

Aeler: Stone, Breath, and the Ledger

Core Concept

The Aeler are masters of infrastructure, economics, and subtle influence. Their power lies not in flashy magic or brute force, but in their ability to make the world work - and to make others dependent on that work.

1 Aeler — Stone, Breath, and the Ledger

Mount-born engineers, keepers of underways, and masters of soft power

“Hold what bears weight. Record what breath costs. Promise only what stone will keep.”

1.1 I. Stone & Breath

The Aeler resemble their mountains: layered, load-bearing, slow to move, impossible to unmove once set. In the high Aelerian ranges, every life is counted in *breaths, heat, light, and grain*. Underground, a lantern’s hue is a balance sheet; a bell-note means more than a shout. They call this discipline **deep accounting**: air tallies hung by vent-shafts, lamp-time written in chalk, calories measured in the language of ovens.

Above the tree line, stone yields little. Aeler communities rely on southern granaries to swell their numbers; in return, they build the works that make those granaries stand. To outsiders, Aeler influence feels like gravity: not a spear at the gate, but the gate itself, the levee above it, and the price of the mill-stone.

1.2 II. Grounds & Holdings

The Aelerian Range

Alpine holds cling to ribs of granite. *Vent-stacks* thrum in winter like organ pipes; ropeways hum with ore and kiln-brick. Pass-keepers mark every climb with *keystone tablets*—names of those who swear to keep the road.

Underways

A second country. Galleries where a cough wastes air; shafts where heat pools like a predator. The Aeler teach novices the *Nine Measures*: light, draft, echo, dust, taste of iron, sweat-chill, lamp-shadow, bell-lag, and head-ache. Fail two, turn back. Fail three, seal the door.

The Mistlands (Protectorate)

North of the range lies a pale country of low sun and breathing fog. Here, **Mist Wards**—slender towers with vane-bells and salt gutters—keep arable bands clear. Human farmsteads work barley, oats, and hardy roots under Aeler *grain sureties*. The bargain: seed, levees, and warding for tithed surplus and winter labor on the towers. Some call it stewardship; others say the ledgers lean hard. Both are true in different winters.

Southern Commonweals

South of the range, cities—Ecktoria, Acasia, Vhasia, Viterra, Thepyrgos, Ubral—wear Aeler work like hidden bones: bridges that never fall, floodgates that answer one key, ovens that feed thousands, mint dies that refuse to blur. Contracts are the quiet battlefield; concessions the spoils. A pledge of stone is better than a regiment that eats.

1.3 III. Threats from Below

Deep Drakes are not simply big lizards. They are pressures that think: heat and hunger with a will, minds that push at the back of your teeth. The Aeler call the phenomenon **stone-press**. Symptoms begin as number-slips and end as people walking into shafts “to make the sums right.”

- **Signs:** condensation runs *uphill*; lamp-blue goes *flat*; bell-ring returns with a late second echo.
- **Defenses:** *null-bells* tuned to kill harmonics; *vein-salt* lines across thresholds; *cold writs* (etched silver plates) worn over the heart; teams that count breaths in rotation and swap counters mid-phrase to catch mind-drift.
- **Doctrine:** never descend alone; never let a single mind do the ledgers; never meet a Drake’s gaze in still air.

In play (fronts): **Stone-Press** [6], **Miasma Spread** [4], **Vent Failure** [4]. When *Stone-Press* fills, escalate *hallucinated ledgers* and *mis-signed keystones*; treat social scenes as if the room itself is an opponent.

1.4 IV. Law, Ovens, and Soft Power

Aeler law is **Tally-Law**: if it isn’t written, it isn’t owed; if it cannot bear weight, it isn’t promised. Their soft power rides four pillars:

- **Keystone Rights.** Control the piece that holds the whole. Aeler sign *keystone clauses*: maintenance for access, repair for rate. Break the clause, and the bridge “politely rests.”
- **Grain Surety.** Winter ovens and storage domes. In exchange for tithe windows and public pricing courts, cities adopt *Oven Charter Days*—no one starves while the charter bell rings.
- **Water & Flood.** Sluice math is power. Aeler sluicewarden guilds lease keys, not walls; they can open a city for trade faster than any army can take it.
- **Mint & Measure.** Calibrated weights, indelible dies. When a coin bears Aeler marks, courts sharpen.

In play (Strings): *keystone right*, *grain surety*, *sluice key*, *mint die*, *oven charter*. Cash a String to shift a negotiation’s DV by −1 or to force a *public bowl* (fairness hearing) before a blade is drawn.

1.5 V. People & Institutions

- **Bell-Chains.** Signal corps that read echo and carry news down-lines faster than runners. Their captaincy exams are held in the dark.
 - **Ledger-Kin.** Families who hold communal contracts and assign *scrips of air, heat, and lamp*. Marriages are audited as carefully as bridges.
 - **Vent Priors.** Engineers who treat airflow like liturgy. Their vestments are leather aprons burned in a pattern that maps the hold.
 - **Oven-Wardens.** Bakers as quartermasters; saints of bread and ration-line. In famine, they outrank colonels.
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1.6 VI. Aesthetics & Speech

- **Colors:** soot, iron, kiln-orange, glacial blue.
 - **Materials:** rough-split stone outside; mirror-polished keystones within; leather scored with counting notches; vellum that smells of lye and smoke.
 - **Proverbs:**
 - Stone keeps the promises you place on the right spot.
 - Count in the light, breathe in the turn.
 - A bridge is a treaty that learned to carry weight.
 - Heat is a loan; pay it back with bread.
 - **Names:** given + craft + keep: *Orra Vent-Prior of Third Stack*; *Ghent Bell-Captain of Red Echo*. Silence is punctuation; bells are syntax.
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1.7 VII. Relations & Rivalries

- **Ykrul.** Mutual respect where work meets weather. Rope meets ring; pass-oaths meet meadow concessions. Arguments end on the Board with a hand on the stone.
 - **Linns.** Sea people who love a keystone you can sail; Aeler admire their hull-geometry, distrust their ledgers.
 - **Lethai-al.** Tree-law and stone-law debate. Root and ridge agree more often than songs admit.
 - **Deep Drakes.** The foe that teaches humility. Victories are written in sealed doors and names of the lost.
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1.8 VIII. Strings & Tools (at the table)

- **Keystone Tablet.** Establishes or pauses a route; once/scene, convert a chase into a stand where *Position +1* for defenders who prepared.
- **Null-Bell.** On ring, cancel one *psychic push* or compel; costs *lamp-time* (mark gear wear or Fatigue).

- **Oven Charter Seal.** Force a *public bowl* in markets: one round of fair-price negotiation before violence can escalate.
 - **Sluice Key.** DV -1 on any operation hinging on water, flood, or sanitation; if abused, create *Public Outrage* [4].
 - **Air Scrip.** Negate a first underground suffocation/miasma consequence in a leg; on use, tick *Vent Failure* [1].
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1.9 IX. Adventure Seeds

1. **The Bell That Rang Twice.** A late echo signals stone-press in the east galleries. Audit the vent ledgers, find the mind-heat, and seal what thinks in the dark.
 2. **Bread Before Swords.** Southern grain is short; an Oven Charter is contested by syndics with sharp friends. Win the bowl, post the rate, keep the line fed.
 3. **Keystone Courtesy.** A bridge fails “politely” on the caravan road. Someone altered the tablet. Follow the chisels to a quiet war over a toll.
 4. **Mist Ward Winter.** Warding bells are silent and the fog eats fences. Repair the tower with farm help who distrust the ledger—and prove the sums keep them alive.
 5. **Drake’s Ledger.** A Deep Drake hoards *numbers*: stolen tallies, miscounted breaths, lost names. Bring back the books and the people they keep.
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1.10 X. Portraying the Aeler

Lead with craft and capacity. Show how a promise is a structure, not a sentence. Underground, make *air and light* into currencies; overhead, let contracts move armies without banners. When the deep presses, slow your words, count your breaths, and let the bell decide who speaks next.

1.11 XI. Sumwrights & Ledger-Compacts (Aelinnel Allies)

Aeler holds commonly retain **Aelinnel Sumwrights** as neutral keepers of ledgers. Copper-stylus and split-book in hand, they maintain the *two-ledger doctrine* (said/meant) and audit ovens, sluices, and mints. Sumwright contracts insist on:

- **Public Weights.** Scales, measures, and dies are tested at market-bell; falsifiers lose *Display Rights* (see XII) for a season.
- **Even Witness.** A Sumwright must read accounts to both parties aloud; silence equals assent for that line only.
- **Split Custody.** One ledger remains in the hold; one travels with the Sumwright caravan; discrepancies ring the *Red Bell*.

Strings: *sumwright retainer*, *public weight right*, *red-bell audit*. Cash to reduce a negotiation DV by -1 or force a fairness hearing before a blade is drawn.

1.12 XII. Commerce, Status, and Display

Aeler society is **collectivist and mercantile**: wealth flows first to commonworks (ovens, wards, roads, keystones), then returns as **Display Rights** that signal status. The more you contribute, the more you may wear, carve, or light.

- **Display Charter.** Public marks (metal trim, lamp-halos, keystone etching) are licensed by the ledger-kin. Fraudulent display is a civic shame and fined in grain or labor.
- **Rings of Account.** Narrow bands on tools and belts show contract classes kept: water, bread, bridge, mint. Three rings grant first voice in oven courts.
- **Quiet Wealth.** Private hoard without public work is suspect; *unworked shine* draws auditors and jokes in equal measure.

At the table: presenting a valid *Display Writ* improves *Position +1* in civic negotiations once/scene; on a miss, start *Audit Clock* [4].

1.13 XIII. Orders & Companies

- **Iron Avengers.** Traditionalists who enforce blood-feuds inscribed on keystones. They keep *Gray Lists* (names owing red silver) and are bound to answer when rung. Most cities tolerate them only under license.
- **Spirit Shield Warriors.** Ancestor-venerating protectors who wear *mask-helms* etched with lineage prayers. They guard vent-stacks, memorial galleries, and children's routes. When the *Stone-Press* rises, they stand first.
- **True Masons.** Wanderers of Acasia, Vhasia, and Viterra who repair ancient Aeler work—bridges, sluices, ovens, wards. Paid in tithe-windows, charter clauses, and a bed in any house that stands because of their hands.
- **Edgewalkers.** Opportunists who scan borders and markets for the gap that pays. Part scout, part broker, part thief-catcher, they sell *first knowledge* of breaks and bargains.
- **Reform Lodges.** Aeler who object to human exploitation concentrate in foothill freeholds and human cities. They press for *grain sureties without hooks*, teach oven math to neighbors, and vote their ledgers in favor of mixed councils.

Strings & Tools: *gray list token* (compels a parley before feud blows), *ancestor mask* (once/scene resist fear/psychic pressure), *mason's oath* (DV −1 on repair/restoration scores), *edgewalker marker* (create an opportunity clock on first contact).

1.14 XIV. Ethics & Dissent

Many Aeler reject exploitative arrangements with human protectorates. You find them teaching weights in river towns, serving as oven-wardens in mixed boroughs, and organizing *Charter Kitchens* where the bell rings regardless of ledger. In Mistland winters, these dissenters argue for *tithe holidays* and push to convert ward-labor into paid guild work. Their opponents answer with ledgers; their allies answer with bread.

1.15 XV. Play Hooks (Orders in Motion)

1. **Red Bell, Gray List.** An Iron Avenger ring forces a feud claim in a city that banned duels. Can you translate blood into bread-price and retire the name from the stone?
2. **Masks in the Miasma.** Spirit Shields request outside help to clear a vent gallery where Stone-Press twists numbers. Keep the count, keep your mind.
3. **Bridge Without Purse.** True Masons will repair a flood-broken span if a mixed council signs a Display Charter that elevates commonworks over private shine.
4. **Edge of Profit.** An Edgewalker offers first knowledge of a Syndicate price shock at the harbor. Take the lead, share the gain, or watch the sluice open for someone else.
5. **Charter Kitchen.** Reform Lodges move to open a winter oven without tithe. Broker grain, tame politics, and post the bell before the ledgers close the door.

Affinity (Aeler)

- **Stone & Breath:** +1 die to Craft, Tinker, and Survival rolls related to infrastructure, construction, or resource management. In underground/dense urban environments, +1 Position on rolls to navigate, maintain, or sabotage systems.
- **Deep Accounting:** Once per scene, you can spend 1 Boon to “audit” a situation - ask one question about hidden resources, costs, or dependencies that the GM must answer truthfully.

Starting Talent

Vent Prior’s Training (3 XP - Minor Talent):

- Requirements: Craft 1+, Wits 2+
- Benefits:
 - +1 die to rolls involving air quality, ventilation, structural integrity, or underground navigation.
 - Know the “Nine Measures” (light, draft, echo, etc.) - can detect environmental hazards or hidden passages with a successful Wits + Notice roll (DV 3).
 - Once per scene, can “read” a structure like a ledger, gaining +1 die to rolls to understand its construction, weaknesses, or maintenance needs.

Key Talents

Mint & Measure Path

Calibrated Weight (4 XP - Minor Talent):

- +1 die to rolls involving trade, negotiation, or detecting counterfeits.
- Once per scene, can force a “public bowl” (fairness hearing) in a market or negotiation scene by spending 1 Boon. This shifts the DV of the negotiation by -1 and gives you +1 Position.

Keystone Clause (6 XP - Major Talent):

- Requirements: Calibrated Weight

- Benefits:
 - Can establish “keystone rights” over a piece of infrastructure, contract, or resource. This gives you a String (see below).
 - Once per scene, can “pause” a route, contract, or service you control, converting a chase into a stand (Position +1 for defenders who prepared) or forcing a negotiation.

Oven-Warden’s Path

Charter Bell (5 XP - Minor Talent):

- Requirements: Presence 2+, Command 1+
- Benefits:
 - In a crisis involving survival (famine, shelter, etc.), can organize communities with a successful Presence + Command roll (DV 3). Success grants +1 Position to all allies for survival-related actions.
 - Once per scene, can invoke an “Oven Charter” - force a public bowl in a crisis situation, ensuring fair distribution of resources or preventing violence.

Vent-Captain’s Path

Bell-Chain Signal (4 XP - Minor Talent):

- Requirements: Wits 2+, Notice 1+
- Benefits:
 - +1 die to rolls involving communication, signals, or detecting hidden information.
 - Can establish a “bell-chain” communication network with allies. Once per scene, can send a message instantly to any ally within the network, regardless of distance (as long as there’s a path).

Strings (Aeler)

Aeler characters accumulate “Strings” - markers of influence and control over infrastructure, contracts, and resources. These work like Bonds but are more concrete and economic.

- **Keystone Right:** Control a critical piece of infrastructure (bridge, sluice, ventilation shaft). Can “pause” it once/scene.
- **Grain Surety:** Control a food source or storage. Can force fair distribution or gain leverage in negotiations.
- **Sluice Key:** Control water flow or sanitation. Can shift DV by -1 on operations involving water/flood.
- **Mint Die:** Control a source of currency or measurement. Can force a public bowl or detect counterfeits.
- **Oven Charter:** Control a public resource (oven, shelter, etc.). Can invoke charter protections.

Patron Relationships

Aeler typically bond with Patrons related to **Order, Infrastructure, Wealth, or Craft** (Sacred Geometry, Clockwork Monad, Mab, The Witness, Oath of Flame & Light). Their approach to patronage is often contractual - they make deals and expect precise repayment.

Complications

- **Stone-Press Susceptibility:** When in deep underground environments or high-stress situations, make a Spirit test (DV 3) or suffer -1 die to rolls due to hallucinations or mental pressure.
- **Ledger Dependency:** You rely on precise accounting. If separated from your ledgers/records for more than a day, suffer -1 Position on rolls involving planning or resource management.
- **Surety Obligation:** You've guaranteed resources to a community. If you fail to deliver, mark 2 segments on your Obligation clock with your primary Patron (or gain a permanent Complication if you don't have one).

Sample Aeler Character

Orra Vent-Prior of Third Stack

- Body 2, Wits 3, Spirit 2, Presence 2
- Skills: Craft 2, Notice 2, Survival 1, Tinker 1
- Talents: Vent Prior's Training, Bell-Chain Signal
- Affinity: Stone & Breath
- Strings: Keystone Right (on the main elevator shaft to the surface), Sluice Key (controls the water reclamation system)
- Complication: Stone-Press Susceptibility

Adventure Hooks

1. **The Bell That Rang Twice:** Investigate a malfunctioning signal system in an Aeler hold that's causing dangerous delays. Is it sabotage, a Deep Drake, or something worse?
2. **Bread Before Swords:** A city's Oven Charter is being contested by a powerful syndicate. Can you ensure the winter ovens stay open and fair?
3. **Keystone Courtesy:** A bridge has "politely rested" - someone altered the keystone tablet. Track down the culprit through the trail of chisel marks and contract disputes.
4. **Mist Ward Winter:** The Mistland wards are failing and the fog is eating the farms. Repair the towers with locals who distrust Aeler "ledgers" - and prove the math keeps them alive.
5. **Charter Kitchen:** A Reform Lodge wants to open a winter oven without tithe. Broker grain, tame politics, and post the bell before the ledgers close the door.

Integration with Core Rules

Deep Drakes as Fronts

When encountering Deep Drakes, use the provided fronts:

- **Stone-Press** [6]
- **Miasma Spread** [4]
- **Vent Failure** [4]

When Stone-Press fills, escalate with hallucinated ledgers and mis-signed keystones.

Tally-Law Mechanics

Aeler law (Tally-Law) can be represented through:

- Using Strings system for contractual obligations
- Applying -1 DV in negotiations when proper documentation exists
- Creating clocks for “Audit [4]” when contracts are violated

Display Rights

Aeler status through Display Rights can be tracked as:

- Minor Asset (4 XP): Public Display Charter - +1 Position in civic negotiations
- Major Asset (8 XP): Rings of Account - First voice in oven courts, DV -1 on resource management