

THE MEERRIJDEERS

OVERVIEW

History

History details that the original Meerijder clan was once three nomadic tribes that lived on the southern shores of Lake Quag that were all related by a common ancestor who lived over 200 years earlier. Karl Meerijder, the patriarch of the largest of the three families, convinced his cousins Biannette and Adger, the hetmenn of the other two families, that they formally join together. The three families settled on the coast of the great lake and soon had adopted the life of fisherman and sailors.

Before long they had soon spread out along the shore of the lake. Karl Meerijder and his family established themselves along the southern shore of the Lake Quag. Biannette Meerijder and her family set up a number of small villages along the eastern shore of the lake, while Adger Meerijder settled the western shore.

Within a few generations they became formalised as an independent clan, with the Oostmeer, Südmeers and Vestmeer as septs within the clan. Karl's great grandson became the Pfalzgraf, a position that became hereditary, handed down to the oldest child. The Pfalzgraf was advised by a clan council, which consisted of the Obstergrafs of the Oostmeer and Vestmeer septs and the clan's religious leader.

The Meerijders flourished, becoming known as sailors of great skill. Many took up the life of a fisherman, while other became merchants and traders, both the legal and illegal variety. Although the clan was geographically diverse, it was extremely proud of its heritage and very close. Children would be fostered out to families of the other septs, resulting in many marriages between the three septs.

While the closeness and sense of clan pride was a great strength of the Meerijders, it was also is directly responsible for the current division. Around 300 years ago (Y295) a great plague hit the town of Meerstadt. At that time Meerstadt was the Pfalzgraf's seat and it was situated just north of where Shanmott now lies (on Flinderlord Island near the Meersstradt). The plague decimated the Südmeers sept, killing the Pfalzgraf and her family. When the plague had finally burnt itself out, the population of the Südmeers was so depleted that it could no longer function as a separate sept and had to be adopted by the Oostmeers.

Once the Vestmeers, and Oostmeers had mourned the loss of their cousins, the two Obstergrafs met to decide who would become the new Pfalzgraf. Due to the intermarriages between the septs the line of succession was unclear and both had equal claim to the title. Unfortunately the two men were equally stubborn and the discussion eventually turned to blows and anger. They each left the meeting vowing that the other would not become Pfalzgraf.

The rift continued to widen but neither sept was willing to relinquish the clan name and separate. Finally it was agreed by the House of Grafs to allow each to have a Pfalzgraf, with the hope that one of the septs would form its own clan. This did not happen, but it did reduce the antagonism between the two.

Peace between the sub-clans continued with both being quite amenable towards each other. Intermarriages and productive clan councils began to happen once again. To both outsiders and Meerijder alike it appeared that the clan might be healing itself. Then five years ago a disturbing trend appeared. Some of the younger members of the clan started to refer to themselves as Vestmeer or Oostmeer, not Meerijder. Words were exchanged and fights began to break out between the young hotheads. Old issues began rising to the surface and threatened to divide the clan once again.

Current situation

The clan sits on the very brink of self-destruction. The relationship between the Oostmeers and the Vestmeers has hit an all time low. Fights have erupted between young hotheads in public places and there are many in both sub-clans that want to put aside the Meerijder name, considering it 'tainted' by the other side. This alarming view is especially prevalent among the younger members.

In the Oostmeer sub-clan, the path of reconciliation is supported and pushed by Arren Meerijder, the current Pfalzgraf of the Oostmeers. Unfortunately for the clan Arren is only the Regent until Stefan Oostmeer (son of the last Pfalzgraf) comes of age (in about three years time). Stefan has very different views to those of Arren. Stefan believes that the clan should break off all relations with the Vestmeers and become an independent clan in their own right. If that means abandoning the Meerijder name, then that is the price to pay for cutting away the dead wood that is the Vestmeers. These views hold much support with Stefan's peers and are gaining acceptance on the Oostmeer council. Arren hopes that in the three years before Stefan becomes Pfalzgraf, he can modify his view.

The Vestmeers have similar problems. The current Pfalzgraf, Johan Vestmeer is a weak man that is ruled by his wife Marika. Marika fully believes in the superiority of the Vestmeers. Her son Casper Vestmeer also holds these views and feels that the Oostmeer upstarts should really be taught a lesson or two. Fortunately for the Vestmeers the Pfalzgraf's daughter, Karla, hold a more libertarian view of reconciliation. Always her father's favourite, she often can counter the council of her mother and brother.

As with the Oostmeers, the Vestmeer council is split on the matter of clan separation. However with the growing number of attacks on the Vestmeer ships by unknown assailants, the voices of retribution have been growing stronger. It is believed that some council members, most notably the Vorjâger Obstergraf, has given permission for covert raids to begin against the Oostmeers in retaliation. However these suspicions are as unproven as the Oostmeer involvement in the destruction of the ships.

To avoid the self destruction of the clan, the Voorman arranged for the marriage of Jana Rietmârcher and Taarvi Vorjâger. With both Jana and Taarvi seeming to have real feelings for each other, it appeared that reconciliation could happen. Unfortunately for the Voorman, on the way to the wedding site Jana was killed. The exact events have been covered up. All that is known is that the six adventures that were assigned to protect her failed. It is rumoured that a priest of Zilchus was involved, and it has been suggested that Jana was killed by her insane bridesmaid, but that is discounted by most people. Determined that the wedding will go ahead, Jana's younger sister, Mina, was instead married to Traavi. Not happy with the situation and still only a child of 12 years the marriage is not going well (she still thinks boys are icky). The Voorman has upset many members of the Rietmârcher and the Vorjâger septs with what they see as interference in a Clan matter. To make matters worse, Jana's body has disappeared.

ORGANISATION

The Clan

The Meerijdersis are a deeply divided people. They consists of two sub-clans, each with a small number of septs

Oostmeer is the larger of the two sub-clans, running down the east cost of Lake Quag. It has three major septs and seven minor septs. These are:

Major: Sûdmeers, Vissjâger, Rietmârcher

Minor (and the major sept they originated from): Esilmeer (Sûdmeers), Krijgboot (Rietmârcher), Silberstrom (Rietmârcher), Drachemörder (Rietmârcher), Stromridjer (Vissjâger), Fischejâger (Vissjâger), Schifferbauer (Vissjâger)

Vestmeer is the smaller of the two sub-clans and runs up the Western coast of the lake. It has two major septs and six minor septs. These are:

Major: Vorjâger, Resigner

Minor (and the major sept they originated from): Hundrijder (adopted), Kestameer (Resigner), Goedmeeróver (Resigner), Iggeteffer (Vorjâger), Gersiten (Vorjâger), Sternverfolger (Vorjâger)

The Septs

Sûdmeers

Originally the third and ruling sept of the Meerijder, the Sûdmeers were adopted into the Oostmeers when they were decimated by the plague. The majority of Sûdmeers settlements found around the South-eastern shores of the lake. The sept are mostly traders and merchants, but the Sûdmeers have also produced a fair number of noteworthy performers and artisans.

Vissjâger

The Vissjâgers are the second major Sept of the Oostmeers. Mainly traders, they are found all over the eastern shore of Lake Quag and some members of the Sept have even moved to Vestmeer lands. Generally more interested in peaceful commerce, there have been some instances where a Vissjâgers has turned to piracy.

Rietmârcher

The Rietmârchers are the third major sept of the Oostmeers and are the military sept of the clan. While having their share of fishermen and traders, the majority of the Rietmârcher find their way into the military, with many filling ranks in the Navy. A strong rivalry exists between them and the Vestmeer sept of Resigner.

Esilmeer

The Esilmeer is the only sept to have originated from the Sûdmeers. The Esilmeers are craftsmen, making many sort-after goods worked from wood and bone with maritime motifs. The Esilmeers are the southern most sept of the Oostmeers.

Krijgboot

The Krijgboot are a minor sept that originated from Rietmârcher sept. Like its parent sept, the Krijgboot are military inclined. What makes the Krijgboot different is that they prefer to serve landbased units as opposed to the Navy. The majority of Krijgboot have a dislike for horses so the members of this sept generally join the pikemen units of the infantry.

Silberstrom

The Silberstrom are named after the founder of this minor sept. Hansel Rietmârcher was a naval officer in the Auszug. She had a reputation of not giving any quarter and the nickname of the Silver storm (because of her silver hair). When she retired from the navy, she became the head of her family and eventually they formed their own sept.

Drachemörder

The Drachemörder are a small sept that has a large reputation. Legend has it that a dragon turtle was terrorising the shipping lanes. Trade around Traft was starting to be hampered and the merchant classes were crying out for protection. Hearing the cry, a rash and young Rietmârcher called Endrald, gathered his equally young and rash friends and 'borrowed' his father's boat to search for the beast. As luck would have it, they did find the Dragon Turtle; or rather the turtle found them, rising up and capsizing the boat. Dumped into the water, Endrald and his crew tried fighting the beast. Endrald was swept aside by a giant flipper, but through a mixture of luck and bravery, he managed to climb onto the back of the creature. Slowly making his way to its head, Endrald drew back his short spear and slammed it through the eye and into the Dragon Turtles brain, killing it.

When the survivors were rescued, they were found on the back of the gigantic corpse. Endrald fame soon spread throughout the countryside and was known to all as the Drachemörder or Dragon killer and went on to found his own sept.

Stromrijder

In all the Oostmeers (and some would say all of Perrenland) there are no sailors as talented, brave or foolhardy as the Stromrijder. This minor sept originated from the Vissjäger but soon established their dominance on the water. Their name originates from their willingness (some would say anticipation) to brave the storms that can threaten Lake Quag. Every Perrenlander knows that if you needed to get somewhere by boat or ship, then a Stromrijder will get you there no matter what the weather (or die trying).

Fischejäger

The Fischejäger are the quietest and simplest of all the septs of the Oostmeers. Mainly fishermen, the Fischejäger are simple straightforward folk that speak their mind and give no quarter to fools. Content to pull their livelihood from the lake, this small sept hold no interests in the politics of the clan. Originally from the Vissjäger sept, the Fischejäger consider themselves Meerrijder, not Oostmeer. In their minds the two sub-clans should set aside their differences. After all, what is the point of feuding, it doesn't put fish on the table.

Schifferbauer

The Schifferbauer are the backbone of the Oostmeers. Originating from the Vissjägers, this small sept are the shipbuilders for the entire sub-clan. Of all the boats and ships that ply the waterways of Quag, none are better than those build by this sept. Strongly patriotic to the sub-clan, the Schifferbauer are strong supporters of separation. They believe that the Oostmeers have what it takes to be a separate clan, and if the Vestmeers shrivel and die because of the separation then it is a win-win situation. There have even been reports of Schifferbauer connections to the recent spate of ship burnings being suffered by the Vestmeers, but there has been no proof.

Vorjäger,

The Vorjägers are the largest sept of the Vestmeer sub-clan and its members are mostly merchants and traders. Found mostly on the Western shore of Lake Quag, they have holding in many of the larger settlements there. Although most are legitimate traders, there have been rumours that there are some malcontents that have taken to raiding Oostmeer ships in retaliation to the burnings of the Vestmeer ships.

Ressigner

The Resigner sept makes up the majority of the military for the Vestmeer sub-clan. Like their Oostmeer cousins, the Rietmârchers, the Resigner prefer the life in the navy to that of a trader or fisherman. With the

majority assigned to the Vestmeer sponsored vessels, a great rivalry exists between the Resigner and Rietmârcher sailors, with many a brawl breaking out in a tavern as they get a few drinks under their belt. Unfortunately while this use to be quiet a friendly rivalry, over the last few years it has turned nasty, with a number of serious injuries and even a few deaths resulting.

Hundrijder

The smallest of the septs, the Hundrijders were originally a travelling clan of halflings, they decided to give up their nomadic life and settle down, where the Vestmeers adopted the clan as one of their own. While a few of the Hundrijders have started to follow the traditional professions of the Vestmeers, such as merchants and fishermen, most still follow the traditional clan trade of Dog breeding. The Hundrijders are famous for breeding riding dogs and the two largest cannel, the Tailbenders and the Tailchaser are reputed to produce the best in all of Perrenland. Rumour has it that the Tailbenders have summoned a celestial bitch, and are attempting to produce puppies from her. The majority of the Hundrijders live in the village of Hunddörf, one of the few settlements in lowland Perrenland that is almost entire populated by non-humans.

Kestameer

A small sept, the Kestameers are mostly fishermen and farmers. Like the Fischejâger, they keep to themselves and rarely involve themselves in clan politics. Of all the septs and families of the sub-clans, the Fischejâger and the Kestameer are on the most amicable terms. Even with the relationship between the Oostmeers and the Vestmeers at an all time low, Kestameers and Fischejâger fisherman will risk their lives to help the other if trouble arises and are often seen in taverns sharing a few ales over fishing stories. A friendly rivalry exists between the two septs, but the one thing they will not share is the good fishing spots (like any fisherman). The Kestameers are mainly found in the Northwestern shore of Lake Quag, well away from the rest of the clan and its politics.

Goedmeeróver

The Goedmeeróver is a small sept that once was part of the Resigners. The Goedmeeróver are unusual in that this sept rarely sail the great lake. They instead prefer to travel up and down the sometimes treacherous river systems that flow into Lake Quag. Being expert river pilots and navigators they are often sort after for their skill and almost six sense for avoiding many of the hidden hazards of the rivers. Members of this sept can be found on the western shore of Lake Quag, as far south as Clatsberg, wherever a river mouth opens into the Quag, and along many of the western river system in Perrenland.

Iggeteffer

Often thought a bit strange by the rest of the Vestmeers, this sept likes the extremes. The Iggeteffers produce more rogues, pirates and nare-do-wells and any other septs. They also produce more paladins, champions of the weak and defenders of justice that any other sept. Traditionally the sept are mainly merchants like their parent sept, the Vorjâgers, but the majority of its members are either with the clergy,

adventuring, serving the military, causing trouble, raiding other ships or all of the above. The rest of the sub-clan has a saying that if something is a bit Iggeteffer, then it is unpredictable and could go either way.

Gersiten

Although not as talented as their Schifferbauer cousins, the Gersitens are also shipbuilders. Servicing most of the West coast of Quag, this small sept specialises in the lake skimmers used when Quag freezes over. Although their ships may not be as fine as the Schifferbauer, their lake skimmers are superior. The Gersiten sept originated from the Vorjâgers and are found mainly in the villages of Vestdörf or Fischerdörf

Sternverfolger

The Sternverfolger sept originally was a group of families in the Vorjâger sept. Highly skilled in the ability to read the stars they became well sort after navigators for the lake and its rivers and beyond, with many trading companies outside of Perrenland taking on a Sternverfolger navigator. Over time the families grew and about 50 years ago they petitioned to be recognised as a sept in their own right. Sternverfolgers can be found almost anywhere on the Western shore of Quag.

Government

The Meerijder system of government is a hereditary system that has been in use since the clan was united, and is now used by the both the Oostmeer and the Vestmeer sub-clans

The leader of each sub-clan is the Pfalzgraf. This position is passed down from parent to oldest child, or nearest related relative. The head of each sept is called the Obstergraf and is passed on like the Pfalzgraf.

The Pfalzgrafs rules the clan with the Council of Obstergrafs acting as their advisers, but it takes a strong Pfalzgraf to completely ignore their wishes. While the Pfalzgraf can veto any decision made by the council, the council also has the power to veto any decision made by the Pfalzgraf, but this veto vote must be unanimous. The Pfalzgraf also is unable to declare any military action on behalf of the sub-clan with out the majority support of the council. This would include such things as declaring a clan blood feud, or separating from the Meerijder name. The council is also responsible for choosing a regent Pfalzgraf if the heir is under the age of 17 when the old Pfalzgraf dies or a regent Obstergraf, if a Obstergraf dies when their heir is not of age.

NPCs

Important people of the Meerijder Clan

Arren Meerijder (7th/3rd lv Human Sorcerer/Bard, LG, M, 55)

Arren Meerijder is the current Pfalzgraf of the Oostmeers. A strong supporter for the reconciliation between the two sub-clans, Arren believes that a fractured clan will only weaken Perrenland as a whole. Afraid that this will open up Perrenland for an attack by Luz, Arren has been using all his power to move the process forward. Unfortunately he is hampered by the fact that he is only the regent until young Stefan Oostmeer comes of age. Arren feels that with Stefan holding very different ideas on the reconciliation of the clan, he may not be able to achieve his goals. As a contingency, Arren has privately sponsored his second cousin, Till Vissjäger in the Voorman elections. If Till is successful, then Arren hopes he can use his political power to mend the rift.

Stefan Oostmeer (1st lv Human Aristocrat, CN, M, 14)

Thrown into the spotlight early, Stefan Oostmeer has not yet had time to grow up. Young Stefan has suddenly gone from a boy preparing to serve his time in the Zee-Auszug, to the centre of attention from every courtier with an agenda. Unfortunately for Stefan and the Oostmeers, he has fallen into the company of rebellious troublemakers. Young and impressionable he has started to believe that the Oostmeers should rid themselves of the loadstone around their necks that is called the Vestmeers. Time will tell how this young man grows up.

Johan Vestmeer (7th lv Human Fighter, LN, M, 45)

Pfalzgraf of the Vestmeers, Johan is a weak man that will give in to almost any whim of his wife. But he was not always like that. As a young naval officer he showed great promise as a leader of men and as the future Pfalzgraf of the Vestmeers. At the age of 17 he married Heidi Sternverfolger. Heidi was very much like Johan, she loved to sail and ride. Unfortunately six months after they were married, while Heidi was out riding, her horse shied from some animal hiding in the undergrowth. Heidi was thrown from her steed, hitting her head and lapsing into a coma and dying. Johan was devastated. All the life appeared to drain out of him. Three years later, at the urging of his family, he remarried. Young Marika Vorjäger was the opposite to Heidi. She hated the outdoors, preferring to stay indoors and follow more 'civilised' pursuits. This suited Johan who no longer rode or sailed.

Marika Vestmeer (3th lv Human Aristocrat, LN, F, 42)

Born from noble parents, Marika married Johan Vestmeer three years after the death of his first wife. Unlike Heidi Vestmeer, Marika was a quiet, very demure woman. The very opposite to the adventurous Heidi. Underneath the quiet exterior there lurked an ambitious and sometimes spiteful woman and in her mind the best way to achieve her ambitions is for the Vestmeers to lead the entire Meerijder clan or for them to be given full clan status in their own right.

Karla Vestmeer (4th lv Human Bard, NG, F, 19)

The daughter of Johan and Marika Vestmeer, Karla is the light in her father's eyes. Unlike her brother and mother, Karla supports a peaceful reconciliation of the clan. If that means that an Oostmeer

becomes Pfalzgraf, then as long as it is someone like Arren Meerijder or Till Vissjäger, so be it. A charming and witty young lady, she is quite talented with her voice. Recently she has been travelling from Meerstadt to Schwartzenbruin to audition at many of the bardic colleges there.

Casper Vestmeer (5th lv Human Fighter, LN, M, 21)

Heir to the Pfalzgraf of the Vestmeers, he has been entirely corrupted by his mother. Believing in Vestmeer superiority and his right to rule, he is often seen calling for the retaliation against the Oostmeers for the burning of the Vestmeers ships.

As a warrior and a leader of men, Casper shows remarkable talent. Contrary to his public face, Casper is a good commander of men. As an officer in the Zee-Auszug, he is caring and concerned for the welfare of those under his command and his men trust him and will follow him without question. This is a trust that Casper never abuses or uses to his own advantage (much to his mother's dismay). This attitude gives hopes to the members of the council that he can be trained as a good Pfalzgraf.

Till Vissjäger (6th/4th lv Human Fighter/Sorcerer, NG, M, 44)

Till Vissjäger is a retired naval captain and the second cousin to Arren Meerijder. He served in the Zee-Auszug for twenty years where he proved a capable commander, eventually gaining command of the Perrenland flagship. Since retiring from the navy, he has taken over his family business; a trading company called Vissjäger Shipping. Just recently Arren nominated him for the Voormanship. He is standing as an independent candidate not a clan endorsed candidate to avoid the problem of the Vestmeers not accepting a Oostmeer in the position.

Till is passionate about the need for building up relations with neighbouring countries and supporting them in their struggle against luz. He is also in favour of the Sepia Uplands becoming a new canton, but on their terms not Perrenlands. Closer to home, Till believes that the Meerijders need to put away their differences and unite under a Pfalzgraf that is agreed upon by all parties.

A redhead in nature as well as appearance, Till was known for his fiery temper in his younger days. Although more calm and mature in his older years, he still is known to be a man of action when the situation calls for it.

(Note: Full statistics for Till Vissjäger can be found in the module "Into the Hills")

CLAN PECULIARITIES

The Festivals of First Thaw and First Freeze

While the clan of Meerijder celebrate the usual Perrenland festivals and holy days, there are two days of special significance for both the Oostmeers and the Vestmeers. They are First Thaw and First Freeze.

First Thaw: The Festival of First Thaw celebrates the day that the winter ice on Lake Quag melts enough to allow the passage of ships from Schwartzenuin to Traft. The festival begins with feasting and dancing which continues all day and well into the night. The celebrations concludes with the beginning of the Thawing race at dawn the next morning. The race begins at Schwartzenuin and travels across the lake to finish in Traft. It is a dangerous race with large chunks of floating ice that can sink or crush a ship, but it is open to all competitors, although the competition between in Vestmeers and Oostmeers is fierce and very serious. Once the first ship reaches Traft, the feasting begins until the last (surviving) ship reaches port.

First Freeze: The festival of First Freeze celebrates the day when the lake freezes over between Traft and Schwartzenuin. Like the festival of First Thaw, it begins with revelling and feasting, and ends with a race. The ice skimmer race begins in the city of Traft and crosses over the frozen Lake to the city of Schwartzenuin. Like the Thaw race, the Race of First Freeze is dangerous due to thin ice, partially frozen sections and unmerciful weather, but is open to all competitors.

The Art of Ice Fishing

When the mighty Lake Quag freezes over, many fishermen use the time to repair their nets and boats, but a few risk the dangerous ice to bring in a winter catch. These hardy fishermen must travel out onto the lake far enough so that the ice is not too thick and make a hole to the unfrozen lake beneath. Common methods for making the hole include chipping it away or melting it with fire. Sometimes a large, shallow metal dish is used to set the fire. Traps or lines are then set down the hole and the fisherman moves to set a new hole. A single fisherman will often stay on the ice for weeks at a time working up to a dozen holes at a time.

The legend of Old Whitey

On legend that is still shared by both the Oostmeers and Vestmeers is that of Old Whitey. Old Whitey is a lake trout that is said to travel the rivers and waterways of Perrenland and Lake Quag since the time that Perren united the clans. Eyewitnesses tell of a pure white lake trout measuring between 3 and 6 feet in length with a scar up his left side. He has been seen in the lake and in the rivers of Perrenland, but to this day no one has succeeded in catching him. (Although many claim that they nearly had him but at the last minute he got away.). Both the Oostmeers and Vestmeers honour the old trout (even while trying to catch him), and it is said that the fates will be good to anyone who catches a glimpse of the crafty fish.