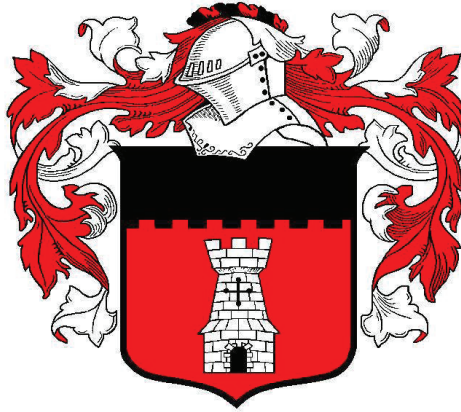


The Ascendency of Schaffhausen

Security is without price
There is nothing new under the sun



"Why do we concern ourselves with this New World father?"

"We hear it contains wondrous things."

"How is that out concern? Can we not acquire whatever we wish by trading as we have always done?"

"Impetuous boy! Are you questioning the wisdom of the Diet?"

"I would never dream of it father, though I am hardly a boy at seventy eight."

"That's what I thought at your age. You'll learn."

Of all the nations of the Known World, Schaffhausen is the prize. Geographically, it is a land of majestic mountains, verdant forests and shimmering lakes and streams, with boundless mineral wealth and a proud and aristocratic people. There is nowhere else in the whole of creation where the citizens enjoy as secure and stable a life as they do in Schaffhausen. Nowhere else does the government have such a commitment to maintaining the safety of its people against those who seek to harm them. Caught between Alkonian jealousy and Merisusi aggression, prey to the hungers of a dozen larger nations across the world, the Schaffen maintain their sovereignty only through a combination of fierce national pride, constant vigilance and a courageous dedication to the ideals of the nation.

Other nations struggle with the instabilities created by their inefficient and ultimately unfair forms of governance. Schaffhausen, however, places power in the hands of those with the broadest experience, greatest wealth of accumulated knowledge, and longest (and thus deepest) investment in the land itself. Historians have proved that this elegant approach to leadership has led to a supremely stable and prosperous country, where, given enough time, practically any citizen can rise to a position of authority and influence and shape the future of their nation.

A little brief history

"History is written by the State."

Perhaps as long as two millennia ago, the land that is now Schaffhausen was settled by adventurous souls from what would eventually become Alkyon to the south, and by the

Merisusi from the north. Even in those days, the mountainous terrain provided a degree of privacy and independence much appreciated by the those who value their privacy. It also proved to have rich reserves of precious metals and gemstones buried in its hills, as well as potentially more valuable reserves of iron. This meant that the land also became a site for pitched battles between the interests of the different fiefs and nations, until the expansionist Renian empire invaded and created Hausen, an allegedly independent nation controlled for all practical purposes by the Renian satraps.

The satraps were mostly concerned with protecting and exploiting the mineral wealth of Hausen. The administrators of the province enjoyed as high a level of wealth and sophistication as could be maintained away from the Renian capital, and over several generations came to appreciate their life of ease. Of course, this level of comfort was not universal – perhaps as many as sixteen out of every twenty Hausen natives spent their entire lives working in the mines or associated industries. As the Renian empire moved from the height of its power toward the decline, there was an increasing dissatisfaction among both the native avian and mokosh populations, and among the imported human slaves who did much of the more dangerous work in the mines.

The actual point at which the Fall of the Renian Empire takes place is a matter for conjecture; different Schaffen historians place the collapse at different points. Regardless, the Schaffen date the collapse and the birth of their nation from the same date. Following riots allegedly over the price of bread, but in fact prompted by foreign agitators, a slave uprising launched a bloody and violent revolution that killed the Renian Satraps.

Chaos reigned, with opportunistic observers on all sides looking to take advantage of the instability. As fires raged in the old Renian capital in Unterwalden, the matriarch of the aristocratic Shaf family gathered together the most influential of the surviving citizens and united them under a single banner. After a month of tense negotiation while slaves ran riot across the country, the first Diet in Oberwalden was convened, with matriarch Gertrav Schaf serving as the charismatic First Minister. The Diet immediately set about quelling the slave uprising, restoring much-needed stability to the region, and turned their attention to the vital task of defending their newly independent country from those who would want to take advantage of the situation to crush the nascent nation.

Over the next several centuries, Schaffhausen was the target of several attempted invasions. In each case, the invaders were defeated by Schaffhausen determination and courage. After each assault, the Diet ordered thousands of Ducatto spent on improvement of the border defences, until the name "Schaffhausen" became almost synonymous with the idea of fortification. Access to Schaffhausen has always been a matter of controlling the six major passes through the mountains that surround the country, and the Schaffhausen focused their defensive attentions on these passes, turning them into impenetrable fortresses. Today, a comparatively small number of trained Schaffhausen can hold the passes against a much larger force of arms through the cumulative effects of their siege engines, fortified choke points, and carefully controlled roads and collapsible bridges.

The wisdom of age and the foolishness of youth

"Experience always trumps Enthusiasm."

In Schaffhausen the basic building block, from the highest station avian ministerial family to the lowest station clan of human farmers is that of the family. The head of the family controls all the families' wealth and assets, and allows his relatives access to this wealth as he or she sees fit. When he or she finally passes from the world of the living, the next eldest member of the family inherits everything. In theory, one could leave ones wealth and possessions to someone other than ones closest, eldest blood relative but in practice such a shameful disregard for tradition could potentially result in the entire collapse of ones fortune or the destruction of ones family, and so no self-respecting Schaffhausen would consider it.

At its core, Schaffhausen is a gerontocracy. Advancement to positions of authority is achieved solely by age without respect to favour, privilege or wealth. This structure has many benefits, not only is it utterly fair, since everyone can see the basis by which a person has gained their position but it also ensures that decisions are taken by people who are long past the age where people are prone to rash and impulsive decisions. This appreciation for the value of age, wisdom and experience is a cornerstone of Schaffhausen society.

It is a widely held truth that the more of life one has seen, the more experience of the world one has, and thus the better prepared to deal with the complexities of state. The older one is, the more one has invested in the state, whether in the form of property, social connections or wealth. Youth on the other hand is often prey to the weaknesses of hot-headed passions, fashions

of the moment, and romantic distractions that allow their otherwise good judgement to be thrown away for a moments diversion. Young people – meaning practically anyone under forty years of age – are encouraged to explore their passions as long as they do not let their hot blood get in the way of their respect for their elders or their duty to the state. Only people over the age of forty are considered to have enough invested in the nation and to have had enough life experience to be thought of as properly mature.

Incidentally, those few who have been tempted to accelerate their advancement through resorting to murdering their relatives or superiors are considered to be traitors against the very cornerstones of Schaffhausen's social structure and punished extremely severely when they are invariably uncovered.

Having relatives who die young is considered an embarrassment in Schaffhausen, although this can be mitigated slightly if ones relative died defending the country or in an unavoidable accident. This focus on longevity, and the tendency to consider the lifespan of relatives when choosing a mate, has led to the people of Schaffhausen enjoying much longer lifespans than members of the same race in other nations. This societal longevity is just one more piece of evidence that proves that the Schaffhausen way of life is superior to that of less civilized nations in the wider world.

It is accepted that occasionally the Schaffhausen philosophy can result in someone reaching a position of influence that they are too infirm of body or mind to truly appreciate. This is very rare and never causes a problem since the strong community spirit that pervades Schaffhausen means that associates and family members help to ensure that everything continues to run smoothly, covering for any minor complications that might otherwise have arisen. The Schaffhausen are a naturally long-lived, healthy people made even more firm of body by fine alpine air, mineral water and regular exercise.

Where the family is the building block, and respect for ones elders is the cornerstone, tradition is the foundation from which the Schaffhausen state is built. In the past, Schaffhausen was almost utterly destroyed by a collapse of traditional values. Every day, other nations show time and again the devastation that a lack of tradition can cause. Stability is the highest virtue a society can aspire to, and the people of Schaffhausen have a vested interest in preserving the stability of their society. Novelty can prove diverting for a time, but it cannot compare to the comfort and assurance that comes from doing things in a way that time itself has proven to be reliable and effective.

The wealth of schaffhausen

"Anything that is cheap, is tacky. Anything that is free, is worthless."

As a nation, Schaffhausen is incredibly rich. Despite its small size, its successful citizens enjoy a quality of living easily matching or exceeding that of the nobles of Flambard or even the courts of Millen. The mineral wealth of the deep mines of Schaffhausen cannot be overstated, and is believed to be genuinely inexhaustible. Most of the countries wealth is carefully managed by the so-called "first families" of the Schaffhausen whose familial fortunes, built up over centuries of wise investment dwarf the individual wealth of practically anyone short of the heads of states of the larger nations.

The mines of Schaffhausen are still rich in the finest quality silver, gold, gems and iron and the sale of these minerals makes the owners of the mines rich beyond the dreams of avarice. A large portion of this wealth is re-invested in assuring the security of the country against jealous foreign aggression, whether physical invasions from Merisusi or more subtle economic manoeuvring from the Alkonians who would very much like to get their hands on the Schaffen mines. It is as a result of this socially responsible attitude that Schaffhausen has not only the strongest fortifications in creation, but one of the best equipped armies since the height of the Renian empire. While the military forces are by their nature small, they are well trained and fiercely patriotic. The Hammermen of Schaffhausen are surely one of the most elite forces in the world.

Three of the Trade Houses are generally made welcome in Schaffhausen. Greenfield Shores imports food and drink from around the world for the experienced palates, while Raddock Bay supplies the slave labour that operates the most dangerous mines and farms and Bakhana provides its finest mercenary troops to protect the borders. The Sacuza are considered mostly an irrelevancy in a land-locked nation, although it must be remembered that their boats potentially allow overseas nations to attack Schaffhausen where their distance might otherwise prevent them being an active threat.

The Diet is actively hostile to the Rimici Capell. Prior to the rise of this upstart so-called trade house, Schaffhausen was a by-word for security and occasionally extended lucrative loans to other nations. With the prominence of Rimici Capell, the status of Schaffhausen in the outside world has suffered. The bankers of Rimici Capell are not welcome in Schaffhausen, although individual citizens occasionally find themselves forced to use their services when they go out into the wider world. This dislike is certainly mutual, and the young upstarts in Rimici Capell would like nothing better than to conquer Schaffhausen and prostitute its great wealth for their own ends. A few foolish youths have suggested that Schaffhausen ought to do something about their rivals, but the Diet knows that Rimici Capell will not be around forever, better to wait for them to spend their way into poverty and obscurity.

The master sculptors of Schaffhausen

The highest art in Schaffhausen is that of sculpture. The creation of a physical piece of art by experienced and talented hands can last for centuries after the artist has died, allowing future generations to benefit from the insights of the artist. The quality of a piece of art can be judged in two ways, the seniority of the artist, and the materials with which he has worked. It is a truism that truly great art cannot really be created by anyone who has less than a century of life experience on which to draw. Less experienced artists tend to appeal to the baser emotions, or simply set out to shock. A more mature artist can invest a wealth of experience and meaning into every piece of sculpture. It would be shameful to waste fine quality materials on a callow youth when a true master could use the same matter to create an immortal piece of art. As a consequence, only the best artists work in gold and precious metals, with younger artists restricting themselves to stone or even clay as a medium to express their often naïve artistic temperaments.

Life for most of the inhabitants of Schaffhausen is good. So good, in fact, that the nation as a whole sees little of value in the outside world, but must acknowledge that their country is under constant envious scrutiny by unhappier lands. This understanding has led to the vast network of fortifications carefully deployed around the passes of Schaffhausen - fortification, after all is more reliable than diplomacy. The philosophy of meticulous defence has served the nation well, as the northern border with Merisusi lands in particular is subject to frequent (and thankfully unsuccessful) raids.

The Diet employs several regiments of Bakhana troops at great expense to ensure the safety of the people. These Bakhana troops generally man the northern passes, and are a useful and practical buffer zone against Merisusi aggression. Schaffhausen also maintains an elite standing army of its own. Over three-quarters of the non-mercenary military forces are mokosh and humans, with the avian Ministers for Defence provide the important leadership and make strategic decisions. Actually serving as a military officer for a time is seen as a fine pursuit for a young avian, but is generally considered to be too dangerous a career for anyone with any sense.

Schaffhausen leads the world in the science of defence. Their siege engines and fortified buildings are the best in the world. Recent developments in weapons technology, notably the musket, have been a concern for the more excitable members of the military, but the Diet have proved reluctant to approve any funding for such newfangled devices. This is not a surprise. The traditional view of innovation in all areas, especially the military, is that it is generally young people who become concerned about such things. In thirty years or so when they have gained a little perspective, if they are still concerned about this new technology they will be in a position to do something about it. Until then, the musket and darkpowder weaponry in general are treated as being little more than fashionable accessories and little cause for concern. Some members of the Diet look at the recent furore over the source of darkpowder as simply proof that the technology is doomed to be little more than a historical curiosity. It is an unavoidable truth that the more exciting something appears to the young, the less enduring its appeal will be in the long run.

The truth about darkpowder weaponry

It may be worth mentioning at this point that many members of the Diet are not entirely sure what a darkpowder weapon is. An official demonstration of the new technology was arranged for the Diet by Bakhana merchants from the Kyops Volery in Alkyon. This proved ineffective after wise heads determined that it would be impossible for the weapon to be fired in front of the Diet due to the extremely loud and startling noise it created, not a quality much appreciated in a country where so many people have weak hearts... The unloaded weapons were shown to the Diet but many of them clearly consider darkpowder weapons to be little more than very odd crossbows.

The cantonments of Schaffhausen

Politically, the nation is divided into three cantonments; Oberwalden, Niwalden and Unterwalden, following the same boundaries as the original military districts established by the Renians. Each cantonment has several smaller divisions, usually

centred around a prominent city or town. For example, the city of Rorschach stands at the heart of the Niwalden district of the same name.

Oberwalden is largely occupied with administration and bureaucracy. Its inhabitants tend to be mostly avian, although there is a substantial minority of humans. Oberwalden is named for the nation's capital as well as many universities and religious centres. The Diet meets in Oberwalden, in the gorgeously appointed Hall of Ministers. The government sits at all times, debating the issues of the day and guiding the future of Schaffhausen towards a glorious future. Most aristocratic families maintain their estates and residences in Oberwalden, which is considered by many to be one of the most beautiful places in the entire world.

Niwalden is the largest of the districts and while it is mostly concerned with agriculture and forestry, it is much more than a simple rural wilderness. Niwalden is generally considered the poorest of the three districts, although the Schaffen taste for the finer things in life has led to heavy government subsidies for the smaller family farms and smallholdings that concentrate on producing high quality, low volume products such as Schaffhausen's famous cheeses and smoked meats. There are also several small centres of professional excellence, the town of Rorschach for example provides the country with some of its most skilled architects, engineers and builders. Niwalden is also famous as being the recruiting ground of the renowned Schaffen mountain men who form the core of the country's non-mercenary military forces. Niwalden is a picture of idyllic pastoral life for the farms are almost entirely worked by slaves and prisoners, leaving the honest citizens to manage and oversee the operations. In some ways Niwalden is Schaffhausen's open-air penitentiary. To be sent to the farms, however, is considered a lesser punishment than being sent to the mines, especially by avian citizens.

Unterwalden, the final Cantonment, is awash with foreigners. All of the major trade houses bar Sacuza have offices here, although Rimici Capell are generally permitted only to trade with the other foreigners, and that grudgingly. The landscape is dotted with mines and spoil heaps as well as the lodgings for slaves who toil to work off their debt to society. The streets here are cosmopolitan affairs, but remarkably ordered in spite of the quantities of merchants, slaves and other foreigners. The skills of Schaffen craftsmen are without rival, and Unterwalden is a place where petitioners from all over the world come to commission their services. Even the newest Schaffen journeyman is best employed spending his time on high quality goods, and so lower quality items are generally imported from Alkyon where they can be produced in bulk and exported cheaply.

The great mineral wealth of Schaffhausen is concentrated beneath Unterwalden, and over the centuries the mines have been dug deeper and deeper into the mountains to uncover that wealth. It's said that only the Ministry of Mining and Industry has any real idea how extensive the mine works beneath Unterwalden are, and how deep the oldest mines now run. The great mines of Unterwalden are truly a tribute to the masterful engineering skills of the Schaffen people.

The issue of race

"Some people are suited to leadership, and some are suited to being lead."

All the highest ranking members of Schaffen society are avians. The majority of the country's wealth and almost all its important positions are held in avian hands. This is simply an expression of the fact that the avians are best suited to deal with the complexities of running the country. The mokosh and humans that make up perhaps a half the population of Schaffhausen between them are more suited to work in practical positions. There are some ministerial positions that are traditionally held by mokosh or humans – the Minister for Farms and the Under-Minister for Weapons Appropriations traditionally operate in areas where these two races have natural talent – but for the most part the difficult task of running the country falls to the avians. It is only natural that the ministries prefer to deal with other avians, and even foreigners can understand this and as a consequence prefer to send avian representatives to Schaffhausen where possible.

Over half the country's mokosh population are employed either in the military, manning the defences and patrolling the passes, or in the mines where their physical endurance is such an asset. Humans on the other hand have repeatedly proved their suitability to operate the agriculture vital to the survival of the nation, and have a natural deference that makes them excellent as household servants. It is difficult for members of these races to advance in other careers simply because experience has shown that they are better suited for their traditional roles.

At one time, there was a small minority of wemic citizens in Schaffhausen, a relic of the old Renian dominance of the region. Even in Renian times, the delicate wemic race found the mountainous climate disagreeable. Sadly they never contributed much of value to Schaffen society and around five hundred years ago a major sickness struck the small wemic population, and ended their involvement in the Schaffen society.

The place of tradition

"Anything done for the first time creates a demon."

While religion is a minor matter for most Schaffen, the importance of tradition cannot be over-stressed. Practically every day there are traditional observances to maintain, important past events to be celebrated, or specific customs that ought to be observed. The higher ones social status, the more true this becomes. Indeed, many Ministers spend the bulk of their time preserving the customs and traditions of their ancestors, leaving the less pressing business of their offices to their Nidwalderung staff.

Tradition allows the Schaffhausen to preserve continuity within the nation that other countries can only envy. When the Minister for Fisheries attends the Ceremony of the Spring Waters and personally pours the bottles of water, wine, milk, blood and fish-oil into the river Helvennan, she knows that she is doing something that every previous Minister for Fisheries has done on that day at that time for a thousand years. The river fishermen know that their fathers and grandfathers back twenty or more generations have watched the Minister for Fisheries perform that ceremony, and that reinforces their understanding

of their role in society. They will work harder, and will know that they are an important part of Schaffhausen.

The roots of many of the traditions and customs in Schaffhausen are lost in the mists of the past, but this makes them none the less vital and important. Some traditions are observed by the entire populace – for example, the tradition of boiling and eating an egg on the anniversary of ones birth onto which one has painted ones True Name in coloured ink, with the colour of the ink and the nature of the egg being determined by the time of ones birth. Even the lowest farmer observes the Ceremony of Childish Things, a coming of age ritual generally observed on one eighteenth birthday when all ones childhood toys are destroyed in a traditional bonfire – save that most treasured one which is placed in storage until the young man's first child is born, then passed on to the first-born.

Each family has its own traditions and ceremonies as well, that serve to reinforce their connection to their favoured ancestors. Every Spring and Autumn equinox the Vodanor family of Niwalden brings out the clay icons of their dead forebears and holds a great torchlit banquet to honour their deeds before smashing each one as dawn breaks, and beginning again the months-long ceremony required to replace all three hundred icons.

Others, such as the aforementioned Ceremony of the Spring Waters, are the responsibility of specific members of society. Living up to ones ceremonial duties is an extremely serious responsibility, and more than one Minister has chosen to take his own life rather than live with the shame of having failed to do so. Regardless, the personal observation of national and especially family traditions and customs helps Schaffen throughout the world maintain a connection to their homeland, and remind themselves that they belong to the greatest nation of them all.

The study of traditions and customs is a large part of the curriculum at the universities in Oberwalden, and the scholars there regularly discover new importance and significance in the rituals that so underline Schaffen society. Every Schaffen is brought up to respect and, where appropriate participate in, the personal traditions and customs of other families. It is considered exceptionally rude to make fun of an observance, or to question a ritual that clearly has great significance to another Schaffen. The odd rituals and ceremonies of foreigners, based as they so often are on the very shakiest of foundations, are not automatically considered so sacrosanct, but a well-brought up citizen should still err on the side of respecting their strange folk ways as he expects them to respect his own traditional responsibilities.

GIFTS

To show honour and respect to ones superiors, gifts are given. There is a long and complex etiquette for dealing with gifts. To give a gift of too little value is insulting, but to give a gift of too great a value is also insulting as it implies that the giver considers himself better than the receiver. Many high status individuals in Schaffhausen society publish regular lists of the things they want, and expect those who owe them favours or position to provide those things, all the time maintaining the polite fiction that the gift is a complete surprise.

When a higher status individual gives a lower status individual a gift, it is with the unspoken proviso that the gift should be seen as a loan, and that the bounty may be withdrawn at any time if the one who benefits from the givers largesse proves unsatisfactory.

There are entire industries in Schaffhausen dedicated to the creation of suitable gifts, from gold-encrusted clocks to eggs studded in precious jewels, to life-sized confectionery statues of civic heroes. These high-quality items are much in demand by the richest men and women in the world, but they are rarely exported except to fill specific orders.

AN OUT OF CHARACTER NOTE REGARDING TRADITIONAL CEREMONIES

Obviously, there are dozens of traditions and ceremonies that the Schaffhausen celebrate. Profound Decisions will not be providing an exhaustive list of ceremonies; rather we encourage you to come up with as many of your own as you feel comfortable portraying.

RELIGION

“Give respect to the Gods but keep the greater portion of your respect for the parents who raised you.”

Schaffhausen does not have any overwhelmingly dominant religion. For the most part, the people of Schaffhausen acknowledge the existence of the Gods, but do not involve them particularly in their day-to-day lives. The Teacher and the Smith are the most popular religions, with the emphasis of these faiths being on respect for tradition, and the importance of serving the greater community.

Merchant worship is very popular among the slaves and the lowest classes of farmers and miners, but virtually unknown elsewhere. It must be admitted that some Schaffen regard the Merchant faith with cynicism, seeing it as a way to keep slaves and low-class citizens focused on their work rather than as a true calling. The ideas that one might advance your position just by working hard rather than genuine entitlement is distasteful to right thinking folk and the Alkonian disapproval of inherited wealth is very much at odds with the traditions of Schaffhausen. Such things are not openly stressed by priests of the Merchant in Schaffhausen.

Huntress worship is generally restricted to a few sects in Niwalden and in the military, primarily focused towards seeking revenge for Mersisui raids or the rare insurrectionist attacks that are not prevented by the Night Watch.

Worship of the Weaver is a dangerous aberration. The Ministry of Faith has made it clear that the followers of the Weaver are dangerous upstarts and they have repeatedly discovered proof that Weaver sects are intent on destabilising the country. This seductive faith has lied its way to respectability in other lands but Schaffen theologians have made clear that the Weaver is actually an adversary figure, a destructive and capricious force little different to a demon. Arguments rage over whether this being is actually the power behind the fallen, a sort of queen of demons or something entirely separate. Weaver followers who are discovered are subject to summary arrest. Most people are happy to inform the authorities of anyone who they suspect of harbouring Weaver ties, simply because no sane citizen wants

such a dangerous and unpredictable individual living among them. Nobody wants to see Schaffhausen turned into the sort of anarchic hell-hole that other nations become when they tolerate Weaver worship.

One group of Weaver followers called the Oblique Narrative are especially feared and hunted. These terrorists specialize in assassinating particularly infirm ministers and family heads in the mistaken belief that by drawing attention to their condition they can bring down Schaffhausen society. A few dissidents have claimed that the Oblique Narrative is a cover for a sinister agenda within the Nidwalderung to remove incompetent Ministers, but few sane people bother going down to the mines to listen to these people.

The Minister of Faith performs many important ceremonial duties throughout the year in honour of the gods, and there are several beautiful cathedrals in Oberwalden, awesome tributes to the skill and vision of the Schaffhausen people. Members of the Ministry of Faith oversee most religious observance ensuring careful attendance to rites and traditions that have been handed down since Renian times. A few individuals may enjoy a more personal connection to the gods, but this is a private matter that is ignored by society as long as it does not obviously threaten the stability of the nation.

It is also quite common for young people to become fired up with the philosophy of one god or another, and embrace the tenets of that faith in a way that society might disapprove of. This tends to lead to the formation of short-lived cults and strange occult groups, but most Schaffhausen grow out of this phase after a few decades. These odd sects are carefully monitored for signs that they might allow their religious convictions to cloud their judgement and try to disrupt the safety of their fellow citizens, or for signs that they are being unduly influenced by so-called religious leaders in other nations who might try to use their naïve outlook to turn them against their homeland. Schaffhausen is a very tolerant society provided that nothing is said or done that might threaten the status quo. Most sects disappear within a generation, which proves how little they really had to offer. The few with real merit tend to be preserved and become a very discreet part of the wider traditions of the Schaffhausen way of life.

The Nidwalderung

“The price of prosperity is constant vigilance coupled with pragmatic devotion to duty.”

Although the Diet provides leadership and makes the decision on policy, these policies are implemented by the Nidwalderung. Every Minister who sits on the Diet is assisted by a department of Nidwalderung bureaucrats. Even a relatively minor Minister will have the assistance of half dozen Secretaries, each of whom will have two or three Under-Secretaries of their own, with the rest of the department being composed of aides, researchers, lieutenants, general dogsbodies and the like. Every department maintains a strict pecking order based on seniority and time served. It is general practice that when the holder of an office dies everyone else is promoted one step, with the First Secretary becoming Minister as soon as the current incumbent passes on. The strategy of promotion based on time ensures that ministers and their underlings need not compete for the attention of their masters in the Diet by taking ever more foolish risks as is

common in Alkyon and some other lands.

This massive state bureaucracy is a slumbering titan, slow to awaken but unstoppable once in motion. The offices of the Nidwalderung control most aspects of life in Schaffhausen, and it is their efficient enactment of the Diet's commandments that allow the country to remain safe from foreigners and subversives. Different departments deal with different areas that range from town planning to military issues and policing.

It is commonly known that the offices of the Nidwalderung house the largest information gathering organizations in the world. They have agents, covert and overt, in all countries of the known World as well as collation and sorting facilities that allow vast quantities of information to be placed at the disposal of the Diet. If Schaffhausen is to be kept safe then it must keep a constant watch on the jealous foreigners who spend much of their time plotting how best to conquer Schaffhausen and steal the wealth of its citizens. Without constant vigilance, the country would soon be overthrown by insidious operatives, its secrets stolen and its people enslaved.

The sheer size of the bureaucracy does create a few limitations. Some key pieces of intelligence are lost among the sea of information and the Diet has to be consulted for all official operations both mundane and covert. In practice, the Nidwalderung has grown used to acting with a certain amount of autonomy, but its reactions remain sluggish at best. However, once a course of action is decided upon, it can and will be seen through to its conclusion. It must be said that for every course of action seen through to its conclusion, one will be abandoned as the officers responsible for its execution are promoted or pass way, and another will end up reaching an entirely different conclusion to that which was originally desired as focus shifts and new bureaucrats bring their own particular agenda to bear on the situation.

Law, order and the night watch

“The price of prosperity is constant vigilance coupled with pragmatic devotion to duty.”

Within the Nidwalderung, the most efficient branch of the government is the Ministry for National Safety, the Night Watch. These brave few stand as a bulwark against eternal darkness. This respected organization operates in Schaffhausen enjoys the full support of the citizenry although it operates almost entirely in secrecy. They do not wear uniforms, but every citizen knows at least one officer to whom they can report suspicious behaviour or concerns about their neighbours or the doings of foreigners. The Night Watch generally go masked when they are on official business, to maintain their anonymity and in doing so preserve their ability to operate without concerns that disgruntled dissidents might uncover their identities and injure them or their families in their day-to-day lives. The officers of the Night Watch serve as both investigators and judges, and ensure that whatever punishments are mandated by the laws are carried out.

The Chancellor for National Safety heads the Ministry, and is the only Minister whose identity is not publicly known; only the highest ranking ministers of the Diet know who holds the position at any time. For the most part, the Minister is rarely seen outside the Chancellery, except when called upon to report to the Diet. The Chancellery is a beautiful fortified building

in Oberwalden whose imposing architecture and white stone construction make it a truly wonderful structure that any visitor to Schaffhausen should be sure to see at least once. It is within the Chancellery that records of all accusations and criminal trials are compiled and reviewed.

Criminals are not mollycoddled in Schaffhausen. Someone found guilty by the Night Watch of having committed a crime is usually fined. A complex and traditional sequence of codified punishments exist where a criminal is punished in a way that specifically fits the crime. This fine may take the form of the confiscation of assets, or it may take the form of minor maiming. For example, for illegally injuring a citizen of Schaffhausen, one may be beaten with the number of strikes and the tool used for the punishment depending on the severity of the crime and the comparative stations of those involved. Theft is generally punished by the confiscation of assets, with part of the amount confiscated being paid to the injured party and the rest going to help maintain the Night Watch. Someone found guilty of speaking sedition generally has their tongue removed, while those found guilty of writing sedition have one or more hands removed. Those whose crimes are considered serious enough are generally sent to work on the punishment farms of Niwalden or in the mines of Unterwalden, either for a period of time or more likely for the rest of their lives.

The protection of law and good order is generally seen as being a responsibility of the family; when someone is found guilty of a major crime, their friends and family will also fall under suspicion. With serious crimes, all the criminal's known associates, friends and family other than those who provided information leading to the arrest, will be routinely called on by the Night Watch where they are required to prove that they had no knowledge of the monstrous acts of the malcontent.

With the Night Watch discreetly responsible for enforcing the laws of Schaffhausen, the nation is uniquely freed from the requirement to maintain a public police force – there are no city watches in Schaffhausen, and the closest the country has to an obvious law-enforcement group are the rangers who patrol and protect the forests of Niwalden. Secure in the knowledge that they are watched over night and day by the Night Watch, the Schaffen people can sleep comfortably in their beds knowing that an officer of the law will be nearby actively hunting and disposing of anyone who might mean them harm. This enlightened approach to the law means that Schaffhausen has one of the lowest crime rates in the world.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

“All change is for the worse.”

In Schaffhausen, haste is seen as a vice that is generally leads to error and regret. The Diet maintains a traditional “wait and see” attitude at all times, and history proves time and again the value of this approach. A problem that seems insurmountable today might solve itself if caution and good judgement are exercised. Very little that happens in the world touches the security of Schaffhausen, and this is very much a consequence of careful neutrality and distancing from the concerns of other nations.

With this in mind, and as Schaffhausen has no naval interests, it is unsurprising that news of a passage through the Maelstrom failed to have any noticeable impact on the country. Beyond several

hundred reports filed by the Nidwalderung and a derogatory article on page five of the Schaffen Gazette, the discovery of the so-called New World passed largely unremarked. Even the very name given to it suggests a rather unfortunate status.

Within the last few years however, the Diet has adjusted its attitude to the New World. Initially some hot-heads were concerned that the new products and trade would unbalance the economy of the Known World, but as that has largely failed to happen it has been decided that there may exist a possibility that some things in the new world might prove interesting. After several more years' delay whilst access to a port and other essentials were negotiated with the Alkonians, Schaffhausen finally dispatched an expedition through the Maelstrom.

The ministers of the Diet have no interest in the land that is apparently so abundant in the New World, as it would require a massive and totally inappropriate expenditure of funds to fortify and protect territory so far away. Their main interest lies in two areas; exploitation of the mineral wealth of the New World, and acquisition of the so-called magical objects that are allegedly created there. A small group of Schaffen have been entrusted with a fortune in Gold Ducatto to travel through the Maelstrom and ensure that some of the mineral wealth of this “New” World is brought back to Schaffhausen, where it can do some good.

While the practice of magic itself is a potentially dangerously new idea, if it is taking place thousands of miles away on the other side of the Maelstrom, surely it cannot harm the traditional Schaffen way of life? And the fruits of exploring these untrustworthy and untried sciences might be of benefit to the people of Schaffhausen. In thirty years time, when the first pioneers return home to rejoin proper society, their discoveries might prove interesting. Until then the Diet will content themselves with an adequate return on their investment in gold, silver and gems which should begin any day soon.

“How much for the suit my man?”

“Fifty silver ducatto.”

“FIFTY DUCATTO!?! Do you take me for a beggar? Take this cheap trash away and bring me something worth at least three hundred!”

