



## Appearance

Commonly, people associate the Asaltante with primitive or simple clothes, made of roughly spun linen or wool, leathers, and furs. However, they may often be seen in more modernized garb.

The common person usually wears simpler clothes of earth-toned colors, and will often tie strips of cloth or leather around his arms or legs to add dimension or color, and practicality trumps aesthetic value. Meanwhile, wealthier members of society can be more readily identified by the intricacy of their clothing, its embellishments, and the fur that lines or trims much of their clothing.

Silver tends to be the preferred metal for jewelry and hardware in Asaltante outfits, and patterns resembling unending knots are common decorations for cloth and tattoos.

Both men and women are known to braid their hair, and men often decorate their beards with braids and beads, if they wear one.

## Behavior

Asaltante generally place great emphasis on martial prowess, and give respect to physically capable individuals. Bravery is equally important, and they often feel little resentment for negative events, as they believe their fates are predestined by the gods.

An individual's honor and honesty are also extremely important to Asaltante culture. Therefore, attacking an unarmed individual, utilizing poison to bring harm to someone, breaking oaths and promises, and telling blatant lies are all viewed as deplorable acts.

## History

The Asaltante were initially nothing more than collections of hunting clans that were led by their most capable member. However, as time passed and clans broke apart and encountered one another, disputes on hunting territories erupted, and an era of conflict ensued. After several generations of disputes and skirmishes, the clans finally established territorial boundaries and settled their differences. Having established permanent territories, most Asaltante families established farms.

Having established homesteads in fixed territories, some clans returned to skirmishing with one another, as resources became scarce. In an effort to end the conflicts, the Council of Jarls was formed, and the independent states united to form the nation of Nimri.

Nimri joined the Old Empire but quickly left when Mercius came to power. Throughout the Great War, the Asaltante assisted in the rebellion by sacking imperial ports, and supplying soldiers with plundered equipment.

### **Society**

The Asaltante social structure has three layers—thralls, karls, and the aristocracy. Thralls are slaves who were likely prisoners taken during raids or battles. By tradition, thralls are usually set free after five years, and given a gold coin. Oftentimes, freed thralls will be welcomed in the community as karls. Karls are commoners—farmers, warriors, artisans, and the like. The nobles of the Asaltante include earls and jarls. Earls are roughly the equivalent of barons, and as such, are low-ranking nobles who rule over small tracts of land and individual towns. Jarls on the other hand, each oversee their own district of the country, and act much in the same way that a Count would.

Nimri is divided into nine districts, each ruled by its own jarl. When making a decision that would affect the entire nation, the jarls gather to form a council, and will vote on their course of action.

Regular meetings—called Althings—are held in the halls of the aristocracy. Here, Karls come together to feast, settle disputes, or seek justice by the judgements of their lords. Disputes are settled via debate and mediated by the local authority, and determinations of guilt or punishment (in regards to crimes) are made by an appointed Law-Giver's judgements.



### *Coming of Age*

When a child reaches 13 years old, he and his family visit the local earl. Upon their arrival to the earl's mead hall, the child is offered a cup of mead and a piece of salted fish, each serving as symbol for the sea, and the land, which they call home. As the child partakes of the food and drink, the earl asks them to swear loyalty to their earl, their jarls, and their homeland.

If the child accepts, he is offered a bracelet made of silver or another valuable metal, and welcomed as an adult member of the community. The bracelet acts as a symbol of honesty and loyalty, and oaths sworn upon it must always be kept.

### *Religion*

The Asaltante have their own beliefs regarding greater powers. Although they respect Endo, Prana, and Gaia, they tend to worship others as well. These include Ibil, the Lord of Trickery, his brother Orneus, the God of Law, Etrin, Goddess of the moon, and Baran, the God of the sun. Although these are the most prominent of the Asaltante gods, there are many more, each with their own domains, interests, and relationships with their counterparts.

Most Asaltante believe that their fates are predetermined and may be influenced by the whims of the gods. While this belief lends itself to a more open and relaxed mindset among those who share in it, it also causes a need for numerous invocations and ritual sacrifices of goods, wealth, and blood in an effort to appease the gods and earn their favor.

The afterlife in the gods' realm of Umbric, according to Asaltante beliefs, is attainable by all but the most wicked of individuals, and the most favorable realm—Baran's home of Reinivik—may only be reached by falling in battle. As such, elderly warriors have been known to wander the lands in search of their last fight.

However, there are as many realms in which the dead reside, as there are gods. Each realm is associated with a particular god, and houses individuals whose interests match the associated god's ideals. Generally speaking though, the Asaltante do not hold the belief that any particular realm serves as a punishment for one's deeds in life.

It is said that Reinivik and halls similar to it serve not only as sanctuaries for the fallen, but as training grounds for a great battle believed to herald the end of the world. Following a series of natural disasters and extensive famine, evil forces will rise to power and grow emboldened, striking out at any and all. To protect the good and innocent, the gods and the fallen warriors who congregate in their halls will face these foes in a final battle, but will be doomed to fail as their despair empowers their enemy. In the end, it is



believed that the world will be consumed by the fires and chaos of this great battle and all will perish, only to reborn and initiate a new cycle yielding the same results.

### *Superstitions*

Ravens are believed to be the messengers of the gods, keeping tabs on the realm of mortals and reporting their deeds to their masters on a regular basis. Though they may be viewed as a good omen, their regular presence amongst carrion also suggests they are harbingers of death and ruin.

Though ravens may serve as the gods' eyes and ears in the mortal realm, the gods themselves test the hearts of men by disguising themselves and blending in among them, often portraying themselves as beggars or injured travelers.

### *Courtship*

The fathers of the respective bride and groom arrange marriages, which most often serve to provide mutual gain for both families. Beyond the occasional meeting between the bride and groom under their fathers' supervision, little courtship takes place.

### *Marriage*

For one week prior to their wedding, the bride and groom are locked away in their respective houses, forbidden from seeing one another. Throughout this time, they are accompanied by older members of their family, of the same sex, and are given advice on their duties as a husband or wife.

On the third night, the man is blindfolded and led to a family crypt, where he is instructed to recover a sword from the grave. Here, it is believed that he must confront the ghost of his ancestor, who will lecture him on his duties both as a father, and as a husband. If no suitable crypt is available, the groom's family is likely to hide a sword for him to find.

One day before the wedding, the bride is taken to a bathhouse or other suitable bathing area where she will wash away her past as a maiden, all the while being instructed on the duties and expectations of a wife and mother. Later, the groom is taken to the same place, and instructed on his coming duties as he washes away his bachelorhood.

The wedding garb worn is simple, with the only difference to their normal clothes being the addition of an amulet bearing the mark of Etrin, and the bride's bridal crown, which is usually passed down to her by her mother. The groom carries the sword he recovered, and wears an axe at his hip as a symbol of his ability to both protect and provide for his new bride.

Once the two families have gathered, the groom approaches a boy from the bride's family, and offers him his sword. In exchange, the bride's father presents him with a new blade. A local priest oversees an exchange of oaths of loyalty, before the marriage is blessed in the name of the gods.

Once the ceremony is finished, the two families make their way to a nearby mead hall or similar gathering site, to feast and drink. Here, the newlyweds are expected to share a cup of mead together, to confirm their union. At the conclusion of this feast, the couple is offered a series of gifts by their families—often practical items, such as blankets or tools—along with enough mead to last the pair for a month. It is believed that in order to have a fruitful and healthy marriage, the couple must spend the month following their wedding, drinking their mead together.

### *Funerals*

The dead are most often buried in a shallow, rock-covered grave, or in a family crypt, and offerings of food, drinks, flowers, money, and livestock usually accompany the body. Once the body has been washed and prepared, the Day of Whispers is held. One by one, the individual's family and friends spend a period alone with the body, sharing their final thoughts with them.

Following the Day of Whispers, the corpse is paraded through the community, to the grave, or—in the case of a wealthy person's funeral—the boat that will serve as the funeral pyre. However, if no suitable boat or body of water is available, the body is burned on a funeral pyre, and the remains are collected and buried in a family crypt. Songs, dancing, drums, and bells are common during the trip, and the general atmosphere is more akin to celebration, than mourning.

Funerals of wealthy individuals are typically public affairs. On the day of the funeral, slaves of the deceased are asked if they would like to accompany their master to serve them in the afterlife. Should any of the slaves accept, they are given mead and other intoxicating substances in excessive amounts, and are showered with gifts of money and jewelry. Just before the pyre is lit, the slave's throat is cut, and their body is placed next to that of their master.



### *Festivals*

Every three years, a ritual known as a Blótan is held. During this time, members of all levels of Asaltante society make a pilgrimage to the Temple of the Gods near Ariadre, bringing goats, cattle, and horses with them. Over the course of three days, the animals are sacrificed and their blood is collected in bowls. The blood is offered to effigies of the gods, sprinkled on the walls of the temple, and occasionally sprinkled on the people attending the ritual. Toward the end of the event, the slaughtered animals are butchered and their meat is used to produce a stew that is cooked by the jarls in attendance. Mead is also consumed during the feast that follows, with four cups left to stand for Orneus, Etrin, Baran, and another for departed souls.

### *Games*

Physical sports are common pastimes for all members of Asaltante society, and involve activities such as running, jumping, climbing, and lifting or hurling large rocks. Dice and board games, such as chess or Hnefatafl, are also popular, particularly among the higher-ranking members of society.

### *Gender and Family Roles*

Asaltante men function primarily as hunters, warriors, and laborers, while the women tend to the children and livestock, and perform general house chores. When the men are away, the women are granted authority over their husbands' property, and will take up arms to defend it, if the need arises. If a man dies, his property and possessions are transferred to his widow.

### *Traditional Occupations*

While all members of Asaltante society are capable warriors, most hold practical occupations as well. The most common of these, being related to rearing livestock and raising crops. However, artisans such as boat builders and blacksmiths are also in no short supply.

### *Economics*

Given the cooler, rockier climates of their traditional homeland, the typical Asaltante society does not generally produce enough in the way of food crops to sustain itself, let alone serve as a means of income. Textiles are usually made from the wool of hardy sheep and goats which are easily kept as livestock, and an abundance of sturdy trees yields plenty of wood for shipwrights and carpenters to make a sufficient living.

Given the general lack of resources on land and limited supplies of iron deposits, the Asaltante favor spears and axes as weapons, and pillage what weapons they can from fallen foes. To supplement their diets and general need for resources, these people take to the sea; taking fish and whales with which they may provide themselves with additional food, fats, and materials for tools.

To satisfy their limited access to more intricate trade goods, crops, and other general resources, many Asaltante travel the world as merchants, trading their furs, fish, and cultural works for precious metals, tools, clothes, jewelry, and other refined goods. Others meanwhile, prefer raiding and pillaging foreign lands for resources and slaves, and view the hazards of battle as an opportunity to impress the gods.

### **Aging and Life Expectancy**

On average, Humans may live for up to 70 years.