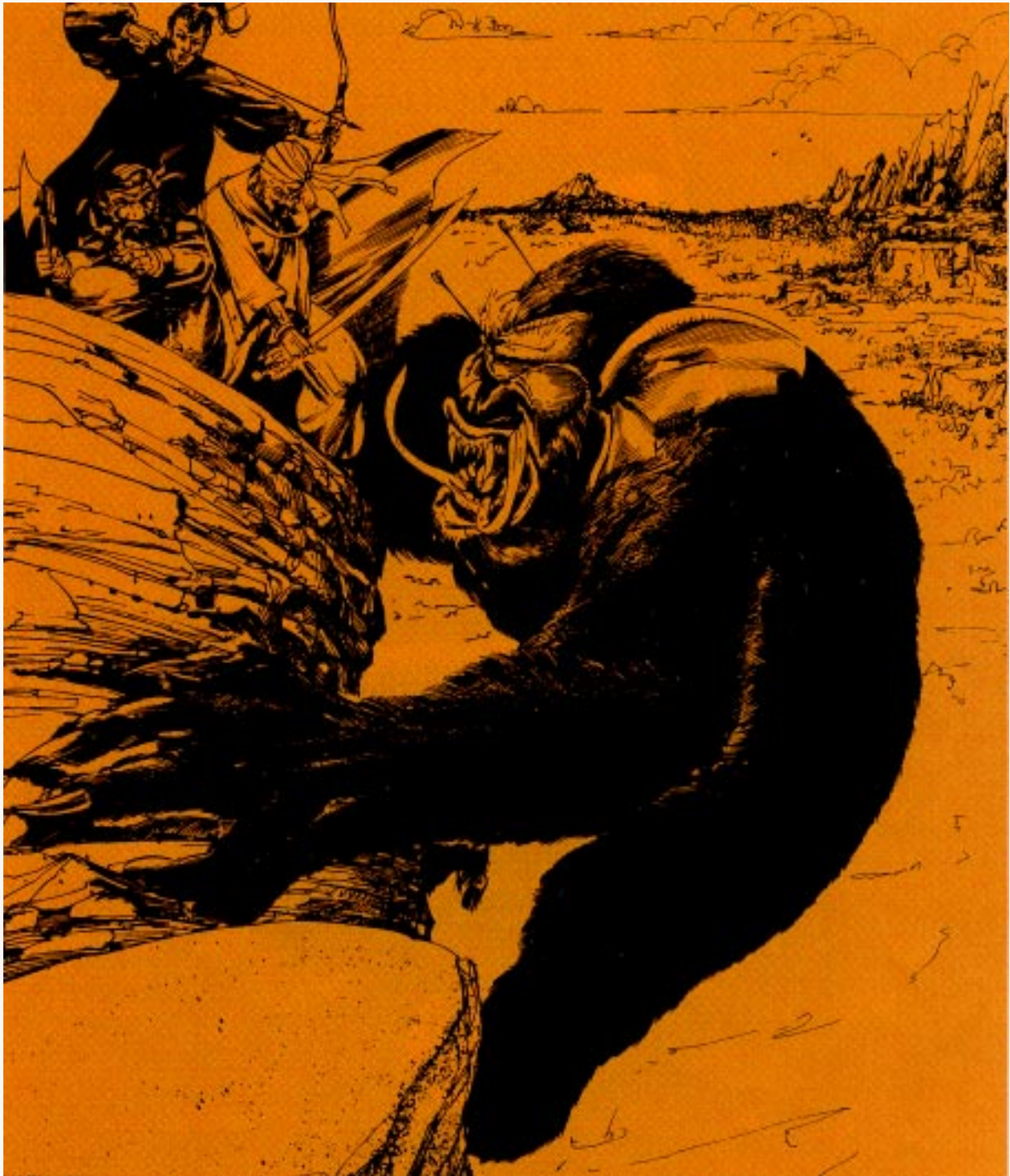


CAMPAIGN JOURNAL:

Campaign ideas for the AD&D® AL-QADIM® setting

by Gregory W. Detwiler

Artwork by Karl Waller



Arabian Adventures Galore!

The AL-QADIM® supplement for the AD&D® game is a sizeable campaign world, whether taken alone or with additional source materials (such as the *Golden Voyages* supplement). Some of its many potential adventures are traditional in the fantasy genre, while others are unique to the land. This article lists major scenario possibilities, with suggestions on which PC classes are best suited to each adventure.

Exploration and trade

Like Sinbad, adventurers may travel over vast distances to find adventure, generally in areas the party has never seen before. The search can be purely for knowledge (which will be rare unless a rich NPC is bankrolling the party), for sources of treasure to loot, or for trade. After all, Sinbad was a merchant though he rarely brought cargoes to port. In general, such a trip involves exploring uninhabited regions and searching for trade outlets where there are human or demihuman inhabitants.

Historically, the Arabs were great traders. Considerable cultural and mercantile interchange occurred between them and their Christian neighbors during the periods of peace that separated *jihads* (holy wars) or Crusades. They sent explorers and trading fleets to both Africa and the Orient, putting the the Arabs in a lucrative position as middlemen between the buyers from the West and the goods of the South and East.

The great European voyages of the Age of Exploration were motivated by a desire to get to the goods directly, avoiding Arab middlemen. At that time, the Middle East was dominated by the Turkish Ottoman Empire, which was almost constantly at war with at least some part of Europe for several hundred years. If the Turks had continued to allow trade between East and West, the Americas might never have been discovered, at least not until the Aztecs and Incas had become technologically advanced enough to face the Europeans on their own terms.

If you accept the AL-QADIM setting as the FORGOTTEN REALMS® worlds version of the Middle East, your PCs can set off from Zakhara on voyages to another part of the Realms or Kara-Tur. A campaign with plenty of travel and character turnover would be an excellent excuse to mix PC classes from various realms. A trade-hungry merchant-rogue could count among his crew a knowledge-seeking Western mage, a corsair captain, a masterless samurai (ronin), a hakima to keep an eye on potential customers, and a collection of mercenaries, including western fighters, native-born askars, or Oriental bushi. For the owner of the vessel, just keeping this motley crew from cutting each other's throats can be an ongoing adventure in itself.

Even if the DM restricts himself to what the medieval Arabs actually did, the campaign can still expand beyond Zakhara's borders. In DRAGON® issue #189, several articles on Africa, the Orient, and India discuss how to use those cultures and their equipment in a standard AD&D campaign ("The Dark Continent" by David Howery, "Arms & Armor of Africa" and "Rhino's Armor, Tiger's Claws" by Michael J. Varhola, and Tom Griffith's "The Other Orientals"). Africa in particular is well-covered with regards to trading goods, monstrous opposition, and the types of societies that could be expected. Its legends and lore were described in "An African Genesis," by Brady English, in issue #191, and the warriors of Africa were given kits to rival the kits of Zakhara in "Real Warriors Ride Elephants!" by Michael John Wybo III in issue #195.

If your party wants to go on trade expeditions, the corsair and merchant-rogue kits are naturals. Any type of warrior can go along as hired protection; if the trading vessel or caravan is trying to open up a nation's markets to the homeland, even a mamluk might be assigned as a sort of military liaison or ambassador. Remember, mamluks have civil service as well as military training.



Some rogues could go along as hired help, even if they have ulterior motives. Sa'luks, holy slayers (under cover), and matruds could all be present. Barbers can serve as traveling medics and groomers, with rawuns as entertainment. Beggar-thieves never hire on as help, as this would mean doing actual work. They will hang around the city gates when the caravan blows into town, but cross-country adventuring is not this kit's strong suit.

For magical protection, the mainstream wizard and priest kits may be hired on or assigned for really important journeys. A hakima is particularly useful for dealing with potential clients. Kahins and some types of mystics (anchorites and hermits) generally cannot be persuaded to go along, and moralists may antagonize the customers, which is not good business practice. Unless the party is searching for magical items, spell components, or other arcane items, the spell-casting classes will not be emphasized in this type of adventure. If a caravan is lost or attacked in the desert, however, a sha'ir who successfully calls upon the jann for help will be greatly appreciated.

Warfare

Several types of war are possible in the AL-QADIM setting. The first is the war of national aggrandizement, the type of war that goes on everywhere. Warrior classes will be ascendant here, especially the mamluks, who are the best leadership material. Wizards who specialize in combat spells will also be important, whether the mage is question is an elemental mage who tosses the ever-popular *fireball* around or a sha'ir who has bound a war-monger genie to his service. The priest classes in this type of war are stuck with

their usual job of combat medics, though they may also help maintain morale (as do rawuns). Hakimas may serve as advisors, and they will be particularly useful in ferreting out enemy spies. In general, the thief classes will simply fade into the woodwork or lurk on the outskirts as scavengers, though desperate matruds may be hired on as cannon fodder, and barbers as additional medics. Holy slayers will not be much used, unless the national war is also a *jihad*.

The religious war or *jihad* is the type of conflict most commonly associated with the Middle East. The main motives are to spread the faith and exterminate infidels. Surprisingly, most priest classes will still be stuck in the old medic role in a *jihad* because only moralists will have the kind of narrow-minded fanaticism necessary to stir up true religious fervor in the troops. Imagine troops storming a castle wall with suicidal zest after hearing an ethoist say, "Those guys in there aren't all that bad, but they're not quite right, either!" Aside from rallying to fight a religiously intolerant attacker, ethoists and pragmatists leave much to be desired as morale-boosters in a holy war.

As with "conventional" warfare, any type of warrior class may qualify for a *jihad*, but the farisan will really stand out. In a nation ruled by a theocracy, they may even usurp the more professional mamluks in command, whether the latter like it or not. This could lead to some political intrigue, which can disrupt the war effort. The proper balance would be for the relatively intellectual mamluks to control military operations, with the farisan in the role of spearheads, leading glorious charges, storming parties, and the like. Even if this arrangement was negotiated

as a temporary compromise, it could wind up being permanent, as farisan who constantly lead glorious charges often wind up missing from the ranks of the living.

Mercenaries are uncommon in a true religious war unless they are co-religionists with the prime movers of the war (and if they are, you'd think they would be willing to fight without pay for the sake of the faith). Even sorcerers may find themselves in less prominent positions, as clerical miracles are given precedence over scholarly magic. Priests will look with particular suspicion on the genie-contacting sha'ir, both because sha'irs communicate with supernatural beings and because sha'irs may (if lucky) use priest spells as well as wizard magic. As with normal warfare, most of the rogue classes won't be of much help, except as medics (barbers), morale-boosters (rawuns), and plain cannon fodder. There is, of course, one major exception to this bias against rogues.

In the holy war, the holy slayers really shine forth in full glory. Each (theoretically) fearless assassin is a one-man or one-woman commando team, ready, willing, and able to cut down an enemy general or other leader at the Grandfather's or Grandmother's command. Indeed, without at least a religious cold war going on, the holy slayer will not have much to do in the campaign.

If any PC rises to high enough rank to command the services of holy slayers, a word of warning is in order. In the example we are discussing, it is assumed that a moralist faction is trying to impose its religious beliefs over the entire region. One religion will probably have no more than one fellowship of holy slayers. Since holy slayers are assassins for their faith, anyone who tries to beat down all other faiths will have every other fellowship of holy slayers in the region gunning for him! In this case, a holy slayer of the crusading aggressor may come home to report success, only to discover his leader mangled by a collection of jade jambiyas, obsidian long swords, blowgun darts, red-feathered javelins, etc.

Finally, we have frontier warfare, which ranges from repelling local barbarians to launching punitive expeditions against the hillfolk to raiding the locals for slaves. In Zakhara, the nomads of the wastelands, whether desert or steppes, will be primary targets. In such a campaign, you could have an entire party made up of desert riders resisting the imperial offensive. If weaker cultures are included in the campaign, you could simulate the historical slave trade the Arabs pioneered.

Using Arabic-style armies to fight the armies of other non-Western regions will make for a fairly even contest. The AD&D 1st Edition *Oriental Adventures* supplement states that the lightly armored and more mobile warriors of the East are able to outmaneuver and destroy the heavy and clumsy *gajin* forces of the West. Simi-



larly, in DRAGON® issue #189, David Howerly states in "The Dark Continent" that native African armies are superior to heavy Western forces on their home ground due to the heat and local diseases. Disease would still be a problem for a Zakharan army, but in matters of heat, ease of movement, and maneuverability, both sides would have equal ability.

Both Arabic and Oriental (including Indian) armies have a far greater proportion of cavalry than their Western counterparts, and such forces would perform equally well in African deserts or savannahs. The jungle blocks the use of pole arms and other large weapons, but such weapons aren't used by cavalry anyway. Of course, cavalymen aren't likely to be wildly enthusiastic about being dismounted for combat, no matter how practical it may be in the jungle or rain forest. Far-East enthusiasts should note that these factors work for the armies of Kara-Tur and the Realms' equivalent of India as well as for the armies of Zakhara, should the Dark Continent be invaded from the East instead of the North. A local band of guerrillas playing hide-and-seek in the jungle with a ninja clan would make a very interesting scenario, indeed.

In the case of slave raids, a more likely strategy than out-and-out invasion would be normalized trade with some of the stronger kingdoms, with Zakharan goods paid for in part by slaves. Here, the local kings can either raid their neighbors or simply sell off the less desirable of their own subjects. Even if a colonial invasion is planned, the Zakharans could go the route of Julius Caesar in Gaul and bribe local allies to help them against other tribes, negating the home-team advantage by picking off the native tribes one at a time. When the long-standing enemies are crushed, the Zakharans can finish off the conquest with a treacherous attack on their erstwhile allies, who would now be standing alone to face a foreign army by now well acclimated to the tropical environment. Dirty pool, perhaps, but that's the way empires are created.

Intrigue

True role-players favor scenarios of intrigue above all others, with negotiation and a battle of wits taking precedence over spells and swordplay. In intrigue-based adventures, the warrior types are deemphasized, unless there is intrigue in the military high command or an attempt to spark mutinies among the troops. Mamluks and possibly farisan will be the most important soldiers here, due to their connections. Spell-casters also are not visibly prominent, though the casting of divination and mind-control spells behind the scenes can be decisive. The hakima will be the most important priest kit in an intrigue-heavy campaign, for obvious reasons, while the peculiar resources of sha'irs (such as gen and genie spies) will also be useful.

When a glib tongue is the weapon of choice, the rogue classes really shine as the decisive PCs. Thieves, especially sa'luks, will be tactically important, as someone who sneaks into a home to steal something can also sneak into a home to eavesdrop on a private conversation. Beggar-thieves, matruds, and holy slayers can perform the same function. As the bards of Zakhara, rawuns may use their popularity and talent to go places that most people are banned from, performing in (and spying on) even the mansions and palaces of the wealthy and powerful.

In a political campaign, it is often important to get among the common people, whether to hear their opinions or to spread rumors and dissension. Here, the barbers and beggar-thieves truly come into their own. Barbers are adept at spreading rumors and relaying information between various covert groups, while unobtrusive beggar-thieves can overhear many a conversation in the marketplace.

The marketplace is a rich site for intrigue, and the merchant-rogue has a major role in political conflicts as well. The successful ones are important taxpayers who may shell out extra money for political favors. Merchant-rogues who sell silks and other luxury items for the rich may even be personal acquaintances of the upper class. As with barbers, they can relay messages between customers belonging to different factions, whether as simple go-betweens or to coordinate their operations. Next to rawuns, successful merchant-rogues are most likely to have access to the ruling class. Finally, their abundance of wealth and equipment enables them to bankroll or supply any dissident group.

Aside from their abilities as spies, holy

slayers also will be useful in their normal role as assassins. In fact, aside from holy wars, intrigue is their main field of action. Not only can they remove troublesome opponents, but a low-key killing that is not public knowledge—but is nevertheless mentioned behind the scenes—can intimidate wavering allies or frighten opponents to insure their loyalty or neutrality. In a purely political campaign taking place in palaces and mansions, the holy slayers may do what little actual killing takes place during the adventures.

Blood feuds and vendettas

This combination of warfare and intrigue is a private struggle between individuals, organizations, or tribes. Families, tribes, holy-slayer fellowships, and specific religions are all potential enemies in blood feuds. For religions, vendettas resemble a holy war, except that the enemy does not have his country's resources behind him.

The most common cause of a blood feud is real or imagined slight that sullies the honor of a particular family or nomadic tribe. This grievance can become the source of a single adventure or can be a background menace throughout the campaign. Eventually, though, things should come to a head, if only because the PCs will grow tired of being attacked by the same nomadic tribe every time they set foot in the desert, or of fighting off hired thugs every week in city alleyways.

As stated in the AL-QADIM rulebook, honor is crucial in Zakhara. The only precedent in the AD&D game is the honor-point system of Kara-Tur: "First and foremost, if any character, no matter what race or character class, ever allows his honor to fall below zero, that character is out of the game. The player should crum-



ple up the character record sheet and toss it away" (page 35, *Oriental Adventures*). Presumably, the erring PC whose honor is tarnished has committed *seppuku*. In the Land of Fate, no one would kill himself over a matter of honor, but a PC can be slain by a family member or a fellow tribesman seeking to restore the group's honor.

As in *Oriental Adventures*, true role-playing is much more important in Zakhara than it is in the standard pseudo-European settings. Just looking at a host's unmarried daughter the wrong way can get a PC in trouble, and any PC based on the stereotypical barbarian who wenches in every town is not going to last very long in the Land of Fate. An offended party will take revenge as soon as possible, preferably when the victim least expects it. If Osman the camel-driver has been ogling a veiled woman who has a barber in the family, Osman should either grow a long beard or shave himself, since he will never know who might make an "accidental" slip with a sharp razor at his throat.

Bigger organizations provide the potential for any number of feuds. For instance, the Brotherhood of the True Flame kills all elemental fire mages who will not join their organization, and any PC who turns down an invitation to become a member can expect *fireballs* whizzing by at the most inopportune times. Of course, the Brotherhoods policy could easily boomerang if it surfaces too often and too violently. The general populace considers all elemental mages to be evil, solely because of the Brotherhood. Given Zakhara's obsession with honor, how long would it take before all the other elemental mages decide to redeem the honor of their profession by turning the Brotherhood of the

True Flame into a horrible example? The same goes for any other evil wizard organizations the DM may create.

Vendettas can also start when a mosque is defiled or ransacked. Generally, moralist priests will be the prime movers for this sort of adventure, with members of the other priest kits being victims or at most hitting back in self-defense. Temple feuds provide plenty of action for farisan, and the adventure could end with an armed clash between armies of these Zakharan paladins belonging to rival sects. In general, though, religious squabbles don't play as well here as in the standard AD&D setting, due to the greater tolerance for opposing faiths in the Land of Fate. Racial vendettas are even more unlikely, unless some outlandish foreigners unwisely drag in their old regional feuds. Foreigners who do so usually receive a sharp lesson in local etiquette at the hands of the authorities.

Again, the holy slayers shine in religious feuds. The PCs are still seen as "enemies of the faith," while the low-key nature of the violence makes it less likely that the forces of law and order will become involved. Conversely, one of the PCs may be a holy slayer who disobeyed orders for some selfish reason (like survival), thus drawing the wrath of the entire fellowship down on the party and eventually leading to a major battle at the fellowship's headquarters. If not, the party should resign itself to an endless string of stolen or ruined supplies, mounts and pack animals run off, homes burned down, and increasing numbers of friends, family, allies, hirelings, and henchmen who develop slit throats—to say nothing of frequent attacks on the PCs themselves.

Genies

At first glance, this seems like a catchall for all sorts of other adventures, with only a particular creature type to bind them together. Veterans of the AD&D game may even compare it with the misadventures of those who deal or tangle with fiends. However, the Land of Fate gives its own flavor to geniekind, making them more than just another set of supernatural monsters. The primary reason for this is the sha'ir wizard kit.

The advantage of being a sha'ir is that you can get genies to do things for you. The major disadvantage is that, sooner or later, the genies will want some favors in return. All genies, from the jann on up, expect to be rewarded for their efforts—if not immediately, then sometime in the future. Sha'ir PCs who rise in levels can expect to go on various missions that the genies would like to see done.

Not complying with the wishes of the genies has several nasty side effects. Attack is one of them. The party will probably get involved in the fight as well, often to discover that they gain no reward for the expenditure of blood, spells, and vital equipment other than saving the sha'ir's hide. In many cases when a "business deal" turns sour and results in conflict, the sha'ir and his party will gain no experience points for their victory, assuming there is one. The same thing happens when battling monsters a deity sends to punish the sha'ir for sending his gen after priest spells.

It is the second disadvantage that makes requests by genies look like *quest* or *geas* spells. If the sha'ir does nothing to repay his supernatural benefactors, then all genies will refuse to deal with him in the future. This boycott effectively destroys the sha'ir as a viable character, turning him into nothing more than a magic-user who can take forever to have a spell ready to cast. If the PC party has at least one sha'ir along, they can expect at least a few genie-sponsored adventures once they reach mid-level, often with no more reward than the sha'ir being allowed to continue making use of his powers. Who said PC parties have to turn a profit on all their adventures?

The flavor of Zakhara gives that realm a style all its own, and that flavor infuses the adventures that take place there. If the DM is fully aware of this difference between the Land of Fate and other AD&D realms, he can use it to ensure his gaming group will have plenty of surprises in a wide variety of adventures. This is, of course, what the game is all about. So plan carefully: the PCs have no Fate but the Fate which the DM gives them!

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