

G U R P S

# FANTASY

*The Magical World of Yrth*

SECOND EDITION

BY KIRK TATE AND JANET NAYLOR

**STEVE JACKSON** GAMES

# GURPS FANTASY

*Second Edition*  
*The Magical World of Yrth*

By Kirk Tate and Janet Naylor

Based on Material by Steve Jackson

Edited by Loyd Blankenship, Steve Jackson and Creede Lambard

Additional Material by Aaron Allston, Loyd Blankenship, Jeff George, Steve Jackson, Caroline Julian, Chris McCubbin, Sean Nicolson, Steffan O'Sullivan and Alex Von Thorn

Cover by Kirk Reinert

Illustrated by Donna Barr, Angela Bostick, Larry Dixon, C. Bradford Gorby, Rick Lowry, Larry McDougall, Kyle Miller and George "Speed" Webber

Map by Mike Naylor

GURPS System Design by Steve Jackson

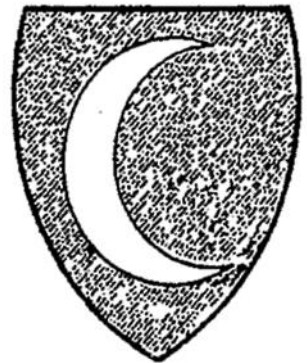
Loyd Blankenship, Managing Editor

Carl Anderson, Production Manager

Page Layout and Typography by Loyd Blankenship

Proofreading by Monica Stephens and Kerry Havas

Playtesting and Comments: Anthony Affrunti, Marc Barnett, Whitney Blankenship, Duane Collins, Nancy Feldman, Neal Feldman, Dana Holm, Scott Paul Maykrantz, Kathy McClure, Scott McClure, Mike Naylor, Brett Slocum and the Game Alliance of Salem



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# INTRODUCTION

The world you are about to enter will appear both familiar and strange. Yrth (pronounced “eerth”) is a world much like our own. Its sun and solitary moon appear the same, although the stars are totally different. The year is the same length and the seasons come and go just as they do on Earth. The flora and fauna of Yrth are, for the most part, identical to Earth's. Even the human cultures of Yrth have their roots in our own past — the countryside is dotted with great mosques and towering cathedrals. Indeed, there is much here that a modern Earthling would recognize.

## About GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of the *GURPS* system. Our address is SJ Games, Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! Resources now available include:

*Roleplayer.* This bimonthly newsletter includes new rules, variants, new races, beasts, information on upcoming releases, scenario ideas and more. Ask your game retailer, or write for subscription information.

*New supplements and adventures.* We're always working on new material, and we'll be happy to let you know what's available. A current catalog is available for an SASE.

*Errata.* Everyone makes mistakes, including us - but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata sheets for all *GURPS* releases, including this book, are always available from SJ Games; be sure to include an SASE with your request.

*Q&A.* We do our best to answer any game question accompanied by an SASE.

*Gamer input.* We value your comments. We will consider them, not only for new products, but also when we update this book on later printings!

*BBS.* For those of you who have computers, SJ Games operates a BBS with discussion areas for several games, including *GURPS*. Much of the playtest feedback for new products comes from the BBS. It's up 24 hours a day at 512-447-4449, at 300, 1200 or 2400 baud. Give us a call!

## Page References

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition*. Any page reference that begins with a B refers to a page in the *Basic Set* - e.g., p. B102 means p. 102 of the *Basic Set, Third Edition*.

Any page reference that begins with an M refers to a page in *GURPS Magic*.

Yet Yrth is *different*. It is a magical place, rich in mana. The wilds of Yrth are prowled not only by lions, tigers and bears, but by gryphons, dragons and other magical beasts. Evil spirits rise from ancient crypts to stalk the night. And humans, the most common intelligent race, are not the only people inhabiting this land. They must share Yrth with Elves, Dwarves, Orcs, Goblins and numerous others. In some areas, they coexist peacefully; in other locates, they do not. Yrth's whole history was changed by a tremendous magical backfire, the Banestorm (see p. 6), whose effects spanned not just continents, but dimensions. It was this event that brought humans to Yrth.

Here is a place where our earthly fantasies are reality. To one who is jaded and unimpressed by our own world, Yrth is a land full of wonders. Its deserts are just a little hotter, its winters colder, its forests greater and its mountains taller and more foreboding. Sorcerers weave arcane magics and brave warriors battle creatures out of legend. In Yrth you will find adventure, romance, intrigue and mystery. Those who yearn to perform great deeds may do so — if they have the courage — for this is a world built on a heroic scale, full of awesome challenges, great dangers and even greater rewards.

## About This Book

*GURPS Fantasy* is organized into six major sections. The *History* chapter outlines the major events of the millennium since the Banestorm, and includes a timeline. *Cultures* describes the feudal society of Yrth's humans, Islam, Christianity and the most prominent nonhuman cultures. *Kingdoms* provides detailed descriptions of several important nations, including information on governments, history, important locations, geography and famous personages. *Characters* contains *GURPS* statistics for Elves, Dwarves, Goblins, Halflings, Orcs, Reptile Men and other intelligent races, as well as jobs, skills and character types. *Creatures* describes some of Yrth's unique fauna. The *Fantasy Campaign* discusses how to run a fantasy campaign and build your own fantasy world, and provides suggestions for scenarios and campaigns set in Yrth.

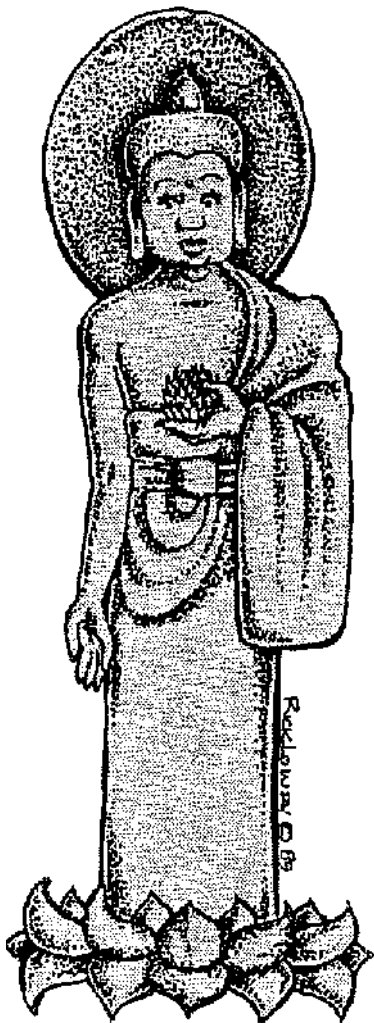
## Ytarria

This book concentrates on the continent of Ytarria, located in Yrth's northern hemisphere. There are other lands across the eastern and southern oceans, occasionally visited by trading vessels, but these regions will be left to the GM and to further supplements.

Ytarria itself is about the same size as North America — roughly 3,000 miles across. Its climate is basically temperate, but it is sufficiently large to have weather ranging from arctic to sub-tropical. There are six major kingdoms — five human and one dwarven — and a host of smaller principalities and independent settlements. There are also substantial wild lands and unexplored regions. Of the five human kingdoms, Megalos and Caithness are Christian; al-Haz and



al-Wazif are Moslem; and Cardiel is nominally Christian with a significant Moslem and pagan population. Other familiar peoples and cultures, most notably Jews, Chinese, Zoroastrians and Hindus, are represented by close-knit minority groups spread throughout the continent.



## Religion

Some of the best roleplaying campaigns have a religious element, yet no subject is more controversial. Fantasy writers (of both books and games) often take the safe way out, providing superficial mumbo-jumbo in place of religion. Frankly, we find this unsatisfying, if not actually obnoxious. Many roleplayers seem to agree; given the chance, they would rather be paladins of a “real” faith than of the Temple of Google the Mostly Omnipotent.

Therefore — with the hope that we do not offend greatly — we have presented three of Earth's major faiths, by name, as some might have developed in a world where magic was real. These depictions come largely from history, partially from the favorite stereotypes of fantasy literature, and lastly from the imaginations of the writers! For those interested in more detail, we recommend Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (for fantasy) and any good text on the crusades (for history). We have found Durant's *The Age of Faith* especially useful. The imagination, as always, is up to you.

## How Religion Works

The true nature of religion in Yrth, or any other game-world, is up to the GM's conscience, whim, and/or sense of drama. Some possibilities:

*Nonintervention.* Divine powers do not enter human affairs. Good works and prayer may help you in the afterlife, but no one will ever know; they'll have to take it on faith.

*Occasional intervention.* Once in a while, sincere prayer will be good for a die-roll modifier, or a modest little miracle. The players should never be sure whether divine intervention has actually occurred. There should always be a “natural explanation.”

*Magical aid.* Clerics of certain faiths receive an automatic bonus to learn spells related to their religion. See *Magic*, pp. 84-86, for more information.

*Active deities.* The prayers of the innocent and holy can literally work miracles, up to and including thunderstorms, partings of oceans, and angels with flaming swords. Such aid is not granted on a die-roll, but is based on the GM's opinion of the worthiness of the petitioner (“God does not roll dice.”).

If this is the case, then forces of evil such as Satan are also real, and will actively seek to corrupt and destroy — Satan is particularly interested in the souls of mages and of churchmen who do not truly believe in their own faith. Souls occasionally return from the afterlife (either heaven or hell) to warn or threaten those still on Yrth.

*One True Way.* Any of the above — but the benefits are confined to a single faith. Others are simply false creeds.

## About the Authors

### Kirk Tate

Kirk was the author of *GURPS Ice Age*. Born in Lubbock, Texas, and raised an Air Force brat, he has been a roleplayer and GM for ten years and a wargamer for more years than he cares to remember. He holds a B.A. in history from the University of Texas, where his interests ranged from ancient Greece to modern Mexico. Along with gaming, his hobbies include rugby, fantasy literature and painting miniatures.

Kirk currently resides in Austin, Texas, where he is attending law school and selling his soul to the devil. He lives with his wife, Deborah, and an incredibly ugly couch named Egbert.

### Janet Naylor

Janet Naylor resides in Schenectady, New York, with her husband, Michael, three dogs, three cars, two computers and more books and games than she can find shelves to put them away on. She is an Assistant Sysop on CompuServe's RPG-ames Forum (type “GO RPGAMES”), and has been roleplaying and GMing for eight or nine years. She holds an M.S. in Computer Science from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and a B.S. (also in Computer Science) from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Her current hobbies include reading science fiction and fantasy literature, painting dragons, watching Japanese animation, writing, driving up and down the Eastern Seaboard, and playing RPGs of all sorts both on and off the computer.



## The Banestorm

Once upon a time, Yrth was home to the elder races — the Elves and their rivals, the Dwarves — and to the nomadic, barbaric Orcs.

The Dwarves either enslaved or ignored the Orcs; most of the Elves simply avoided them. But one group — the Dark Elves — was offended by the Orcs' very existence. Their best wizards worked for years on a “final solution.” It is perhaps just as well that the details are not known, but the eldritch Elves fashioned what they thought was a great summoning, intended to bring a merciless bane upon the Orcs.

It failed... badly.

The Dark Elves' spell backfired. Most of their communities (and those of many others) were destroyed in an instant — blasted by a force that left only charred, mana-dead scars on the land. Others of the elder folk suffered likewise. But the Dark Elves did get their “bane.” Several banes, in fact... new races, hostile to the Orcs, but just as offensive to others. The Banestorm was the greatest magical backfire in the history of Yrth.

Thus it was, 1000 years ago, that men, Goblins, Reptile Men, Kobolds and other races came to Yrth. Plucked from their home worlds by the capricious power invoked by the Elves, they found themselves in a new land. Yrth would never be the same.



# The Spread of Humanity

Men were by far the most numerous of the newcomers. The force that brought them to Yrth manifested itself as a huge, unnatural storm, which Yrth came to know as the Banestorm. Ships “lost at sea,” found safe haven on unfamiliar shores. Entire *villages* — torn from Earth by sorcerous fire or flood — were transplanted intact to Yrth. Individuals caught in a sudden tempest while on a journey never reached their destinations. Most of this occurred between the years 1050 and 1200 A.D. — the time of Earth's Crusades.

The northern part of Ytarria was settled primarily by men from western Europe. These newcomers found their feudal culture ideally suited to the challenges of their new environment. Strong, charismatic individuals quickly attracted followers and acquired territory. Dozens of tiny “kingdoms” were founded, often only to be gobbled up by more powerful neighbors. All of the former Europeans found unity, however, in their common faith — Christianity.

To the south roamed Moslem tribesmen. Scattered over a wide area, the followers of Islam adopted a nomadic lifestyle — traveling with their herds, raiding their neighbors, and meeting at the few permanent towns to trade. In the towns, however, the rich culture of the Abbasid empire survived. Small groups of scholars and holy men recorded and preserved the science, philosophy and literature of Islam. The libraries and universities they founded are among Yrth's greatest storehouses of knowledge.

In addition to Christians and Moslems, men and women from dozens of other cultures were transplanted to Yrth. Significant numbers of Jews settled in both Islamic and Christian lands. In the frozen wastes north of the Whitehood mountains, pagan Celts and Scandinavians merged into fierce, nomadic clans.

And in the far northwest, “immigrants” from the Orient — mostly Korea and Japan — founded the realm of Sahud. Here and there were also groups of Chinese, Indians, Africans, Germans and Slavs. Most of these smaller groups were quickly absorbed, but occasionally travelers will still come across an isolated village where almost all of the inhabitants have black skin, worship Krishna and Vishnu, or speak undiluted German.

## The Rise of Megalos

The great city of Megalos was founded in the year 1200 A.D., by Simon Menelaus. Menelaus was a charismatic man and a great mage... whose goal was to rule all of Yrth. During his lifetime, he built an empire whose capital was the greatest and richest city in Ytarria — a status it still retains. The dynasty which followed extended the empire's borders, using any means necessary.

Initially, Megalos' conquests came easily. The Goblin kingdoms resisted for a time, but were eventually forced to swear allegiance to the Emperor and convert to Christianity. The western kingdom of New Jerusalem, governed by the Knights of St. John, gave no ground until 1350, when they were convinced to join the Empire for the common cause of spreading the dominion of Christ. In 1424, Prince Ivan tired of waiting on his indecisive father and launched a personal crusade against the Moslems' coasts (in what is now al-Wazif and Cardiel). He was eventually beaten back. But Aurelius I followed in his younger brother's footsteps and called a Grand Crusade against the Moslems of the south in 1440.

This sudden transformation of what had been mere border squabbles into a full-blown invasion galvanized the Islamic tribes. As a result, the three Islamic nations of al-Haz, al-Wazif and al-Kard were born. Al-Kard fell swiftly, conquered within a generation of its founding, converted to Christianity literally overnight, and renamed Cardiel. Al-Haz and al-Wazif proved tougher nuts to crack. Suddenly, Megalos had foes worthy of its steel.

### Timeline

**1050** - The Banestorm begins to bring humans, Goblins, Kobolds, Halflings and other races to Yrth.

**1074** - The Islamic city of al-Siyassi is founded on the banks of Bir Ma'jin.

**1160** - The Islamic Holy City of Geb'al-Din is founded.

**1175** - Benedictine monks establish Drift Abbey on Ental Island.

**1187** - Knights of the Order of the Hospital of St. John are brought to Yrth by the Banestorm. They found New Jerusalem a year later.

**1200** - Simon Menelaus founds the city of Megalos. A powerful wizard and brilliant general, he begins to build an empire. The Banestorm begins to subside.

**1229** - The Goblin Kingdoms join the growing Megalan Empire.

**1270-1290** - Northern border wars push Nomads back beyond the Whitehood Mountains.

**1300** - The First humans, Islamic tribesmen, enter the region which will become Cardiel.

**1310** - The Knights Templar first appear in Yrth, on Halloween night.

**1350** - Megalan warlord Octavius Magnus convinces the Knights Hospitallers of New Jerusalem to join the Megalan Empire in “spreading the dominion of Christ.”

**1365** - Octavius Magnus leads the First Crusade into the city now known as Tredroy.

**1403** - With the forcible “help” of Emperor Antonius II, the first Conclave of Christian Archbishops is held in Mehan.

**1412** - The Michaelite Order is founded in Megalos.

**1425** - Prince Ivan's Crusade; Megalan Knights led by the Emperor's third son descend upon the unguarded Moslems of the south.

**1440** - Megalos launches the Grand Crusade against the southern Moslems.

**1442** - The Islamic country of al-Haz is founded.

**1444** - In response to the Megalan invasions, the northern Moslems form the nation of al-Wazif.

**1445** - Al-Kard is founded.

**1470** - After years of war, Megalan crusaders conquer most of al-Kard. The region is renamed Cardiel and becomes a province of Megalos.

**1473** - The first Imperial Viceroy of Cardiel is named.

*Continued on next page...*



The last of the Menelaen emperors, Diophrates V, died in 1551 without an heir. Lacking easy prey, Megalos turned inward. What had been quiet power struggles quickly devolved into violent conflicts. As a result, Megalos lost ground in its quest for world domination. Invading Megalan legions were repeatedly crushed, and by 1784, Cardiel had won its independence from its conqueror. Attempts at colonization ended in further humiliation when, in 1826, the western earldom of Caithness declared its independence as well.

### *Timeline (Continued)*

**1499** - Calder (formerly "al-Kardir") is forcibly converted to Christianity. All mosques are destroyed and hundreds of mullahs and prominent Moslems are put to death.

**1515** - Diophrates IV becomes Emperor of Megalos.

**1519** - Megalos launches the Eastern Crusade; al-Asima and eastern al-Wazif fall to Imperial forces; general rebellion in central Cardiel.

**1525** - Megalos and al-Wazif sign a truce; the new crusade collapses.

**1551** - The last emperor of the Menelaen dynasty dies without an heir.

A resurgence of the Banestorm deposits humans from Renaissance France in the southern islands, and Protestant Huguenots in Cardiel.

**1553** - Al-Haz declares a *jihād* (holy war) and attempts to "liberate" large portions of Cardiel from Christian rule.

**1555** - Al-Wazif attacks Megalos along the eastern frontier.

**1570** - Members of the Society of Jesus first appear in Yrth.

**1580-1590** - Megalan wizards and Church agents travel to the southeastern islands to eradicate dangerous technology and stamp out Protestant heresies.

**1585** - The legions of Megalos launch an invasion of the Dwarven realm of Thulin's Folk in the Whitehood Mountains. It fails disastrously.

**1589** - The city of Tredroy receives its charter.

**1590** - Barbarians of the Nomad Lands take the castle of Heolford and drive the Megalans south of the Whitehoods. The Emperor's Wall is built in response.

**1606** - The Banestorm subsides once again.

**1613** - After the martyrdom of Simon de Anjou creates popular uprising against the Church in the new province of Araterre, the Curia grants the Society of Jesus its full approval.

**1625** - Araterre becomes a Megalan principality.

**1688** - Thulin, Dwarf-lord of the Whitehood Mountains, petitions the Kings of Zarak for a boycott of Megalos. His petition is carefully considered, but denied.

**1730-1750** - Unrest grows in Cardiel. The Viceroy's authority begins to decay as independent-minded folk from Megalos move here.

**1758** - The viceregal seat of Cardiel is moved to Hadaton.

**1762** - A loose confederation of independent mini-states in western Cardiel is formed after a conference in Tredroy.

*Continued on next page...*

## The Present

Despite its setbacks, 1990 Megalos is still the most powerful kingdom in Ytarria. Al-Haz is gaining, strength rapidly, but isn't quite ready to assume the role of conqueror. Caithness is troubled by internal strife between its young king and some of its powerful nobles. Al-Wazif and Cardiel have flourished in the recent peace. And, as they have been for centuries, the secretive Dwarves of Zarak remain aloof except to trade.

And trade is booming as never before. Merchant vessels from al-Haz carry spices, perfumes and rich fabrics to the image-conscious nobles of Megalos. Wagons loaded with the bounty of Caithness farms roll westward, where their cargoes will be traded for Megalan gold. The famous wines of Cardiel find their way to even the most northern courts, and the amber and furs of the Nomad lands adorn harem-girls in al-Wazif. Traveling Dwarves peddle the finest weapons of Yrth in exchange for exotic foods, fabrics and — most of all — gold. Today a calm rests upon the lands...

The calm may be the eye of the hurricane, however. Although stymied for a time, Megalos is still tremendously powerful... and bent on conquest. It is rumored that the Caliph of al-Wazif has obtained several great artifacts from the Mages' War, the last Megalan-Wazifi conflict which ended in 1928. It is also said that Vincent of Calder, Prince of Cardiel, plans to relinquish his title in the near future. And Caithness appears to be poised on the brink of civil war. With all this activity, it's a good bet that the Megalan legions will soon be marching.

The non-humans on Yrth are surviving as best they can. The Dwarves remain isolated for the most part, occasionally emerging from their caves to trade with the outer world. The Elves, though, are facing disaster as more and more of their homelands are gobbled up by human expansion. The Orcs, despised by everyone, are a constant thorn in the side of any humans they come across, but they are no match for the more intelligent and prolific newcomers. See p.37 for more information on Dwarves, p.36 for Elves, and p.38 for Orcs.

## Other Worlds, Other Folk

Though often times forgotten by historians of Yrth, Earth was not the only world affected by the Dark Elves' Banestorm. The incredible force of magic unleashed at that time rent the fabric of time and space not just on Earth, but on at least two other worlds as well — worlds which were also quite similar to Yrth and Earth in climate, size, lifeforms, etc. The few magicians who worry themselves with such things point to the Law of Magical Similarity as the culprit — the magical forces seeking places as similar to Yrth as possible. Earth, being the closest, was affected the most. The world the Goblins called Gabrook is the original home of Goblin, Hobgoblin, Kobold and Reptile Man, and saw at least three short periods of transfer. And the forested world of Loren'dil, home to Halfling, Giant and Centaur, seems to have only suffered the Banestorm once.

Little has been learned about these other two worlds. But what knowledge there is shows Gabrook to have been a predominantly dry and arid planet where Goblins flourished much like man. Kobolds were downtrodden and often enslaved, while the Reptile Men were feared and avoided. Loren'dil, on the other

hand, seems a peaceful, idyllic place covered almost entirely by a thick, dense wood. The creatures from Loren'dil are all quiet and somewhat shy — used to keeping to their own separate communities. And they have remained so on Yrth.

There are large sections of Yrth that haven't been fully explored — no one is quite sure what is happening in the Djinn Lands, and both the Orclands and the Nomad Lands are sparsely civilized at best. There might be any number of small communities made up of races that aren't covered here (possibly from *GURPS Fantasy Folk*, or creatures created purely from the GM's imagination).

### **The Return of the Banestorm**

The Banestorm began in 1050, and was most active until 1200. After that, its effects were much reduced. Instead of wholesale “kidnappings,” it caught people from Earth (and elsewhere) singly or in small groups... a few thousand a year instead of tens of thousands.

In 1551, the Banestorm increased its activity again. During this period, it brought thousands of Earth people, many of them French Protestants, to Yrth... in a period of less than a month. “Immigration” then dropped off rapidly.

Since then, there have been occasional periods of great activity, when a few thousand people will appear within a few days. But for the most part, the Banestorm has become steadily quieter. Still, new people *do* appear. Small boats or planes from the Bermuda Triangle appear along the coast of Ytarria. Other disappearances that might be Banestorm-related include Ambrose Bierce and Amelia Earhart. And the wandering bard who looks so much like Jim Morrison... no, it couldn't be. Most Banestorm travelers come from our Earth, at the equivalent time. But travelers from other worlds (and times) are not unknown. (The frequency of Banestorm manifestations is an important GM decision. The more continuing “contamination,” the weirder and more unstable Yrth is.)

### **Welcome to Yrth!**

The Banestorm can be used to import a PC party from anywhere, but it's a one-way trip. Or NPCs from Earth, or elsewhere, can be imported.

Every nation on Ytarria has a policy for dealing with “visitors.” As a rule, the more savage nonhumans will destroy newcomers, while the civilized ones will politely show them the gate. Visitors to Caithness, Cardiel and al-Wazif are conducted to the capitol and interrogated by mages. A few are invited to serve the crown; most are released with a small cash gift and their minds newly blanked of dangerous knowledge. Al-Haz does the same, but non-Islamic visitors rarely emerge from the Blue Pavilion. No one knows what Sahud does.

Megalos has a secretive organization, the Ministry of Serendipity, specifically dedicated to “acquiring” such immigrants, both to milk them of useful knowledge and keep them from spreading forbidden data. The Ministry is known to have kidnapped many visitors, over the last 300 years, from other nations... sometimes after their interrogation by the host country, and sometimes before!

The existence of Earth, and the general history of Yrth since the Banestorm, is common knowledge throughout Ytarria. But most people don't consider it *important*. Travelers from Earth will have no trouble explaining who they are, and will find many to listen to their tales. But few will be interested in Earthlings' suggestions about how to change the status quo.

The Ministry of Serendipity has a fairly complete knowledge of the state of events on our Earth; the very existence of this “Liber Terranum Primus” is a great secret. Its contents are far more secret. Certainly Megalos could make gunpowder if it chose to do so.

Over the last century, the Jesuits have shown a great deal of interest in “immigrants” as well...

### **Timeline (Continued)**

**1775** - Al-Haz declares another *jihad* to liberate the former nation of al-Kard. Armies from all over Cardiel march to war before the Empire learns of the invasion of its “colonial territories.”

**1776** - Imperial legions land in Hadaton at the request of nobles in north-eastern Cardiel. They receive little support; in fact, a hundred miles south of Hadaton, they begin to encounter resistance from *Cardien* forces.

**1782** - Al-Haz admits defeat and accepts the Blueshoal as a truce line with Cardien generals.

**1784** - Conall of Craine leads a pioneering expedition into the Orclands west of Megalos.

The nobles of Cardiel inform Megalos that they no longer consider themselves bound by their feudal oaths. The Megalalan forces in Cardiel are scattered, outside of the strongly-held port of Hadaton. After a brief bloodletting, the independent principality of Cardiel is born.

**1788** - The Charter of the Confederation of Cardiel is signed in Calder City. The Duchy of Hadaton remains Megalan.

**1805** - Cardiel annexes the Duchy of Hadaton, with help from al-Wazif.

**1812** - The Caithness colonists drive the Orcs back to the edge of the Great Desert. The Orclands come into being.

**1822** - Conall is made the first Earl of Caithness.

**1826** - Conall declares Caithness an independent kingdom, and is crowned King Conall I; Constantine, the Archbishop of Clixtus, denounces the Curia as being corrupt; the Church of Caithness and its Archbishop are excommunicated by the Megalan hierarchy of the Church.

**1827** - Megalos launches an attack to regain Caithness, which fails miserably.

**1840-1850** - The modern border between al-Wazif and Megalos is established in a series of border wars.

**1844** - The Church of Caithness is reunited with that of Megalos and Cardiel.

**1845** - The Hospitallers are expelled from Cardiel for religious intolerance.

**1924-1928** - The “Mages' War” occurs between al-Wazif and Megalos.

**1926** - The last great Orc war ends in Caithness, largely due to the heroic leadership of young Lord Peredur of Durham.

**1975** - King Morrill III of Caithness dies, leaving his six-year-old son as heir.

**1982** - Megalos invades Caithness, and is turned back at great cost to both.

**1985** - Conall VI of Caithness is crowned at the age of 16.

**1987** - A Megalan legion enters the mysterious Blackwoods and is decimated.

**1989** - Lord Peredur of Durham dies. Young King Conall is thus deprived of his strongest supporter.

Caliph Ishaq of al-Wazif dies. The Caliph is succeeded by his son Hafsa al-Talib.

# CULTURE

## 2

This chapter describes the feudal society and dominant cultures — human and nonhuman — of Yrth. It is important to remember that in human medieval society, culture and religion are one and the same. There is little or no distinction between the secular and spiritual worlds. Kings rule by divine right, and the tenets of the dominant faith are the basis of all laws and customs.

Information about the actual point costs of nonhuman characters is covered in Chapter 4 — this section deals strictly with nonhuman societies and beliefs.



# Technology and Magic

In the Year of our Lord 1990, most of Yrth is Tech Level 3 — essentially the same as medieval Europe. Some regions, like the Nomad Lands, are only TL2, while others, like Araterre, approach TL4 (without gunpowder). Reliance on magic and intervention by the Mages' Guilds retards the advance of science.

*Weaponry:* The finest weapons are made of steel; the best ranged weapons are bows and crossbows. A trained knight in plate armor is the ultimate fighting machine. Non-natives brought to Yrth by the Banestorm have introduced gunpowder on three occasions, and it has been invented by natives at least once. On each occasion, the users and their knowledge were wiped out by the wizards.

*Travel:* Wealthy folk ride horseback or in a carriage. Others walk. In the big cities, a rickshaw can be rented, complete with puller, for a few copper coins. Big riverboats, powered by sails, oars or oxen ashore, ply the rivers. At sea, single-masted ships are common; some galleys have two or three banks of oarsmen. With good weather, an average sailing vessel can manage 70 miles a day.

*Medicine:* Most healing is done by magic. Those without access to sorcery rely on herbal remedies, amputation (with wooden legs and steel hooks as replacements for the lost limbs), good luck and prayer.

The average lifespan is roughly 50 years for a townsman, 40 for a serf. Sixty or 70 is a ripe old age, achieved by few.

*Communication:* The very rich use magic to send messages. Otherwise, private horse-couriers deliver missives. The life of such a messenger is rarely boring. Note that, as a whole, the society is illiterate!

## Magic

In order to run a campaign in which magic plays a significant part, *GURPS Magic* is necessary. Use of the magic rules will tremendously enhance any Yrth campaign — it is a magical place, after all. However, an Yrth campaign does not have to have magic if the GM doesn't want it — in low-mana Caithness, true magic is rare and difficult to cast. And if magic is rare and fairly weak, the rules from the *Basic Set* will suffice.

Most of Yrth has a *normal* level of mana; magic is strong and common. Earth, by comparison, is a low- or no-mana environment — depending on who you ask. For most inhabitants of Yrth, magic is part of their daily lives. Perhaps 1 human in 50 might know a spell or two or have a *knack* in a high-mana area; 1 in 100 in a normal mana area or 1 in 500 in a low-mana region such as Caithness. In a high-mana area, perhaps half of the magic-users will actually possess Magical Aptitude. Of course, some people with Magical Aptitude, especially in low-mana areas, will never learn magic or even become aware of their talent.

The number of trained mages (or mages in training) is much lower — approximately 1 for every 10 “amateurs.” Thus, in a normal-mana area, a prosperous town of 10,000 could expect to have 100 inhabitants who had some magic, and an additional 10 who were fully practicing mages. Some of the latter would be apprentices or specialists.

## Feudal Society

Feudalism is a highly stratified social system. Everyone has his or her place in the feudal hierarchy. Some folk are of a high status, others low, but all are bound together by a web of mutual obligations and duties. Everyone of high status has certain duties to those below him as well as duties to those above him — even serfs have a few rights. The social order is reinforced by religious belief. God grants power to those at the top of the social ladder; religious leaders advise those on the bottom to be content with their lot in life.

## Languages

The Christian nations speak *English*, a language evolved from Old English with a very heavy Norman-French influence. Northern tribesmen speak a related tongue, *Northland*, defaulting to English at -3, and vice versa. Either Northland or English defaults to Earth's modern English and German at -4, and vice versa.

The Islamic nations use a relatively pure *classical* Arabic. The written language is nearly identical to Earth's Arabic. The spoken tongue has drifted somewhat; a Terran Arabic-speaker will be -2 to understand it for the first week or so, but after that will have no problems.

Latin is spoken by scholars and clergymen in Christendom, and by Megalan nobles. They can be understood by any Latin scholar from Earth.

Jews speak *Ladino*, a language closely related to Spanish but written in Hebrew characters. Ladino and Spanish default to each other at -3. In addition, Hebrew is used as a liturgical tongue; the Yrth version of Hebrew defaults to Israeli Hebrew at -2 and to biblical Hebrew at -1.

The Sahudese language has departed so far from its roots that it would not be understandable by anyone from Earth.

As for the nonhuman races, most of them speak their own languages, but non-humans encountered in a human territory are likely to speak the appropriate human tongue.

The human and nonhuman languages of this part of Yrth are all considered Mental/Average skills, with the exception of Sahudese, which is Mental/Hard.



## Pronunciations

Yrth: EERth.  
Ytarria: ee-TARR-ee-uh.  
Caithness: KAYTH-nuss.  
Megalos: MEG-uh-lohss.  
Cardiel: KAR-dee-ell.  
al-Haz: ahl-HOZZ.  
al-Wazif: ahl-wozz-EEF.  
Zarak: zorr-ACH.  
Sahud: sa-HOOD.

## Fealty, Homage and Land Ownership

In feudal society, all power — political, military and economic — is derived from the control of land and the people who work it. Without land, a baron is no more than a bandit leader, his armored knights mere thugs. And having land without serfs to till the soil and tend the livestock is almost as bad as having no land at all. For this reason, the rules and customs governing the ownership and use of the land are the very heart of the feudal system.

### Life in a Feudal Society

#### Serfs

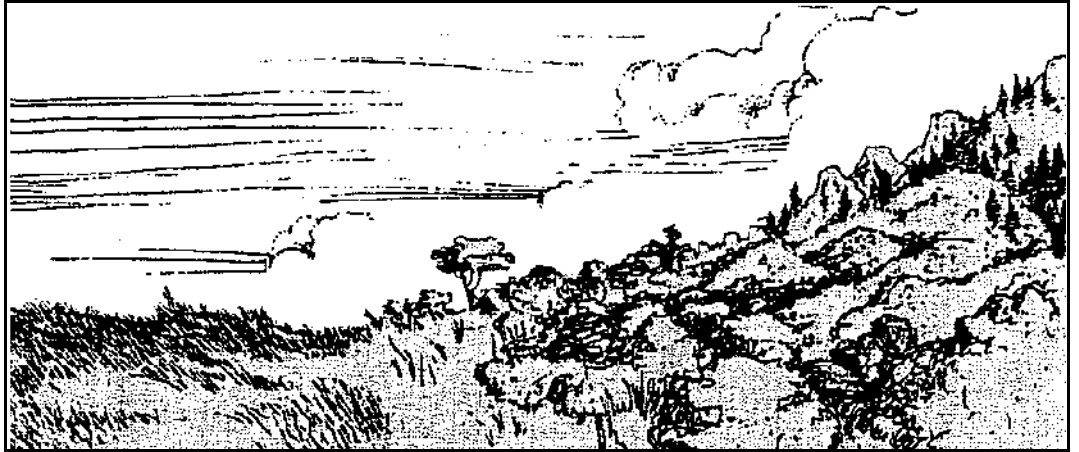
The life of the rural peasant of Yrth is hard, but not impossible. He lives to till the soil, raise livestock, have children and feed his family. The serf and his wife labor from dawn to dusk every day save Sunday and Feast Days decreed by the Church. He works in the fields — plowing, planting or harvesting — makes many of the tools he uses, repairs his cottage and labors for his lord. She makes the family clothes, tends the children, milks the cows and ewes and cooks the meals. His home has but one room, containing a table, fireplace, and one bed which the entire family shares. In winter, the livestock are also allowed in, so that human and animal might stay warm.

In exchange for the plot of land he plows and on which his cottage sits, the serf has a multitude of obligations. First, he must give a portion of his harvest, usually one tenth, to his lord. He must also work for his lord a certain number of days out of the year — farming the lord's land, tending his herds and flocks, maintaining his fences, barns, roads and fortifications. Lastly, he is required to serve in the lord's forces in times of war. In addition to all of this, he must pay a head tax to the Crown, tithes to the Church (in Christian lands), and perhaps a monetary rent to his lord as well.

A serf may be evicted by his lord at any time. If he dies, his family may remain on the land only if the lord so wishes (which he almost always does). In Megalos, a serf may not migrate to another region without his lord's permission — escaped serfs are ruthlessly hunted down. In Caithness they may move, but must first forfeit all their possessions to their master. A serf's children are likewise bound to the land and lord when they reach adulthood.

For recreation, the serf attends religious festivals, dances, and wrestling matches held on the village green. Weddings, births and finishing the planting or harvesting are all cause for celebration. The serfs will gather to drink ale or wine, sing and play games. They are illiterate, and proudly so — “book learning” is considered a waste of valuable time.

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Technically speaking, private ownership of land does not exist in feudal society. All land is held in fief (by grant from a higher authority). High nobles hold land by grant from the monarch, and may in turn grant some portion of it to lesser nobles. With the grant of land comes control over all those persons who live on it; nobles are rulers over their *fiefdoms*, subject only to the king's right to tax or call up troops. The kingdom itself is a fiefdom, held by the king, sultan or caliph through *divine right*. All land belongs ultimately to God, and the monarch is a vassal of Him.

In exchange for his fief, a noble must swear *fealty*, and a knight must swear fealty to gain his title. When fealty is sworn, the *vassal* or *liege man* swears to do the bidding of his *liege lord* and to support him militarily. In return, the liege lord grants the vassal land, a title, or both, and swears to protect him, treat him honorably, and maintain him in his honors and station. Fealty may be sworn to an office — that is, to the Crown or the Church — or to an individual. Powerful nobles in Christian lands generally swear their fealty to the Crown — that way, if the king dies, they are already in the service of his successor. In al-Haz and al-Wazif, however, fealty is sworn to the *man* who is currently sultan or caliph. When a monarch dies, all bets are off, and bloody wars of succession often result.

Fealty is very much a two-way street. A knight or lord may consider himself released from his oath of fealty if the liege lord commits some serious wrong, such as treason or heresy. When a noble swears fealty, he is usually given a token — often a glove or gauntlet — to symbolize his pledge of service. If he wishes to nullify his vows, he will throw the gauntlet at his lord's feet. Armed conflict between the lord and his former vassal often results. From this practice arose the common tradition of throwing down one's glove when challenging another to a duel.

*Homage* is like fealty, but it is more serious and binding. When a person swears or pays homage, he swears to be his liege lord's personal follower, regardless of circumstances or wrongdoing! Thus, if a liege lord is disgraced, so are all those who pay him homage. If he goes to battle, his sworn followers will go with him, even if it means certain death. Unless they are forced to, nobles rarely swear homage to anyone — homage is generally reserved for a noble's personal guard.

A noble *title*, such as duke, baron or emir, almost always has a fiefdom attached to it. Many fiefdoms, however, are not accompanied by titles, being

held by untitled knights — and many knights have no fiefdoms at all. Megalan nobility are an exception to this rule. In Megalos, noble titles can be *bought* by a wealthy man. No oaths are taken, no land is granted, but the social clout of these titles is quite real, *in Megalos*. Lords in other lands regard these men as impostors, and treat them as if they had Status 1 or 2 at best.

Noble titles are usually hereditary; the oldest son inherits the title and any fiefdoms and obligations attached to it upon his father's death. This must be confirmed by the King, but approval is almost always automatic. In the event that a noble dies without any sons, his title and lands revert to the monarch, who may then grant them to whoever he chooses. In most places, a daughter can't inherit a title, but her husband is a likely candidate to receive it from the King. Many powerful nobles got their start by hastily marrying a recently widowed or orphaned noblewoman.

In Caithness, a title doesn't revert if there is a daughter to inherit it. Furthermore, Caithness allows a father to disinherit a son he considers *unworthy*, in favor of a younger son or even a daughter. This has led to wars, but also to better leaders.

A younger son is left with a number of choices. He may become a churchman, monk, scholar or wizard; enter the military as an officer in the king's standing army; accept a title — either a created one or a newly-vacant position — one or two ranks lower than his father's; or get himself killed in the constant political infighting. Once upon a time, pioneering new lands was also an option, but now only Caithness has significant amounts of wilderness.

In the Islamic countries it is common for a father to bestow fiefs on his sons before his death. Thus, when the father dies, the oldest son is in position to become his brothers' liege lord. This often leads to bitter rivalries. Younger brothers may choose not to swear fealty to their older sibling, since their original oaths were to their father specifically. In this event, the first son will have to practice some persuasion — usually of the armed variety.

Knighthood is *not* hereditary. Neither are fiefdoms which do not have titles to accompany them. However, the sons of a knight, if they are fit, will be fostered out as pages and then as squires, and given every chance to *win their spurs* (see below). And if a landed knight has a strong and knightly son, his liege lord will likely permit the son to succeed to his father's fiefdom.

### *Life in a Feudal Society (Continued)*

#### *Freemen and Townsfolk*

These men may own land and homes and live where they please. Most are craftsmen, merchants or part of a noble household. Many, especially the latter, swear homage to a lord. All must obey the commands and laws laid down by the ruler of the fiefdom in which they live. Their obligation to their lord is nearly as great as that of the serf, but is usually collected in cash rather than in labor or goods.

A Freeman may move about, traveling to market to sell his goods or services and purchase the things he needs. But he generally lives his life in one place, never straying more than a few days' walk from the house where he was born. This house is often indistinguishable from the serfs' cottage — what sets him apart is his freedom, not his wealth — but it may be a fine structure with several rooms and sturdy furniture. If he is a craftsman or artisan, his shop and his home are the same place; he works in one room and sleeps in another.

Free peasants are rare in the Empire, but they are common in Cardiel, and in some parts of Caithness and al-Wazif. Free peasants may *not* be evicted from their lands by a lord's whim — they have rights under the law. They do not have to work the lord's land, although they usually do have to give a portion of their harvest to the lord as their fee for the land. They may be subject to call-up for military service for 40 days per year, but they usually must be paid during this time, and they are (in most areas) not bound to leave the lord's own landholdings — they can only be used defensively.

In some areas, a free peasant may avoid his obligations of produce and of service by paying a fee instead. Peasants sometimes accumulate enough wealth to have nice little houses, and enough money to give younger sons a good start, or daughters a tidy dowry. Free peasants will rarely be wealthy, however.

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## Chivalry

Chivalry is the code of honor among Knights — the mounted, military elite of feudal society. More than simply a set of rules of behavior, it is the mystique of knighthood. Most nobles are knights, but many knights are not nobles. All knights, however are warriors and horsemen (in fact, the word chivalry is derived from the Latin word *caballus* meaning horse).

### *Life in a Feudal Society (Continued)*

For the son of a free commoner, there are options other than following in his father's footsteps. He may choose the priesthood, though only rarely will commoners rise far in the Church ranks. In Megalos, he might join the Legions. In any land, he can take service with a lord and practice his craft, or become a servant, overseer, groom or man-at-arms. If his father has money, he may be sent to a university, and learn to be a scholar, clerk, bard or mage.

Traditionally, anyone who lives in a free town for a year and a day is considered a free man, even if he was formerly a serf. If a serf is caught before this time is up, he is in for a *severe* punishment, but if he has been in town long enough, the town itself will protect him from the arbitrary depredations of traveling nobles.

### *Nobles*

These folk are the elite of feudal society. They live in city mansions, fine stone manors, keeps surrounded by wood palisades, and castles. They are waited upon by servants, entertained by troubadours and jesters, and often dress in fine silks and furs. When they are not at the Royal or imperial court, visiting neighboring nobles, or attending the occasional tourney, they entertain guests, hunt, or arrange and attend arena spectacles.

Yet men and women of the noble class have their duties and obligations, too. First and foremost, they are responsible for the defense of their demesne. A noble lives off what his land, farmed by his serfs, produces. Even if he remains safe in his castle, a lord will be quickly reduced to poverty if his fiefdom is continually ravaged by war. And the noble may be called upon by his liege lord to fight and provide troops at any time.

In addition to defense, a lord must oversee the activities of his fiefdom. He is the government. He hears the requests and complaints of the peasants and settles legal disputes. He must supervise the operation of his mills, the training of his men-at-arms, the collection of the taxes and rents, and the working of his own fields (those not rented to the serfs). Many nobles have loyal henchmen, called *seneschals*, to see to these duties while they are away. Otherwise, the wife must see that things are run properly in her husband's absence.

Though a valiant warrior may be knighted on the field, most knights are the product of arduous training. A child of seven might become a *page*, or servant to a lord or knight. At fourteen, he could be *squired* — apprenticed to a knight for long, exacting training. Generally, only boys of aristocratic birth (Social Status 2 or higher) may become candidates for knighthood. A few knights, however, will accept a likely young commoner as squire, and in Caithness girls are also eligible. A successful candidate would eventually be knighted, in a ceremony designed to remind him once again of his duties (see sidebar, p. 15).

The duties of a good knight are to serve his lord; to defend the faith; to protect the poor and helpless; to keep the peace and enforce his lord's laws. He should be a courtier as well as a warrior, skilled in the gentle arts — dancing, reciting poetry, singing and playing music, and chess. He need not, however, be literate — many nobles cannot read or write more than a few words. He should treat other knights as brothers, regardless of their nation or birth, extending courtesy even on the field of battle. Thus, if two knights fight and one drops his sword, the other would show great chivalry by returning it to him. A knight will be hospitable to a guest, though that guest may be his sworn enemy. A knight's word is his oath, and his oath is inviolable.

A knight is expected to be gentle to all women. He may sing a lady's praises and fight for her honor, and never hope for more reward than a silken glove to carry as a favor. Female knights are unknown, except in Caithness, and rare even there.

Needless to say, most knights are not this good. Many *try* to be — but they are only human. Some prate of their virtues, but oppress the poor and take any advantage in battle. Some are thugs, pure and simple — but an armored thug with a greatsword is still worthy of a certain respect.

Being a knight is an expensive proposition. Armor, swords, horses — all are costly. No one of low birth could afford to be a knight, save by the graces of a lord who presented lands along with knighthood. Therefore, any knight should be at least Comfortable, in terms of wealth, in order to meet the needs of his station. In developed areas (like Megalos) where land is scarce, knights who do not have land by birth are either provided for by their lord (out of his own land), or given other wealth-providing grants and concessions (for example: a knight could be given the right to tax goods in a village, or a monopoly on a certain commodity, such as salt or wine, in a particular region). In many cases, this requires agents to manage the details of the knight's holdings or grants, who in turn need to be paid, etc. Knights are, quite literally, the bottom level of the landholding nobility.

It is customary to ask a ransom for a noble or knightly prisoner. An average ransom might be a half-year's income from the prisoner; greedy captors might ask for more. (Assume that income is equal to “cost of support” for the captive's social ranks — p. B191 — unless the captor happens to know the prisoner earns more than that!) In any case, it is both merciful and profitable to take a high-born foe prisoner, rather than slaying him!

In general, a ransom must be paid *before* the prisoner is released. But on occasion — especially when one knight is imprisoned by another — a captive may be freed on his oath to pay the ransom later.

By custom, the arms and armor of a knight belong to the knight who defeats him in battle or during a private challenge. This is not part of a ransom, but “spoils of war.” However, it is a most chivalrous gesture for an experienced knight, having trounced a young challenger, to return his arms.



### The Feudal Economy

Most nations and city-states coin gold and silver money, usually adorned with the profile or insignia of the current ruler. Use the costs given in the *Basic Set*. A copper farthing (\$) has a buying power about equal to a U.S. dollar circa 1990. Silver is worth ten times more than copper; gold is worth 20 times as much as silver. 100 coins — or about \$1,000 worth of silver — weigh one pound.

Because of the rarity of precious metals, however, coins are often hard to come by. Thus, much trade is by barter. This is especially true in remote or isolated villages. In most places, travelers can easily barter labor for food (usually four hours' labor per meal).

Waterways and seacoasts are the best trade routes; where there are no convenient waterways, there are roads and caravan-routes. Large loads are almost always moved by water, as it is both faster and cheaper than outfitting a caravan to travel overland. Trade overrides most other priorities. Even arch-enemies do business when they're not actually at war, and the hardest explorers are also merchants.

### Towns

In a rural fiefdoms, the liege lord has absolute authority; every peasant is a tenant on his land, every villager his vassal. Not so in the towns and cities. There, among the warehouses and shops, on the docks, and in the outdoor markets, all pay homage to money first, God second, and lord third. Because cities are vital as trading centers, their inhabitants, rich and poor alike, enjoy freedom unknown to their rural brethren. Townsfolk move about freely, work at whatever

they do best, and reap the benefits of their labor. Their guilds may wield power equal to — if not greater than — that of some noble families.

The people of the cities and towns have such great autonomy because it's *profitable*. Compared to the lifestyle of an average rural baron, the urban nobility live like emperors. The taxes levied on the trade of even a modest town so far outstrip the potential earnings of an agricultural manor that some nobles actually try to *build* towns from scratch, and then entice merchants and craftsmen to move into the empty buildings. Needless to say, many of these efforts fail.

All large towns and cities have certain things in common. First, the settlement has to have a reason to *exist* in the first place. This means that it must be situated on a major trade route. Many towns die from lack of trade, due to the

### Becoming a Knight

When a squire is deemed ready to become a knight, he cannot simply put on a coat-of-arms, strap on his spurs, and ride forth. He must first undergo a solemn ceremony in which he purifies his mind and body, and then have his knighthood conferred upon him by a noble who is already himself a knight.

In Christian lands, the making of a knight usually occurs on Sunday or some other holy day. First, the squire must fast for an entire day prior to the ceremony — taking nothing but water — and then take a ritual bath. This is to purify his body. (Thus, a *knight of the bath* is one who was knighted in a formal ceremony, while a *knight of the sword* earned his knighthood on the battlefield.) Next, he must purge his soul by confessing his sins to a priest and maintaining an all-night vigil in the cathedral, where he contemplates responsibilities of knighthood.

In the morning, the squire will go to Mass and take communion. After this, he approaches the lord who is going to knight him. The lord will ask him why he wishes to become a knight. If the squire answers that he wishes knighthood so that he may be respected, gain wealth, or otherwise serve himself, then he is rejected and might never be knighted. If he replies that it is to serve God and his liege lord, and to defend good Christian folk from evil, then he is instructed to kneel. The lord will take the knight's sword — which is sometimes hung around the squire's neck — and give him three sound but ceremonial thwacks with the flat of the blade; while striking him he proclaims *In the name of God, St. Michael, and the Virgin Mary, I make you a knight*. This is what it means to be *dubbed* a knight.

Afterward, ladies will come forward and gird the new knight with his sword, bring him his horse, and present him with gold spurs to represent his new status. The squire has won his spurs, and rides forth from the hall as a full-fledged knight.

In Islamic lands, candidates for knighthood also observe the customs of the fast, the bath, and the vigil, although they do not take confession or communion. They are dubbed in the name of Allah rather than Christian saints. Otherwise, the ceremony is similar to the one performed in Christian countries.





### Arms and Devices

In an illiterate society, pictures and signs are important. Thus, a shoemaker's shop is indicated by a picture of a shoe; a wizard's by a representation of a black cat or a crystal ball; a pawnbroker's by the three gold globes.

Likewise, individuals are represented by personal symbols. These are called *arms* if the carrier is of noble blood. A *coat of arms* is actually a tabard or smock, worn over a knight's armor, and emblazoned with his personal symbol. Likewise, a knight usually paints his arms upon his shield. Thus, a knight in armor may still be recognized at a distance.

Men-at-arms will wear their lord's colors, or *livery*, and perhaps paint his arms upon their own shields. A *blank-shield* soldier is a mercenary; a knight wishing to remain unknown will cover his shield with cloth, perhaps exposing it only at the last minute before the joust or battle.

Only nobility can bear arms, but anyone can adopt a personal *device* or symbol. It should be simple to draw. For instance, Justina Wolfslayer's device is an arrow. Her *mark* on a document would be an arrow; she marks her property with the same symbol. Were she to be ennobled, she would probably have the heralds design new arms, incorporating her arrow.

Knightly or noble player characters may design their own arms. The rules for *proper* arms make up the art of heraldry; any library or encyclopedia will provide detailed references. Some quick notes:

In general, heraldry uses seven colors: the two *metals* of silver (white) and gold (yellow) and the five *colours* of red, blue, green, black and violet. Designs must not place a colour upon a colour, or a metal upon a metal — this rule is not artificial, but aids visibility.

The arms of related nobles should be similar, but not identical. The difference, not amazingly, is called a *difference*. When an heir inherits titles, he inherits his father's identical arms — that is, he removes the difference from his own.

A noblewoman may bear arms. They will customarily be emblazoned on a diamond, or *lozenge*, shape. The shield-shape is reserved for men. (In Caithness, female knights may use the shield.)

exhaustion of local resources, the opening of a safer, faster route, or competition. Next, a city must have a good supply of water — for drinking and for transportation. Almost all cities are located on rivers or coasts. Also, it must be defensible; a city is too tempting a prize for would-be invaders. Finally, there has to be plenty of good, fertile land. It takes nine serfs working in the fields to grow enough surplus to feed one city dweller — without rural lords and their hard-working vassals, the city would starve.

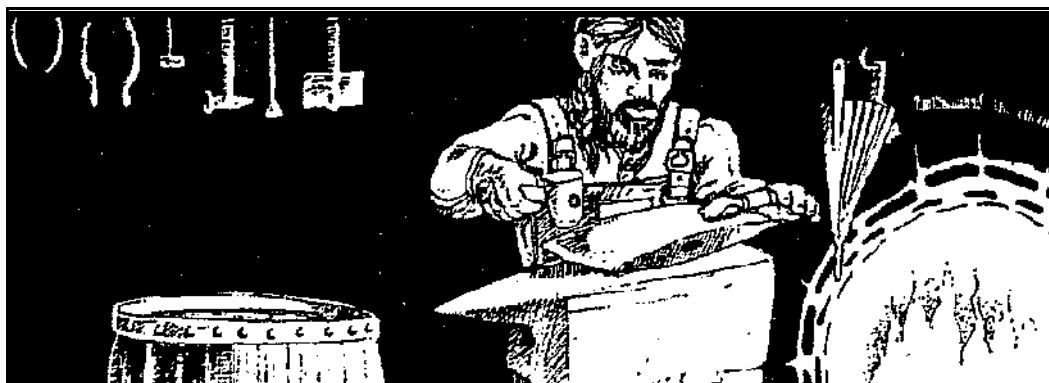
### City Government

Make no mistake, most city dwellers still have lords to whom they show deference, and a commoner can still lose his head for failing to tip his cap to a Baron who passed him on the street. But the nobles rarely use their power to do more than keep the peace and collect taxes. For the rest, they appoint governors or mayors to handle the administration of the cities. These men are usually chosen for their ability, and are often well-educated, successful merchants. The mayor is a vassal of his lord, and owes him fealty, but he is also a member of the merchant class, and considers their best interests as well. Many mayors will choose a council to advise and aid in governing the city. These are the most prominent men of the city: guildmasters, merchants, scholars and clergymen. The captain of the city guard — himself a sworn man of the local ruling noble — may also be included in this group. This council, when acting unanimously, can dictate virtually any policy short of open revolt.

Some cities, especially in Megalos and Cardiel, choose their own mayors and councils, and owe allegiance to no lord save the monarch. These cities have royal charters, giving them the right of local self-rule in exchange for a cash annuity. This annual fee is paid by the city with funds raised through local taxes. Even though these are levied *in addition* to the royal tax paid by every subject, the tax burden of the average citizen is far less than that borne by the rural serf. These *free* or *open* cities must still answer the monarch's call in times of war — providing money, supplies and troops — or their charters may be revoked. In some cases, a city has actually gone to war with its feudal overlords in order to gain — or retain — a charter.

### Guilds

A guild is a benevolent and protective order of folk in the same craft or trade. The purpose of any guild is to provide for the well-being of its members by securing a monopoly in its specific trade. Monopoly equals power; limitation of the trade or craft to insiders — i.e., members and their families — is the guild's primary goal.



A guild performs numerous functions for its members. The first and foremost of these has already been mentioned: members are protected from competition. To this end, only members of the guild may practice their trade within the area under the guild's control. Also, the guild regulates the price and quality of goods. The guild *hallmark*, stamped upon or affixed to a product, is a guarantee that an item meets their standards. Competition based on quantity discounts and

price-cutting is discouraged, but competition over quality is encouraged. The products of a guild's master craftsmen can be relied upon, but they are often costly. The guild also protects trade secrets, and sponsors the development of new knowledge.

Guilds regulate apprenticeship as well, seeing that most apprenticeships go to the sons and daughters of guild families, and that the trade is being properly taught. Guild members are also provided with a kind of *insurance*. If a guildsman dies, his family is taken care of; if his shop or home burns down, the guild rebuilds it; if he is injured or becomes ill, he is attended by a healer in the guild's employ. Some wealthy guilds even build hospitals, churches and schools, or provide dowries for poor members' daughters.

Finally, a guild represents the interests of its members to the local government, nobility and monarch. A guild will attempt to obtain exemption from tolls and tariffs, protection along dangerous trade routes, and reduced taxes for its members. For leverage it relies on its monopoly, by threatening to withhold goods or strike. A baron trying to fight a war without any armourers to equip his knights will realize the wisdom in granting the Armourers' Guild's demands!



### **Guild Types**

There are two major types of guilds: those of merchants and those of craftsmen. Merchant guilds take in all those that buy and sell goods for a living, and may control the trade over large cities, regions or even countries. Craft guilds are for those who manufacture goods or provide specific services; they are usually set up on a city-wide or even neighborhood level. The two types of guild often do not get along. Merchants prefer to buy low; craftsmen want to sell high. And craftsmen often depend on merchants to get their goods to markets in distant lands. Conflicts are frequent.

In general, a guild only exists when it can have at least a half-dozen members, and will not be powerful unless it can have dozens. Thus, a small town will have only a few guilds. But the great cities of Megalos have dozens of guilds — even a Street-Cleaner's Guild. This does not mean that craftsmen in small towns are guildless. But where a small town might have a Clothmen's Guild, a metropolis would have separate guilds for the Spinners, Weavers, Tailors, Dyers and Embroiderers. Guilds are most powerful in the free cities of Megalos and Cardiel, weakest in al-Haz and Caithness.

A guild will collect dues, averaging some 5-10% of its members' monthly income. A wealthy guild will have a guild-house; an ordinary guild will meet in a public place, and a poor one will meet at the Guildmaster's house.

### **Guild Organization**

Large, multi-city or national guilds are led by a Grand Master; the chief of a city guild is the Guildmaster. This is usually a person who combines great skill in the craft with abilities in Diplomacy, Politics or Fast-Talk. The lord or mayor of a city will grant an audience to the Guildmasters on request, and will consult with them on many matters. If the city has a governing council, the Guildmasters are on it.

### **The City Guard**

In any town or city of decent size, there will be at least two military forces. One will be the relatively elite troops or the ruling noble's household. The other will be the city guardsmen.

The guardsmen are the folks who break up tavern brawls, chase thieves, investigate murders (as best they can), toss drunks in the lake to sober up, and, in general, provide what little order a medieval town can expect.

The guard will come into many campaigns, as enemies or allies. Most guards are regular guys, relatively honest, but willing to listen to a reasonable story or lift a tankard of ale. Many are bribable, since an average guard makes perhaps \$130 per month — but some are totally honest.

A typical guardsman might be a 40-point character: ST 12, DX 11, IQ 10, HT 11, with appropriate skills and a disadvantage or two (either Sadism or Honesty can mean trouble for PCs!).

Guards on street patrol will carry light maces, clubs or shortswords; they will have no shields heavier than bucklers. Guards on gate duty will have spears in hand, and bows or crossbows nearby. Officers will probably be mounted, and may carry shortswords or sabers. Typical weapon skill will be in the 12-14 range.

Well-equipped city guards will wear chainmail; others will wear leather. Officers are likely to opt for comfort and wear leather.

Almost never will a guard have magical abilities. Mages can find better jobs!

PCs of unlawful bent should note that it is not a good idea to kill guardsmen. Their fellow guardsmen will remember — and you have an instant Enemy in that town!

### **Slavery**

Many of the lands of Ytarria allow slavery, including Megalos, al-Haz, al-Wazif and Caithness. For general rules on slaves and price, see p. B134. There are four types of slaves:

*Slaves by Law* — Lawbreakers convicted of murder, treason or ruinous destruction of another's property become slaves of the Crown (if not sentenced to death). Half their market value is awarded to the party (or family of the party) injured by the lawbreaker, and the slave is used to build, clean, mine and perform other onerous tasks away from polite society. The lifespan of such slaves is short; five years average, ten years at best. Therefore, reduce the loyalty reaction by 2 (or more) when rolling a reaction for these people. Only rarely is a slave of the Crown freed, and never without special cause.

*Continued on next page...*

Under the Grand Masters or Guildmaster of a craft guild are the Masters. These are the craftsmen who have shown themselves fully expert in the trade — in general, a level of 16+ in the appropriate skill(s). Most Masters will have their own shop, though this is not a requirement.

The next rank is Journeyman. This is a competent artisan (level 14+) who has not yet fully developed his skill. He may work for a single Master, or journey between shops, going to whoever needs hired help at the time. Some Journeymen are well-traveled. A blacksmith might join a merchant caravan, shoeing horses and oxen, repairing wagons, etc.; a weaponsmith might follow an army on campaign; a shipwright might sign on as a crew member for long trading voyages. When a Journeyman is ready to prove himself, he will do a masterwork — a piece that demonstrates his talent to the fullest. If the Council of Masters accepts the piece, he will be promoted to Master. Some guilds limit the number of Masters permitted at any one time, so Journeymen can grow gray waiting.

At the bottom is the Apprentice. The 'prentice is expected to cook, sweep and run errands — all while learning his trade. But he is there to learn, and the guild will discipline a Master who uses his apprentice as slave-labor without teaching him fairly. An apprentice receives room, board and a few coins, and is named Journeyman when his master deems him ready. To determine his readiness, the Master may require him to complete a 'prentice piece, similar in function but simpler than a masterwork.

### *Patron Saints, Mysteries and Secret Orders*

A few craft guilds are more than just economic organizations; they are fraternal orders with rites of initiation, religious doctrines and secret agendas. Many have a specific patron saint, in whose name they conduct religious ceremonies for members only. Some worship pagan gods as their patrons in secret services, while openly going to the cathedral or mosque on holy days. The patron saint or god is supposed to have a special concern for those who practice his chosen craft, and protects them from harm. Joining the guild, being promoted to Journeyman or Master, and the disciplining of errant members are all accompanied by solemn rites, usually conducted by the Guildmaster.

Some guilds regard their craft as a form of art, with important philosophical meaning. Masters are those who are knowledgeable in the mysteries of the craft, and they guard secrets which laymen don't even know exist. On Yrth, these mysteries may include the knowledge of very specific magic spells known only by masters of the craft. These Masters will guard their secrets with their very lives; their families, competitors, even their own apprentices and journeymen won't know the full extent of their knowledge and power. Journeymen whose character or discretion the Masters doubt will never attain higher rank!

There are guilds which aspire to do more than just regulate their craft or trade. A very few have political

### *Slavery (Continued)*

*Slaves by Capture* — Caithness does not have an active slaver industry, so most of these are imports from Megalos and al-Haz. These are people captured in distant lands and slapped into chains. They roll reaction and check loyally normally.

*Slaves by Choice* — Someone who desperately needs money (for instance, to get a relative or loved one out of trouble) may sell himself into slavery. This could occur if a loved one commits a crime and is fined beyond his ability to pay (which would lead to more serious punishments); or if a parent can no longer support all his children, etc. The slave-to-be receives his net market worth (generally the amount he could earn in five years if using his best skills as a freeman). Such slaves roll loyally reaction checks at +2.

*Slaves by Birth* — In Megalos, al-Wazif and al-Haz, the child of a female slave is the property of the slave's owner. These may be freed by the owner at any time. A large number of slaves in Megalos, and the majority of slaves in al-Wazif, are slaves by birth. *Slave houses* breed slaves to particular specifications; the most successful have done so for several centuries. Slavery is not hereditary in Caithness.

Slavery is for life, though all but the first type of slaves may be freed by friendly owners.

In a slave-market (every town or city has at least a small one), most slaves are Slaves by Capture or by Birth; a few are Slaves by Choice. All Slaves by Law are owned by the Crown.

Slaves have no rights to property or possessions other than those granted by their owners, and can be casually slain by their owners, for any reason or no reason. But while this is legal, it is not considered *right*. The Knights of the Stone, in particular, have been known to chastise slave-owners for abusing their slaves.

Marriage among slaves is not recognized by any law, even if the marriage is performed by an appropriate cleric.

An offense against the person of a slave constitutes *waste* — i.e., it is merely an offence against the property of the slave-owner.

Occasionally, nonhumans are found in the slave markets. Most of these (with the exception of an occasional Dwarven criminal) are Slaves by Capture.



goals, and aim to influence the course of history — many more are *believed* to have such secret agendas. To aid in their conspiracies, the members can identify and communicate with one another through secret signs and passwords. The investigation and infiltration of such a group can provide many sessions of adventuring.

The description above covers the craft and merchant guilds. But some of the most interesting guilds don't follow the usual pattern. They include:

### **Thieves' Guild**

In many cities, thieves are just as organized as any other profession. They don't usually bother with formal apprenticeships, masterworks and so forth, but they protect their monopoly on criminal activity every bit as jealously, and much more violently, than any legal guild. In most places, “Thieves' Guild” refers to the local *organization*, not a guild in the usual sense.

A well-organized Thieves' Guild controls all criminal activity in its territory: illegal gambling, slavery, smuggling, blackmail, prostitution, protection and, of course, theft. The organization looks after its members, protecting them from the authorities and rivals. The guild pays the city guards to look the other way at appropriate times, bribes government officials, and arranges the release of incarcerated members. The leader of the guild may be the head of a dominant crime family, a bully who fought his way to power, or even a real Guildmaster, chosen by his peers for his skill and cleverness.

In some places, each type of criminal activity will be dominated by a single family or mob; in other places, the *turf* will be physically divided up. In either case, messy gang wars can erupt. The outcome may be a single Thieves' Guild, or a town temporarily cleansed of riff-raff.

Anywhere thieves are at all organized, amateur competition (e.g., from traveling adventurers) will be viewed unfavorably. On the other hand, joining up (at the lower levels) is often simple and informal. However, the average gang will demand some 25% of the take from any criminal activity in the area — more if the gang provides support and advice.

To contact the local underworld, just visit a seedy part of town and make a Streetwise roll. A successful roll gives you a contact; a critical failure marks you as a spy or stoolie, and possibly earns a beating or a blade.

### **Mages' Guild**

As with the Thieves' Guild, this is just a generic name for any society of magic-users. Mages tend to be contentious; in any but the smallest town, if someone says “Mages' Guild,” ask “Which one?” If the wizards *could* get organized, they would undoubtedly rule Yrth. But, generally speaking, for every group of mages, there is another opposed to it. In many areas there is constant rivalry, and sometimes

### **Guild Adventures**

Guilds of various types can provide a ready source of employment for PCs, even if they aren't a member of the guild. In many cases, the mission is too dangerous (either physically or politically) to risk the life of a trained craftsman — but a doughty band of adventurers will fit the bill nicely!

*Secret Wisdom.* The PCs are hired by one guild to steal a book of secrets belonging to another — or to recover such a book. Or the target might be a sample of goods, dye, cloth, etc.

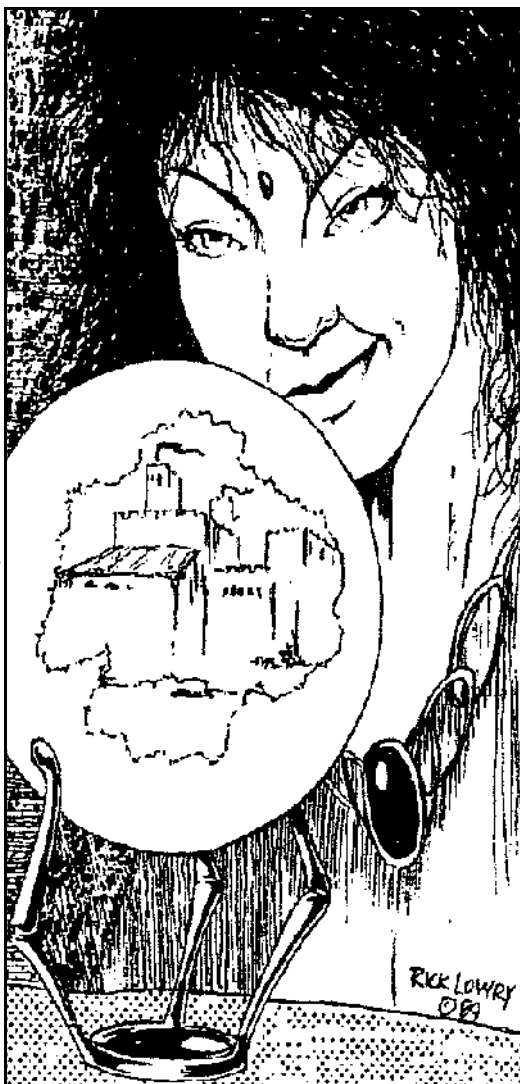
The rival guilds could be craftsmen from different towns, each anxious to establish itself as the greatest guild of leatherworkers, armourers, or whatever.

*Hit the Mattresses.* The PCs find themselves in the middle of an *undeclared* gang war, as different factions struggle to take over the profitable Thieve's Guild of a large city.

*Don't Ask.* The characters speculated, once too often, about whether there was really such a thing as an Assassins' Guild.

*The Free-Lancers.* The PCs are on the track of a valuable item — which belongs to someone else at the moment. Unfortunately, while “casing the job,” they are noticed by representatives of the local Thieves' Guild. Will the thieves ask for a cut of the tool? Warn the victim? Warn the city guard? Try to steal it from the PCs?

*The Firebugs.* There have been entirely too many fires around town recently. The PCs, for whatever reason, are called on to investigate. Soon they have *entirely too many* leads. The local Brotherhood of Fire Mages has been having internal problems; there is a hint that the Armsmen's Guild feels unappreciated and is trying to drum up business; a local family of thieves has started a protection racket... and *none* of them appreciate the PCs' interference!



## The Michaelites

The Order of the Archangel Michael was formed in 1412 to guide a holy inquisition against non-believers in Megalos. The Michaelites dealt purely with religious crimes for their first 200 years, until heretics became scarce. Then they took on "police" duties; first political affairs, and later in spectacular or magical crimes.

Michaelites work in small groups, called a Fist of Michael in Megalos, and a Hand of Michael in Caithness and Cardiel. This is group of around five constables who work well as a team. Most will be fighters with investigative skills. In Megalos, there will always be a priest; in Cardiel, there may be a mullah. Except in Caithness, where magic is rare, there will always be a wizard in the group.

There are separate Michaelite organizations in each of the three "Christian" lands. They cooperate, but share no leadership. The Megalans are severe and often fanatic, and accept no female members. The Caithness Michaelites are skilled investigators and good "street cops," often of common birth. The Michaelites of Cardiel are purely policemen, and not a religious order at all; some are Moslem, and all report to the Prince of Cardiel.

Medieval Earth had no real equivalent to the Michaelites. They are not common city guardsmen, nor are they knights. Their methods have become sophisticated enough to match wits with the clever and often sorcerous criminals of Yrth. For Caithness and Cardiel, G-men of the 1930s are good role models, toting swords and spells instead of tommy-guns. In Megalos, a cross between the Spanish Inquisition and the Gestapo is a very close analogy.

On and off duty, the Michaelites wear a blue surcoat with a white shield device. In Megalos and Caithness the shield is quartered by a blue cross. Everyone recognizes this symbol of law and order.

A Michaelite has the advantages of Legal Enforcement Powers, 10 points (national jurisdiction, not restricted by civil rights); Patron: The Michaelites, 20 points (very powerful, 9 or less); Reputation, 0 points; Lawman (+2 from the law-abiding, -4 from the underworld, recognized by the surcoat unless in disguise); Military Rank 1, 5 points (might be higher).

He has the disadvantages of Duty to the Michaelites and the Law, -15 points (15 or less); Vow: Will not exploit Michaelite status for personal profit, -10 points; Fanaticism (Optional in Caithness, forbidden in Cardiel), -15 points; Religious Intolerance (except in Cardiel), -5 points.

Minimum required skills include Area Knowledge (nation)-12; Brawling-12; Broadsword and Shortsword; one at 14, one at 13; Theology (Christian)-14 (except in Cardiel); Criminology-14; Law-15; Shield-12; Streetwise-14 (Caithness only).

open battle, among and within the various groups of mages. However, cooperation between guilds is not unheard of, and is downright necessary for the creation of some great magical items, though any item which requires the skills of more than one guild to make will be extremely rare, and come only at great, great cost. Guilds are extremely jealous of their secrets.

There are many sorts of mages' groups, with many purposes. Some of the commonest causes include religion (admitting only those of a certain faith); political alignment (loyal to a certain noble, compering heir, merchants' guild, foreign nation, or ambitious mage); type of magic (Brotherhood of Fire Magics, College of Necromancy, etc.); mundane interest (battle-wizards, smith-wizards, thief-wizards, etc.). And many wizards choose to remain neutral, joining several different groups or none at all.

Some mages' groups act as true guilds, charging dues and providing services. Others are more like debating clubs, and the mages have no particular mutual loyalty. Still others are outright criminal conspiracies!

This means that if you need a piece of magical work done, there may be several groups or individuals who can take care of it (though often various groups will specialize to maintain a unique place in the market, so for special or unique items there still may be only one choice). It also means that (at least in most towns) there is no guarantee that a newly-met wizard is honest, competent, or even a true mage! With magic, even more than with other things, the buyer must beware.

However, there are certain things that all mages agree on. The most noticeable of these is the dependence on magic as a technology. Wizards everywhere work to maintain this dominance, quickly dispatching anyone who looks for engineering solutions to problems traditionally solved by magical means. The greatest example of this is the development of gunpowder. Several times, groups of mages have banded together to eradicate this vile substance from the face of Yrth. No mage, no matter how power-hungry, amoral or greedy, is willing to allow such destructive power into the hands of the uninitiated.

## Assassins' Guild

The nobility in Megalos certainly commission enough murders to keep an Assassins' Guild busy, but most folk say that the existence of such a guild there is just a rumor. Others say that their victims know better. There is an Assassins' Guild in Tredroy and an Islamic cult of assassins based in al-Haz — but prudent folk don't talk about them. Let's just change the subject, shall we?



## Armsmens' Guild

This guild takes in most of those who fight for a living... guardsmen, mercenaries, tavern bouncers, bounty hunters, battle-mages, and the like. As a rule, legionnaires do not join; neither do the private troops of nobles. And, of course, a knight would have no need of the guild.

It is also the custom, in any city large enough to have a guild-hall, that the Armsmen serve as fire-watch and fire brigade. For this duty, the Guild receives a yearly payment from the local governor or noble. Wealthy citizens often make a gift to the Guild, as well, to insure close watch on their own streets. The total is enough to keep temporarily unemployed fighters in bread and beer.

The Armsmens' Guild is the place to go if you need to hire a fighter — or if you are a fighter looking for work. It is also a good place to look for a teacher of combat skills.

# Christianity

Christianity is the most common faith on Yrth. It is the state religion of Megalos, Caithness and (if name is not in practice) Cardiel. Not just humans acknowledge Christ; Goblins, Kobolds, Gnomes and especially Halflings are well represented in the Church. Only Reptile Men, Orcs and the Elder folk — the Elves and the Dwarves — remain steadfastly outside the fold.

## History

The Church in Yrth has seen no major schisms such as the Reformation, perhaps because it was never as unified in the first place. Initially, the clergymen which the Banestorm brought to Yrth maintained their allegiance to the Earthly Pope, and refused to appoint one of their own number to that post. Later, Christians in various regions, responding differently to the alien races and magical nature of Yrth, were far too contentious to grant complete spiritual authority to a single man. Wars frequently raged between the “faithful” of one region against their “heretical” neighbors — and it was impossible for outsiders to tell which was which.

The controversy and turmoil which afflicted Christendom was finally quelled as a result of the expansion of the Megalan Empire. By the end of the fourteenth century, virtually all the Christians of Yrth were subjects of the Empire. But the doctrinal disputes, often violent, continued. Finally, in 1403, Emperor Antonius II ordered his knights to abduct the five most prominent clergymen in the Empire. All were brought to the Cathedral of St. Paul in Mehan, where they were kept in “protective” custody until their differences were resolved. Thus, the first Conclave of Archbishops was convened.

This group, which later came to include the Archbishops of Cardiel and Caithness and the masters of Yrth's greatest monastic orders, is known throughout Christendom as the Curia. The Curia is the highest governing body of the Church; it sets doctrine, appoints bishops, and attempts to guide the actions of kings and emperors. As the greatest single landholder in Ytarria, the Church has tremendous political power; it lacks only the legions of the Emperor — and his wizards — or it might already rule in his place.

## Views on Magic

The practice of magic is not considered a sin, but the Church considers it something best kept out of secular hands. Some orders strongly emphasize the use of magic; others ignore it or advise against it; none openly condemn it. Black magic, such as necromancy, is a grave sin. Battle magic, practiced openly, is not considered black.

## The One True Faith

The Church today has many faces in different realms. It is worldly and influential in Megalos, austere and pious in Caithness, and relatively homely in Cardiel. Yet it is unified in doctrine and theology, and insistent on one point — Christianity is the only true religion; all others are false creeds.

The central theme of Christianity — as taught by the Church of Yrth — is that of salvation through faith in Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, who died on the Cross to atone for the world's sins. He rose from the grave after being dead three days, and ascended into Heaven. Jesus, together with God and the Holy Ghost, make up the Trinity — the Divine Being who is Three in One. All men share in the guilt of the original sin committed by Adam and Eve, and are therefore in need of salvation, no matter how purely they lead their lives. Sins in this life can be atoned for before death through penance, or afterward in Purga-

## *The Sacraments*

The Seven Sacraments are the primary rituals of the Church. They are baptism, confirmation, confession and penance, communion, matrimony, ordination, and the last rites. The Church is symbolized by the cross. Mass, the gathering of a community for prayer, is celebrated on Sunday. All Christians — men, women and children — are permitted and encouraged to attend. Services are conducted in Latin.

Baptism, the washing of the body with holy water, is performed at birth in order to cleanse the soul of the stain of original sin. Confirmation, usually performed at the age of seven, inducts a child into the Church as a full member, from which time he is required to attend confession and allowed to celebrate communion. A good Christian in Yrth must confess his sins to a priest at least once per year, and perform whatever penance is given him. Through the taking of holy communion, the worshiper consumes the body and blood of the Son of God through the symbolic bread and wine. The last rites are performed just before death, to prepare one for the afterlife.

All Christians are encouraged to either marry or take up the holy orders, i.e., ordination. The two are, however, mutually exclusive. All priests, monks and nuns must take vows of chastity.

## *The Cult of the Virgin Mary*

In Yrth, Christians venerate many figures in addition to the holy Trinity. Of these, the Virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus, is the most important. The worship of the Virgin is widespread throughout Christian lands.

Mary is known for her unbounded mercy; there are many tales of sinners who, after praying to the Mother of God, were forgiven as a result either moving her Son to leniency. Many sinners find it easier to direct their prayers for forgiveness to this kind, motherly figure than to her stern and distant Son.

Miracles are often attributed to her, and she — like the saints — is considered to be more likely to take a direct hand in worldly affairs. Her benefactors are most often the helpless: women, orphans, paupers, the crippled and the diseased. Healing orders of nuns are usually dedicated in her name.

The Virgin Mary is so popular among the common folk that many priests complain that proper worship of the Trinity is being ignored. Their complaints fall on largely deaf ears, however, and the Virgin's image can be found in virtually every cathedral and home throughout Christendom.

tory. Upon death, the faithful are rewarded in Heaven; heretics and non-believers suffer eternal torment in Hell.

The Church espouses the virtues of prayer, charity (including contributions to good works, the Church and holy war), confession and forgiveness. Humility is another Christian virtue, honored by the best knights and friars and ignored by many others. Obedience to God, and therefore His will as revealed by His priests, is required. Those Christians who willfully reject these virtues or defy the Church risk excommunication; being denied access to priests and participation in the Church rituals is tantamount to being condemned to Hell.

The word of God, His laws and the history of Jesus' life are found in the Bible, as related by the prophets, the Apostles and Saint Paul.

### **Crime and Punishment**

Here are some samples of typical medieval law — specific differences are given in the descriptions for each country.

All sentences of death, maiming or flogging take place in public. Flogging usually consists of a dozen one-HT lashes. Fines are paid to the injured party.

#### **Treason**

Conspiracy to overthrow or murder royalty or one's lord.

Punishment: Death, stripping of titles, honors, lands and properties.

#### **Murder**

Deliberate slaying of any intelligent creature. Self-defense or great justifiable anger are defenses (in most countries, murder of an adulterous spouse and lover is usually considered "justified"). Slaying in drunken brawls, etc., generally get lighter sentences. Slaying in a duel is not murder.

Punishments: Death (extreme cases), slavery (usual punishment), blood-price (fine, up to five years' worth of victim's income). For a "somewhat justified" killing, the blood-price will be reduced.

#### **Rape**

Sexual assault. Forbidden by religious codes.

Punishments: Varies in accordance with the judge's indignation. There will always be a fine; there may be slavery, mutilation or flogging. The usual fine is equal to a "standard" dowry for the victim.

#### **Assault**

Attacking another without sufficient justification (as decided upon by judge).

Punishments: Flogging (until unconsciousness, usually), maiming (if victim is permanently harmed by the attack, the attacker is given similar injury).

#### **Major Theft**

Stealing anything worth more than \$300. Nonpayment of debt is also theft.

Punishment: Slavery (if the stolen object is irretrievable), or maiming (hand removed or forehead branded, as judge decrees).

#### **Petty Theft**

Stealing any property up to \$300 in worth. Nonpayment of debt is also theft.

Punishment: Flogging plus a fine (twice the value of the stolen property) or slavery (if unable to pay the fine).

#### **Waste**

Damaging or destroying, accidentally or on purpose, the property of another.

Punishment: Fine (value of property), perhaps plus flogging (if the crime was blatant and intentional) or slavery (if the offender can't pay).

### **Canon Law**

The Church and all the lands of Christendom are subject to the canon law — religious and secular rules formulated over centuries by the Curia. These laws were first gathered together into one book by the Megalan philosopher-monk Domitus, in the year 1578. Often referred to as the Domitian Code, canon law is very comprehensive, governing most aspects of daily life.

Of course, the Domitian Code contains complete rules regarding the business of the Church: the administration of church lands, rules of monastic orders, heresy, excommunication and tithes are all addressed. Dealings with non-Christians, the conduct of holy war, relations between Church and state, and the punishment of wayward clergy are all regulated by canon law.

Canon law also governs many areas of secular life as well; some of the most important are listed below. Punishments for disobeying Church law range from minor penance and humiliation to maiming and, worst of all, excommunication. Only *judgments of blood* (capital punishment) are beyond the power of the ecclesiastical courts.

### **Marriage, Divorce and Dowries**

Throughout Christendom, it is generally thought that the woman's place is in the home. It is a woman's duty to obey God and her husband, to take care of the home, and to bear and raise children. She is not, however, her husband's property. Every woman has specific rights under canon law, which her husband must obey for fear of reprisal by her family and the Church.

A child of either sex can be betrothed at any age at the wish of the parents, but may not actually be married until age 15. A marriage is not valid until consummated. Marriage between individuals who share a common ancestor within the last three generations is prohibited, as is polygamy. All marriages must be sanctioned by the Church, although not necessarily officiated at by a priest. Special dispensations can be made by the Church on any of these rules.

When a woman marries, her new husband will expect her to bring a *dowry* — her contribution, in lands, goods, livestock or money, to the new household. Parents of any social rank will want to make sure their daughters are well dowried. A girl with a very good dowry will have



a far wider choice of husbands, and may even attract a match above her own rank. A groom must in turn pay a *bride price* or gift to his new wife's parents, and grant her an interest in his own holdings.

A customary dowry is usually equal to four months' cost of maintenance for the bride's social status. The bride price usually amounts to about one month's cost for the groom's social status. The exact amount and content of the dowry or bride price varies from region to region.

Divorce is rare in Christian lands, and is frowned upon by the Church. The Church will grant a divorce only in cases of heresy, or proven adultery on the part of the woman. In the event of a divorce, a wife is entitled to the return other dowry (unless she was proven to be at fault), and, if her husband's actions were responsible for the divorce, to one third of her former spouse's property and money. The bride price is non-refundable. In certain rare occasions, the Church might annul a marriage for other reasons, such as an aging King whose wife has failed to bear him an heir.

### ***Death, Wills and Inheritance***

Canon law also outlines the rules of inheritance, and provides for the care of orphans and widows. As a rule, a man's titles and lands pass to his eldest son — after the Church receives a tithe equal to ten percent of the estate. All the deceased's debts must then be paid next. Finally, the widow is entitled to a portion of the remainder, equal at least to her dowry, but often equaling one third. Any legitimate daughters will also receive a dower allowance. Whatever is left over goes to the eldest son.

If there is no legitimate male heir, all of the estate goes to the widow. Should she not remarry within three years, any noble titles and fiefdoms revert back to the lord who granted them, so that he may bestow them as he wishes. The exception is Caithness, where, if there are no male heirs, the oldest daughter will rightfully inherit and hold the land.



Other arrangements are possible if detailed in a written will, which must be signed and approved by a priest of the Church. Thus, a man can disinherit a worthless older son for a younger one, make greater allowances for his wife or daughters, and, of course, make large donations to the Church. However, a daughter may not inherit the lands of her father, unless there are no other living male relations *and* no lord to whom the land rightly reverts.

### ***Oaths and Perjury***

Virtually all oaths, contracts and testimony before a court are made in the name of God or Jesus. Therefore, the breaking of an oath or contract (including oaths of fealty and homage), or the act of perjury, are serious crimes under canon law. Usually, a penance will be assigned to the guilty party, consisting of a fine (paid to the Church), prayer and a service of some sort. In extreme cases, the criminal's tongue might be cut out — after he has been excommunicated. If a commercial contract has been violated, then the oathbreaker forfeits any goods or money involved — a portion of which, again, goes to the Church.

### ***Saints***

There are literally *thousands* of saints recognized by the Church, and many more that the Church doesn't recognize. Saints are the spirits of men and women who led extraordinarily holy lives, and now reside in heaven, while retaining the ability to act upon the prayers of the living. Many saints were martyrs who lost their lives in the service of God and the Church. All saints performed miracles, through God's grace, while alive; they can do so even more effectively from heaven. Their power, however, is never their own, but is derived directly from God.

Almost every profession, nation, city, guild, church, or monastic order has a patron saint. Children, as part of their confirmation, are given a *saint's name* — that saint becomes a sort of *guardian angel* to his namesake. Even specific animals, illnesses or situations have a saint assigned to them. Which saint one prays to depends upon what the worshiper desires.

Only the Curia may canonize a deceased individual, thus making that person a saint. The worship of *unapproved* saints is forbidden — a restriction that is frequently ignored. Because of magic, the Church is *very* careful about separating miracles — acts of divine nature — from simple sorcery.

Here is a partial list of some of the most commonly called upon saints, and the powers or professions they are associated with.

- Sts. Alyce and Egan: healing and healers
- St. Ambrose; learning
- St. Anthony: pigs and swineherds
- St. Apollonia: toothaches — because her jaw was broken by her executioner
- St. Bertram: Cardiel
- St. Constantine: bureaucrats
- St. Cornelia: oxen and teamsters
- St. Dunstan: smiths
- St. Gabriel: messengers
- St. Galerius: bridges — he was hung from one
- St. George: Caithness
- St. Giles: beggars, cripples and the poor
- St. Honorius: Megalos — he was the fast Megalan Archbishop
- St. Martin: soldiers — he had been one
- St. Nicholas: mariners
- St. Raphael: lovers
- St. Sebastian: archers
- St. Theodosius Equitas: horses
- St. Thomas: mages and magic
- St. Victor: mercy, rain — he avoided being burned at the stake when a sudden downpour quenched the flames



## Usury

The charging of exorbitant interest on money lent is forbidden by the Domitian Code. It was originally illegal for Christians to charge *any* interest, or to lend money at all. This favored Jewish merchants tremendously, as they were free from any such restrictions. As Yrth was settled and trade became more profitable, the laws concerning usury were relaxed.

In general, no Christian moneylender may charge more than 30% annually on money loaned to another Christian. Additional rates may be charged if repayment is late. Any investor who shares in the risks of a business venture is legally entitled to a share of any profits gained. Interest rates vary, as expected, according to the risk involved. Those guilty of usury — charging too high an interest — are invariably punished with stiff fines and sometimes physical torture.

## Sale of Indulgences

The theology of indulgence is based on the concept that sin is always evil, and even though the crime and the eternal punishment are forgiven in the sacrament of penance, justice demands that a sinner always pay for his crimes. Thus a temporal punishment is imposed at the time of confession: a good work, hard prayer, or, perhaps, a fine.

The practice of selling such “indulgences” to sinners, to allow absolution through the giving of money, is controversial, but openly practiced in Megalos, Caithness and Cardiel, on the other hand, strictly forbid this manner of fundraising for the Church. The Curia has yet to rule on the matter one way or the other, though it is a favorite topic of debate.

### *Indulgence Price List (Megalos)*

Sin	Payment
Intoxication	\$5
Bearing False Witness	\$20
Fornication	\$25
Forgery	\$50
Deceptive Trading	\$50
Petty Theft	\$60
Adultery	\$100
Assault	\$200
Major Theft	\$2,500
Killing in a Duel	\$5,000
Murder	\$20,000+
Black Magic	\$50,000 +

## Slavery

Officially, the Church frowns on all slavery as being contrary to the Christian spirit of brotherly love. In practice, canon law merely restricts who can be made a slave. According to the Domitian Code, it is illegal for any Christian to own a fellow Christian against the slave's will. Indenturement, the practice of selling oneself into slavery for a specified period of time (usually to pay a debt) is allowed. The enslavement of pagans, heretics and infidels is also legal.

As a result of these laws, most slaves in Christendom are prisoners of war, captured by Crusaders. In Megalos, however, slavery is a common punishment for many serious crimes. It is customary to have the local bishop excommunicate a convicted murderer, for example, so that he may then be enslaved. This practice is strongly criticized by many theologians, but those who profit from the slave trade are not inclined to listen.

## Relics and Pilgrimage

Relics are objects which, because of their holy origins or use by holy persons, have miraculous powers. Most of the holiest relics of Earth were lost to Christians when the Banestorm carried them to Yrth. A few Christians, however, brought — or claimed to have brought — some relics with them. The Church of Yrth soon began to acquire its own, native relics as well.

The most common type of relic is the corpse or part of the corpse of a saint. The burial places of saints are regarded as places of great power and holiness, and cathedral altars are often built directly over the tombs. Many people carry bits of hair or scraps of clothing which reputedly belonged to a saint. The power inherent in a relic is supposed to protect and bless the person or congregation which possesses it, and many relics have miraculous curative powers attributed to them.

Faith in the power of relics is so great in many people that they will travel long distances and pay large sums for the opportunity to touch or view a holy object. Catering to pilgrims is a booming business for many churches and abbeys; so much so that *fake* relics are more numerous than the genuine articles. At least three cathedrals and two monasteries claim to have the complete corpse of St. Olybrius, and both the Templars and the Hospitallers allegedly possess the head of John the Baptist.

Some of the most popular destinations of pilgrims are: St. Paul's in Mehan, where a piece of the True Cross is on display; Serrun cathedral, under whose altar St. Olybrius is supposedly buried; Martyr's Oak, near Alimar to Cardiel, where heretics allegedly hung St. Bertram; and the tomb of St. Giles the Kind, in Craine.

## Sin for Sale

The sale of indulgences is intended (by the Church, at least) to allow repentant sinners to, quite literally, pay for their wrongdoing while simultaneously filling the Church coffers. Presumably, money earned through this practice is spent on good and charitable works, thereby making up for the “evil” that was committed.

People are not allowed to “preemptively” buy indulgences! In addition to the serious theological questions it raises, it would be very hard to find a priest who was willing to take \$500 from someone who wanted his “account” credited for 20 fornications! And telling a Bishop to “hold on to this \$20,000, I'm going to go kill someone” won't be acceptable...

## Church Hierarchy and the Holy Orders

The Church is ruled by the Curia, which consists of the archbishops and the Grand Masters of Yrth's greatest religious orders: the Olybrians, Templars, Hospitallers and Thomasites. There are nine Archbishops; Caithness has one, Cardiel three (one in Tredroy), and Megalos five. Cities and large towns have resident Bishops who supervise the local churches. An Archbishop or Grand Master of one of the great religious orders is social rank 6; a bishop or Grand Master of one of the lesser orders is rank 5; the head of a powerful abbey or order is rank 4; senior priests are rank 2. The commonest priest or monk is rank 1 by virtue of the sanctity of the Church.

The priesthood and hierarchy of the Church is chiefly male; women may rise no higher than Mother Superior of an abbey. All members of the clergy are bound to codes of chastity. Most of the higher echelons of the priesthood are literate. Holy folk dress in robes buttoned in front from neck to ankle. These robes may be of any color save red or green, ranging from the simple rope-belted brown robe of a monk, to the severe black-and-white of a nun, to the long cassock of a priest or a bishop's jeweled raiment.

### *The Rule of St. Benedict*

The Christian Church of Yrth has many monastic Orders, but all observe — with varying degrees of fidelity — the Benedictine rule. This code of conduct, laid down by St. Benedict centuries before the Banestorm brought humans to Yrth, regulates every aspect of the cleric's daily life.

Monks and nuns living under the Rule of St. Benedict must take the triple oath of chastity, poverty and obedience. They may own no property save their habit or robes, and usually sleep on a simple mat on the floor of their cells. Speaking during meals is prohibited, and attendance at mass is required. All monks are required to serve in some useful capacity; by working in the monastery's fields and gardens, preparing food, constructing and repairing monastic buildings, etc. In addition, they must fulfill their religious duties of prayer, study of the Bible, and charitable work for the poor. Some monks and nuns are *cloistered*, meaning that they are totally isolated from the secular world. Their vows prohibit them from leaving the abbey grounds and even speaking to anyone who is not a member of the order, under *any* circumstances,

Benedictine monks are required to follow a specific daily regimen of prayer and work. Their day begins at Matins, midnight, with prayer and meditation, after which they may return to sleep. They are awakened for prayer once again at Lauds, around 4:00 a.m., and then eat breakfast at the hour of Prime — around 7:00. The morning is spent working (hard physical labor is regarded as good for the soul), with only a short prayer break about 9:00 — the hour of Terce. At noon or Sext, the brothers have their midday meal before returning to their labors. A few hours later — at None — the monks cease working in order to pray and meditate until Vespers, a little before sunset. The Rule requires that dinner be eaten before dark; the rest of the evening is taken up by study and prayer. The monks finally go to bed after the service of Compline, which occurs several hours after dark, usually about 9:00 p.m.

### *The Olybrians*

The Holy Order of St. Michael Olybrius of Serrun is Yrth's greatest monastic organization. St. Olybrius was the first great missionary to the Goblin kingdoms. His success earned him the love of many Goblin peasants, and the enmity of their chieftains, who had him executed in 1194. Founded about the same time as Megalos itself, the order which bears his name carried on his work. Within 20 years, the Goblins of the south were thoroughly Christian.

### *Heresy*

Heresy is a religious belief or opinion that is contrary to the traditional teachings of the Church. Christianity in Yrth has spawned thousands of heretical offshoots. Some heresies have been brutally suppressed or reconverted to orthodoxy — others survive, often in remote rural areas, completely unknown to the Curia or the local Bishop.

The punishment for a heretic who refuses to recant his belief and perform appropriate penance is death at the stake. The Curia may declare a theologian whose philosophies are too radical, or an overly independent monastic order, to be heretical — this is what happened to the Caithness Church 150 years ago. In such instances, the person or group is given a chance to return to the fold before being excommunicated and punished.

The most common form of heresy occurs in the isolated farming villages where elements of pre-Christian, pagan natural worship have been incorporated into their Christian beliefs. These heresies usually involve fertility rites meant to insure a bountiful harvest and the growth of flocks and herds.

The Huguenots (Protestants) have made themselves heretics by declaring themselves to be separate from the overall church. They do not accept religious authority — even their own leaders are elected, unpaid, and rotate among the community. They are burned as heretics everywhere except in Tredroy and some very tolerant areas of Cardiel, where they band together to form tight religious communities — mostly out of self-defense.

Numerous heresies have to do with the role of magic and nonhumans. Some *sects* maintain that magic must be forbidden, and that all wizards are servants of the Devil. The Penitentes, who claim that Yrth is Purgatory and that they are sinners serving penance, believe this. They see Elves, Goblins and other nonhumans as demons sent to corrupt them. Penitentine fanatics sometimes wage campaigns of terror against mages who live near them.

On the other hand, at least one heretical cult, the Manites, believes that those with Magical Aptitude are God's chosen. All others are condemned to Hell. These heretics actively seek out others with magical ability and try to convince them to join their group. They are opposed by orthodox wizards, who worry that the heretics' actions will create an anti-mage backlash among a fearful and superstitious populace.

### ***The Arrival of the Templars***

In the summer of 1310, in Paris, France on Earth, sixty knights of the Templar order were burned at the stake as witches. The entire order was declared heretical by the Pope; its lands and castles were seized by the Crown. The remaining knights were forced to either confess to heresy and renounce the order or go into hiding.

It was on Halloween night of that same year that Templars first appeared on Yrth. Riding out of the midst of a furious storm in full armor, some sixty knights pleaded for sanctuary at St. Giles Abbey just outside the walls of Megalos. They claimed to be knights who had taken up the Cross and monastic vows in order to defend Christendom. They also said they were fleeing persecution arising from false accusations made by their enemies.

The startled abbot admitted the knights — the Banestorm still manifested itself occasionally at that time, and it was clear from the knights' speech and manner that they had just arrived from Earth. The abbot also notified the archbishop, however, who dispatched several Olybrian inquisitors to interview the newcomers. Although the knights were not entirely cooperative, they were invited by the archbishop to establish their order in his diocese — the Hospitallers had proved how powerful such an order could be.

Although the knights claimed they knew nothing of witchcraft, virtually every one of the original sixty had mastered the magical arts before he had been in Yrth a single year. And the new order almost immediately began accepting nonhumans into its ranks, when many humans still considered them demons or worse. The Earth-born Templars dispersed, each following an alleged divine vision to a strategic location. At a river crossing, important crossroads or commanding hilltop, the knight would found a house of the order, and eventually build a fortress.

Within a generation, the Knights Templar were renowned for their courage, zeal and battle-provess. Their rise was so rapid that it has raised more than a few eye-brows, yet the Knights' success is mostly attributed to the machinations of the arch-bishops and imperial favor.

Still, there are rumors: the original knights had adapted to life on Yrth a bit *too* easily; their skill with magic was acquired *too* quickly; the spread of their order *too* rapid. Perhaps there was some truth to those accusations which the knights have always been reluctant to discuss. After all, they did appear on Halloween night. And they had seemed well-provisioned and informed, *too*. One might almost say they'd been *prepared*. A few enemies of the Order even whisper that the Templars are the only Earthlings who ever came to Yrth *voluntarily* — and that they might even know how to *get back*...

The Olybrians carry on their evangelical tradition today. Wandering Olybrian friars, begging alms, preaching the Gospel and aiding the poor, are a familiar sight throughout Christendom. In their great monasteries, theologians formulate arguments against heresy, abbots organize missions to distant lands and the monks work to help the peasants and keep them on the path of orthodoxy. The brothers of St. Olybrius are implacable foes of heretics — often their testimony is enough to condemn an unorthodox worshiper to the stake.

The current leader of the Olybrians is Father Jobert, Abbot of Evrow. He and the other Olybrians are frustrated by the lack of crusading zeal among the Megalan nobility. Together with the Hospitallers, Jobert is urging the Curia to declare another assault on the followers of Islam.

To be a friar of the Olybrian Order, a character must swear to follow the Benedictine rule — two Vows (a major and a minor) and a Duty, worth a total of -25 points. As part of his duty to the Order, he must preach the Christian faith to any

who cross his path. Bard, Teaching, Area Knowledge and language skills are important. An Olybrian monk is *not* required to be a pacifist, especially where infidels and heretics are concerned. Many a friar can wield his innocuous walking stave with deadly skill!

All Olybrians receive an automatic -1 reaction modifier when dealing with heretics; their reputation precedes them. They also, however, receive a +1 from Christian peasants, due to their work on behalf of the poor.

### ***The Knights Hospitaller***

The Hospitallers are a monastic order of knights following the Benedictine rule; their declared goal is the domination of Yrth by Christianity. Though they do actually operate a hospital in New Jerusalem, their primary function is military.

The Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem was first established on Yrth in the year 1187. It is told that Grand Master Roger des Moulins and eleven Knights of the Order, their comrades slain in battle with the Saracens, were spared the same fate when the Banestorm manifested itself as a huge whirlwind. Des Moulins interpreted this event as divine aid, and declared that God had chosen their number for a Crusade in the new land.

The Knights founded New Jerusalem on the site of their arrival in Yrth — ironically nowhere near the New River Jordan, but instead on the banks of the River Conn, just west of what is now the Megalos Duchy of Craine. Despite some initial feuding, common cause led to an



alliance with the armies of Megalos, fighting together to spread the hegemony of Christendom over Yrth. They were rewarded for their efforts with grants of lands and titles from the Emperor. Hospitaller priories were thus established throughout Christendom. Yet the Hospitallers have maintained their independence of the crown, answering only to their Grand Master and occasionally to the Curia.

The Hospitallers are conservative and intolerant in their theology. They are compelled by Church policy to accept Goblins, Halflings, Reptile Men and other races as capable of redemption, but they don't admit these "second-class Christians" into the order. Dwarves and Elves, because they keep to themselves and maintain their own religious beliefs, are regarded as the spawn of Satan and deadly enemies. Of course, all Hospitallers bear animosity toward their traditional adversaries, the Moslems.

The Rule of the Order (the vows) is strictly enforced, except when the Knights are on campaign — this may explain why most Hospitallers are eager to march on the slightest pretext.

While the Order does not claim that magic is inherently evil, its use is forbidden to the Hospitallers. The Rule of the Order permits no luxuries, that the brethren might remain humble, and the use of magic would make enforcement more difficult. More important is the view that magic opens one to the temptations of evil; thus, the use of magic is not for mortal man. The Hospitallers regard mages as fools dabbling in something better left to God.

Because of the intolerant nature of their theology, the Hospitallers were expelled from Cardiel in 1800. Their lands were inherited by the Knights Templar, and this has been a source of great rivalry between the two orders. The Hospitallers also lack holdings in Caithness, where the secular Order of the Stone commands the allegiance of most unlanded knights.

Today, the Order is governed from the Hospital in New Jerusalem by the Grand Master, Sir Gilford Perrennius. The holdings of the Order are divided into priories, each overseen by a Prior (Rank 4). Reporting to the Priors are the Bailiffs and the Commanders (Rank 3), overseeing a single bailey of the Order or a contingent of Knights, respectively. Common Knights of the Order (2), Novices (1) — young noblemen in training who serve as squires to the Knights — and lay soldiers (1 or 0) are subject to the commands of all of the above. The Order also maintains an assortment of laborers and servants (0 to -4).

Knights of the Hospital of St. John must take the quadruple oath — three Vows and a Duty — of the Order (a Vow not to use magic is included). In addition to knightly skill at arms, riding, etc., most Hospitaller characters have the disadvantages of Fanaticism and both Racial and Religious Intolerance. They also have a Reputation as dour fighters and enemies of the infidels (+2 from Christians, -2 from others). The Hospitallers' symbol, a white cross on a black field, is well-known... and feared.

### ***The Knights Templar***

The Order of the Poor Knights of the Temple of Solomon was founded in Yrth in 1310. The Templars quickly became powerful through Church gifts of land. The Archbishops of eastern Megalos were overjoyed at the prospect of having their own military order to counter the influence of the Hospitallers in the west. They retained tight control of the Order, hand-picking each Grand Master — who was accorded a place in the Curia, strengthening the voting block of the Megalan clerics. It was not until 1850, when the Hospitaller Grand Master and the Archbishops of Caithness and Craine insisted that the entire Curia choose the Templar leader, that the Templars received the right to elect their own Grand Master.

### ***The Jesuits***

Members of the Society of Jesus first appeared in Yrth during the 1570s, along with numerous other humans in the region now known as Araterre. The Jesuits were initially persecuted, their brand of monasticism being startlingly different from that of the Benedictine orders. But their oaths of loyalty to the Curia, obvious zeal and successful missionary activity eventually won them respect and even favor among the Church in Megalos.

Although they take vows of obedience, poverty and chastity, Jesuit monks are not cloistered, and are encouraged to go into the secular world to perform God's work. Their philosophy calls for them to take the Church to the people, rather than bringing the people to the Church. A Jesuit's pulpit may be a crate set in the middle of a busy square or a fencepost in a village commons. Jesuits may follow any of several professions — they may be physicians, mages, teachers, artists, farmers, architects, merchants or diplomats. All their earnings, however, go to the Society's treasury. There are Jesuit advisers in virtually every Megalan noble's court.

The Society of Jesus has no qualms about using its power to meddle in secular politics. The Jesuits' influence is such that they are often accused of conspiracy and political intrigue — and they're usually guilty. Some even claim that the Society is not above assassination to achieve its goals. Though it is often not clear just what the Jesuits gain from these efforts, it is apparent that they have some kind of agenda known only to themselves.

Jesuit mages are particularly mysterious. They have powers unique among the wizards of Yrth, the secrets of which they reveal to no one. Many of these powers seem to be derived from magical items of unknown origin. This has caused deep suspicion and even hatred among secular mages, who see the Society as a potential threat to their power.

*Advantages:* Patron: The Society of Jesus (15 points); Literacy (10 points).

*Disadvantages:* Triple Vow: -15 points; Reputation: Conspirators (-2 to secular wizards and some noblemen; -5 points).

*Skills:* Must have skill of 14 or better in at least one secular field.

The Templars remain the primary military arm of the Church, being more willing to heed the Curia than the Knights of St. John. They are organized in similar fashion to the Hospitallers, but their theology is much more liberal. The Order of the Temple accepts warriors from all races, as long as they are of at least knightly birth and willing to take on monastic vows. The Templars also value battle magic, and maintain a special college at Azer which trains battle mages both for the Order and the Imperial Legions.

### Monastic Orders

#### Franciscans

The followers of St. Francis were late-comers to Yrth, arriving in the fourteenth century. Franciscans show little interest in politics, either ecclesiastic or secular, but rather are content to serve God through manual labor. Monks of this order are frequently illiterate and committed to absolute poverty.

In their search to escape all worldly distractions, Franciscans have pioneered some of Yrth's most inhospitable territory. Substantial numbers west with those Christians who settled Caithness, and it is in that country that they are the most numerous.

*Advantages:* Reputation: Poor Servants of God (+1 from Christians; 5 points); Patron (Small organization, appears on 6 or less; 5 points).

*Disadvantage:* Vow: To never own money or property (-15 points).

#### Merciful Sisters of St. Karroll

This order, better known as the Sisters of Mercy, is dedicated to the healing arts. They operate hospitals and leper colonies throughout Megalos, where even the poorest of individuals may find succor. While less famous for their magical powers than the Alycite nuns of Caithness, they practice both mundane and magical healing. Their services are free, although those who can afford it are expected to make sizable donations.

*Advantages:* Reputation: Healers of the Poor (+1 to all Christians, 5 points); Patron (Small organization, appears on 6 or less; 5 points).

*Disadvantage:* Benedictine Vow (-15 points).

#### The Constantinians

St. Constantine was a 16th-century monk in charge of the Imperial archives in Megalos. He wrote on logic, philosophy and ontology, but he is best known for his book *The Organization of Daily Life (1541)*, a primer on the philosophies and practicalities of management and administration. In his later years, he built a small monastery on the outskirts of Megalos City with Imperial support. This became the nucleus of the Constantinian Order, which now plays a key role in the administration of Church and Empire.

*Disadvantage:* Vow (Obedience to the church; -5 points)

*Skills:* Administration-12+ and Accounting-10+.

The Templars are strong throughout eastern Megalos and Cardiel, much weaker west of the Blackwoods, and totally excluded from Caithness. They wear white habits, symbolizing innocence and holiness, adorned with a red cross, signifying their willingness to become martyrs for the Faith.

The current Grand Master of the Templars is Sir Jordan Siegebrieker, a human from the County of Sho'joor. Like the two men who preceded him, the Grand Master is slowly weaning the Order from the Archbishops' control. A shrewd politician and courtier, Siegebrieker has become a close friend of the Emperor, and often hunts with him. His ultimate goal is unknown, but he has enough soldiers and intelligence to become a power behind the throne.

Templar characters have much the same skills, advantages and disadvantages as Hospitallers do, save that they are tolerant of nonhumans and may use magic.

#### The Thomasites

The Order of St. Thomas, one of the twelve Apostles, is dedicated to understanding the true laws by which the universe operates, in the hopes of obtaining empirical proof of the existence of God. It was founded by St. Gareth Aristophiles in the late 1300s, a Benedictine abbot who had devoted his life to studying the works of Aristotle, Pythagoras, Ptolemy and other scientists of ancient Greece. His school, built at Nordenbury near Hidelban, attracted scholars from all over Christendom, and the Order quickly spread to most of the major cities of Megalos. Many Thomasite universities were founded; those at Megalos and Calder rival the great Moslem institutions as storehouses of Yrth's knowledge.

From the very start, Thomasite brothers concentrated heavily on the study of magic — a force obviously more prevalent in Yrth than on Earth. Initially, Thomasites were required to devote at least as much time to the magical arts as to any other discipline. They soon recognized, however, the tremendous potential for evil inherent in undisciplined magical research. Brothers who pursued their arcane studies to the exclusion of matters religious were expelled. All were required to take oaths not to use their magic powers for evil, and the study of theology and ethics was encouraged.

One of the results of Thomasite magical research has been the establishment of hospitals specializing in magical healing. These institutions are located in Megalos, Teridar, Craine and Calder. No one is refused aid, but those who can afford it are expected to make an appropriate donation. Thomasite healers are few — most brethren prefer research and study to working with patients — but they are very good, and they are excellent instructors. Thomasite hospitals are run by members of the Order, but are staffed by lay brethren or even secular healers. Resurrection spells are *not* available at Thomasite hospitals; such magic is considered contrary to God's will.

The Order of St. Thomas is one of the few that openly accepts both men and women. Thomasite abbeys have segregated quarters for men and women, but members of both sexes are allowed equal access to the libraries and laboratories. There are even a few abbesses, although the abbeys under their supervision are predominantly female. Christian scholars of all races are admitted to the Order.

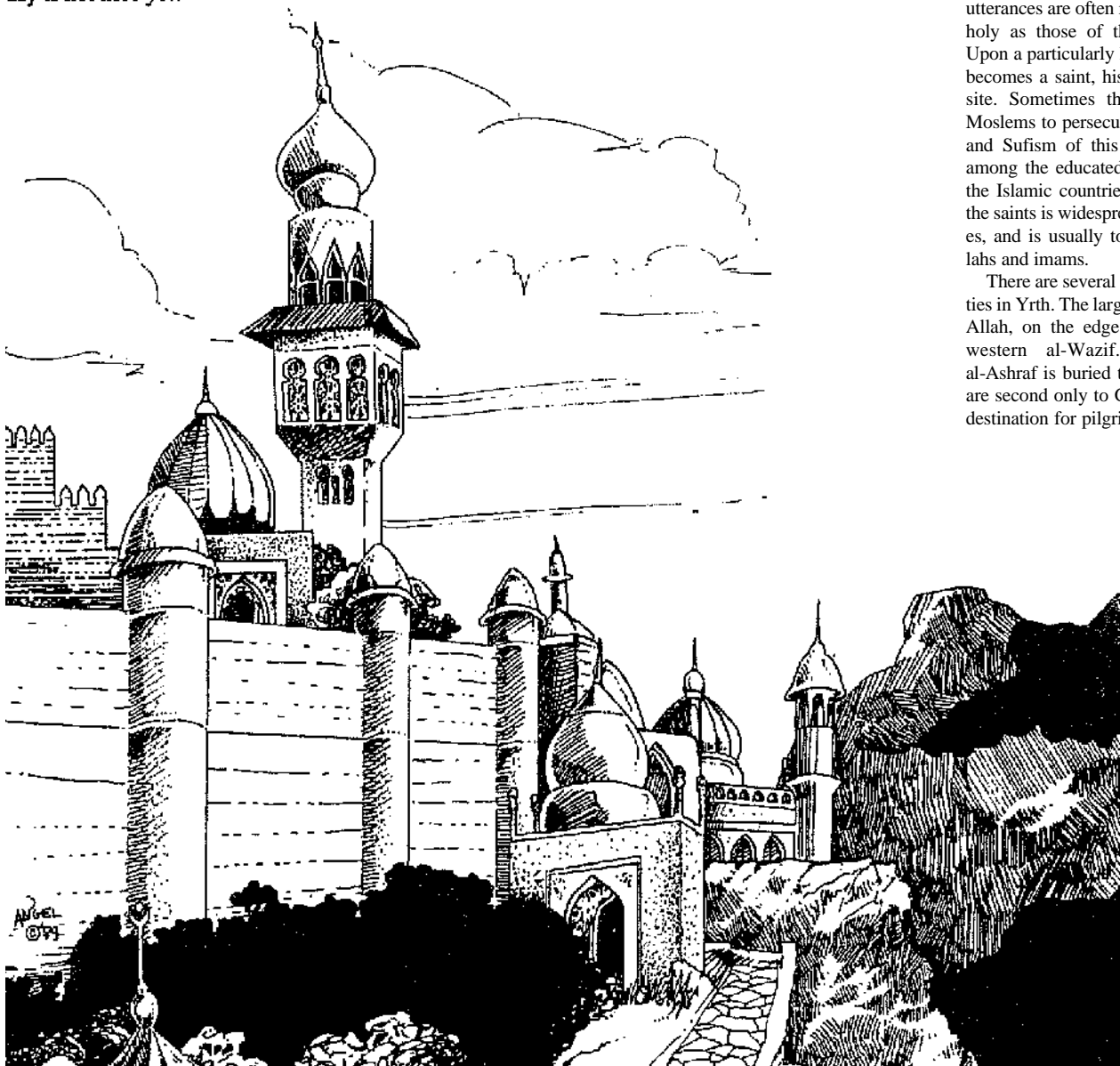
Because of the extraordinary abilities of their members and the knowledge they possess, the Order of St. Thomas is instrumental in formulating Church doctrine. Brother Thales Sapientis, their present Master, rarely takes an interest in the political maneuverings of the Curia, but is always deeply involved in any theological debate.

All Thomasite characters must have at least Magery 1, and take — in addition to their other vows — a Major Vow not to use evil or offensive combat magic. They are required to have the Theology and Philosophy skills, and should have no spell at a higher level than the lower of these skills. All Thomasites are literate; many have the Teaching and Research skills. Most members of the Order have at least a quirk that can be defined as *Inquisitive*.

Some Thomasites wander the world, learning through observation and experience what they can't discover through the study of ancient manuscripts.

## Islam

The lands of southwestern Ytarria are the home of the Faithful — the followers of Islam. The Faith is strict, yet all-encompassing; one need only proclaim, "There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is His Prophet," to be accepted as a brother and a Moslem. The men of the south are convinced that one day the *muezzins* (holy men) will sing the call to worship in all the cities of Yrth, but that day is not here yet.



## Sufis

The Sufis are Moslems who seek to attain spiritual communion with God through asceticism and meditation. The name Sufi is derived from the Arabic word *suf*, the name for the coarse woolen shirts worn by Moslems of this sect.

Sufis are mystics — their ultimate goal is spiritual union with the universe as the manifestation of Allah. They achieve this union through spiritual ecstasy brought on by fasting, harsh discipline, and intense meditation and study of the Koran. Some Sufis achieve ecstasy by exhausting themselves in a rigorous, whirling dance — thus the whirling dervishes of Christian tales.

There are orders of Sufi mystics, usually organized around a single spiritual leader. They often build communities in isolated regions, so they may more easily concentrate on the divine. In this they are similar to Christian monastic orders. Unlike Christian monks, Sufis do not take monastic vows. They often have several wives and many children, they may own property, and they usually pursue an ordinary occupation. They also do not believe in the need to attend organized prayers at a mosque. The Sufi seeks a personal understanding of God.

Because Sufi leaders are supposed to be able to commune with God, their utterances are often regarded as nearly as holy as those of the Prophet himself. Upon a particularly holy Sufi's death, he becomes a saint, his grave a pilgrimage site. Sometimes this causes orthodox Moslems to persecute Sufis for idolatry, and Sufism of this type is uncommon among the educated and the wealthy in the Islamic countries. Yet veneration of the saints is widespread among the masses, and is usually tolerated by the mulahs and imams.

There are several large Sufi communities in Yrth. The largest is at the Pillars of Allah, on the edge of the badlands in western al-Wazif. The Sufi saint al-Ashraf is buried there, and the Pillars are second only to Geb'al-Din itself as a destination for pilgrims.

## History

The Moslems which the Banestorm had deposited on Yrth found themselves in a wide, empty country of rolling, arid plains and winding rivers. Adopting the nomadic lifestyle of their forebears, they traveled across the plains, fighting, herding and trading. Where they gathered to trade, towns sprang up, providing a refuge for the scholars, doctors, artists, poets and *mullahs* (holy men) from the great Islamic cities of Earth. Two cultures grew side by side: one was nomadic and illiterate, the other urban and enlightened, but both were united by their faith in Allah and reverence for His book, the Koran.

In the year 1160 (555 of the Islamic calendar), wandering tribesmen discovered the great valley deep in the mountains known as the Fence of God. They came upon a great black rock jutting up out of the plain, with passages from the Koran carved upon its surface. An ancient man was sitting upon it, who greeted the tribesmen in Arabic. He told them that he had been waiting for sixty years to show the Moslems of Yrth where to build their holy city. Awed by the aura of holiness about the man, the tribesmen left, promising to return with as many mullahs as they could gather. When they returned several months later, the old man was dead — yet his corpse had decayed not at all, and was untouched by scavengers. The mullahs pronounced this a sign from Allah, and founded the hidden city of Geb'al-Din upon the very spot (see p. 79).

During this early period, the two major sects of Islam — Sunni and Shi'ite — lived in relative harmony. The holy men of the cities argued over theology, but the men of the plains were more concerned with minor feuds over territory, goat theft, and so forth. The invasion of the Christians changed everything.

The Grand Crusade of 1440 caught the Moslems completely by surprise. They responded quickly, however, and by 1450 the Islamic kingdoms were formed. The first was al-Haz, with a Shi'ite holy man as Sultan and Imam, the supreme monarch of Moslems on Yrth. A few years later, the predominantly Sunni tribesmen to the north founded al-Wazif, naming their most able warrior Caliph — the political and spiritual leader of Islam. Only the threat of a common foe and the spirit of Islamic brotherhood prevented an outbreak of war between the factions.

This state of peace did not last long, however. As soon as the legions of Megalos turned toward al-Kard, Wazifi armies marched south, intent on seizing control of Geb'al-Din. A twenty-year series of bloody wars ensued, during which al-Kard fell to Christian armies. Out of necessity, the two Moslem nations concluded a truce assuring Sunni access to the Holy City, which holds to this day.

## The Message of the Prophet

Islam is based on the word of God, Allah, as revealed in the Koran, and on the Hadiths, the divinely inspired sayings of the Prophet Mohammed. The Arabic word *islam* means submission; the Prophet preached submission to God in all things. For the Moslem, religion is more than a matter of spiritual fulfillment; it is a way of life. Politics, morality, theology, law, art — every aspect of daily life is encompassed and governed by the Islamic Faith.

The Koran is the Moslem's comprehensive guide to living a proper life. Unlike the Bible, it is not considered the work of mortal authors, but the direct word of Allah. Every syllable is the creation of God — Mohammed was merely the instrument through which He made His will known. The Koran is the final, unclouded word of God, and therefore any further revelations are automatically false. Reinterpretation is possible; additions and revisions are not. Translations are flawed by definition; the only true way to study the Koran is in Arabic.

Idolatry of any kind is strictly forbidden. It is a sin to associate anything with

### The Kharijites

This Moslem sect is the Islamic counterpart to the Hospitaliers. Kharijites are dedicated to the concept of *jihad* — Islamic Holy War. Unlike the Earthly sect from which they are descended, the Kharijites of Yrth are specifically an order of Islamic holy knights. They are most common in al-Wazif, where they have a number of powerful fortresses. They are the bitter enemies of the Hospitaliers, whose strongholds lie just across the border to the north. Kharijite leaders are constantly agitating the Caliph for invasion of the Christian kingdoms.

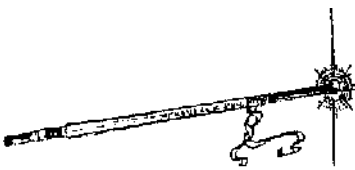
Kharijites believe that *jihad* is the sixth pillar of Islam, as important as the pilgrimage. They therefore believe that they are better Moslems than their less rabid co-religionists — making them somewhat unpopular in many circles. The Caliph leaves them unmolested, however, since they are such diligent border guards. Their occasional forays into Megalan territory amount to little without the support of the Caliph's armies, and provide the Caliph with valuable intelligence.

Magic, while not forbidden by Kharijite belief, is not commonly practiced by its members. This has nothing to do with any prejudice on the part of the knights, but all wizards are required to serve for at least two years in the Wazifi army, and the Kharijites prefer not to take orders from those not dedicated to the *jihad*.

*Advantages:* Reputation: Fanatic Enemy of the Infidels (+1 from like-minded Moslems; -3 from Christians; 5 points); Patron (Medium organization; appears on 9 or less; 15 points).

*Disadvantages:* Vow: Committed to the *jihad* (-10 points); Intolerance (of Christians; -5 points).

*Skills:* Broadsword; Shield; Lance; Knife; Riding (all at 14+).



God, or to create a representation of Him. Even depictions of the human form are considered improper, since man was made in God's image. For this reason, most Islamic art is abstract and geometrical in nature. Calligraphy, however, is very common — comprising an entire second branch of Islamic art. Often great works of calligraphic art consist of verses from the Koran worked into geometrical forms and patterns. Islamic calligraphy is frequently so fancy and ornately abstracted that the text can barely be read.

Every man is judged at his death. If he has led a pure and holy life, he will be admitted into Paradise on the Judgment Day. If he is a believer, but has sinned, he must serve penance in Hell first. Infidels are condemned to Hell forever. Paradise is a garden where one enjoys all the physical luxuries and spiritual bliss. Beside rivers of pure water, milk and honey, beautiful maidens and young boys serve fruit and wine to believers who spend their days reclining on silken couches.

### **The Five Pillars of Islam**

The core of the Faith are the basic duties of Moslems towards Allah — known as the Five Pillars of Islam.

The first of these, *Shahada*, is the profession of faith in Allah and His Prophet. One need only utter this short prayer, and believe it, to be considered a Moslem.

*Salat*, the second pillar, is worship and prayer. All Moslems are required to pray five times daily — at dawn, midday, mid-afternoon, sunset and before retiring. One must kneel and face the *qibla*, in the direction of Geb'al-Din, while praying. (On Earth, Moslems pray facing Mecca, but its direction is lost to the faithful of Yrth.) On Fridays, the faithful gather in the mosques at midday to worship. *Imams*, men who are learned in the Koran, deliver sermons and lead the congregation in prayer. Women are excluded but are expected to pray at home during the services (as well as the five normal calls-to-prayer).

Charity, or *Zakat*, is the third pillar of Islam. All Moslems are expected to give to the needy, especially to orphans, widows and pilgrims. Customs vary, but at least 5% of a person's income should be given to charity. Refusing to give alms to a holy man or pilgrim is considered a grave sin, requiring immediate penance.

The fourth pillar is called *Sawm* — the fast. For the entire month of Ramadan, no Moslem should eat or drink anything other than water while the sun shines. Sensory pleasures such as smoking are also forbidden. Even after sunset, meals are usually plain and unseasoned. Pregnant women, the old, the sick and travelers are exempt from fasting. At the end of Ramadan, a great feast is held, followed by a festival where friends and relatives exchange gifts.

The fifth and final pillar is the *Hajj*, or pilgrimage. At least once in every Moslem's life, he must journey to Geb'al-Din. Thousands make the trip every year. Those who are too poor to afford the journey beg alms along the way. Great pilgrim caravans, protected by treaty and the sanctity of their purpose, are a common sight along the roads to the Hidden City.

### **Predestination and Free Will**

Moslems believe that every event, from the beginning of time to the end of the world, is predetermined by God. It is also believed that free will exists, and that each person bears responsibility for his actions.

On the surface, these two beliefs seem contradictory — but they're not. It was Allah who gave men the power of choice and the ability to distinguish between good and evil. Furthermore — being omniscient — He knows what choice each individual will make, before he makes it, without forcing or influencing the person either way. In effect, each individual is blessed with just

### **The Assassins**

This sect was founded on Earth in 1090, during the height of the Banestorm. Members were transported to Yrth along with other Moslems, and they took their beliefs and organization with them. Following the example of their Earthly founder, they built a fortress high in the mountains of western al-Haz, and named it al-Amut — Eagle's Nest. There the sect's leader resides, known to outsiders only as the Old Man of the Mountain, and dispatches his followers on missions of terror.

The Assassins take their name from the word *hashishin*, meaning *drinkers of hashish* (the drug of Yrth which bears this name is different from that of Earth, but produces the same euphoric effect). Their ultimate goal has always been to spread their particular brand of Islam across all of Yrth. First, however, they believe they must bring down the rulers of orthodox Islam. Their principal methods are public murder and political intrigue. Virtually every city in Islamic lands harbors members of the Assassin cult.

The sect practices a mystical brand of Islam, disregarding formal prayers and fasting. The Assassins believe that there are nine stages of spiritual growth, and that only when all the faithful reach the ninth stage will the Mahdi — the Redeemer — come. The Assassins believe that all property should be communally owned, and that the worship of the Rock at Geb'al-Din and veneration of saints is sacrilege.

Assassin agents are known as *fedayeen*, and are highly trained in their art. They are masters of disguise rather than stealth, since their murders are always committed in public. This is to demonstrate that enemies of the sect will be punished, and to assure the martyrdom of the assassin — who is almost always cut down on the spot. Fedayeen are especially fond of striking during Friday prayers in the mosque, where they are assured of a large audience and can easily get close to their victim.

Assassin characters must take the following:

*Advantage:* Patron: Old Man of the Mountain (10 points).

*Disadvantages:* Reputation: Assassin (4 to non-members, rarely recognized; -7 points); Fanaticism (-15 points); an Addiction to hashish is optional (-10 points).

*Skills:* Knife-12+; Disguise-14+.





enough rope to hang himself. All men, as a result, are held accountable by God, despite the fact that their lives and eventual fates are predetermined.

This rather complex idea is frequently misunderstood by Christians, who assume all Moslems must be both fatalistic and not terribly concerned about leading a moral life. They could not be more wrong.

## The Clergy

Islam has no formal clerical hierarchy or priesthood — the services of a cleric are not required for a person to be a good Moslem. Religious leadership is conferred by the consensus of the community, not through any formal ordination. Any man accepted by the community as knowledgeable in the Faith and of good character may become an imam (Rank 1 or 2), or prayer leader. To become a mullah (Rank 3-5), one must be a scholar of the Koran and the Hadiths — usually, but not necessarily, educated at one of the Islamic universities.

Mullahs have the authority to serve as judges and assign penance for sins. General agreement among the mullahs is necessary to effect any change in doctrine or interpretation, with the opinions of the older and more prestigious mullahs carrying more weight. Since there is no separation of church and state in Islamic countries, supreme religious authority rests with the ruler: the Caliph for the Sunnis of al-Wazif and Cardiel; the Sultan for the Shi'ite faithful in al-Haz.

The crescent is the symbol of Islam. No specific attire is required for the clergy, but black robes are common.

### Islamic Orders of Chivalry

Islamic knights are, in oath, training and behavior, very similar to Christian ones, save that they wear a crescent rather than a cross and fight with a curved blade rather than a straight one.

Characters belonging to any of these orders will have the Reputation advantage: +2 in Islamic lands (10 points); +1 in Christian lands (5 points). Even in Megalos the Islamic knights are accorded grudging respect for their skill and courage.

### The Order of the Crescent Moon

The best knights of al-Haz belong to this order. They are pledged to the defense of Shia Islam, though they do not swear homage directly to the Sultan. The word of the mullahs carries greater weight with the Knights of the Crescent Moon, much to Mamoun's displeasure.

### The Order of the Pegasus

The Order of the Pegasus, the chief Wazifi chivalric order, is pledged to the Caliph. They are ready to serve him at any moment, and form the elite core of his army. Knights of the Pegasus also act as the Caliph's bodyguard; to be selected for this duty is the highest honor. Being Sunnis and more active, by virtue of geography, in the defense against Megalos, the Pegasi have little use for knights of the Crescent Moon. The rivalry between the two orders sometimes takes on the proportions of a small war.

### The Warriors of the Quill

The Warriors of the Quill are a religious order spread throughout Moslem lands. Their motto is "the pen is mightier than the sword." In addition to being skilled in the chivalric and martial arts, they are expected to memorize the Koran and other Islamic works word for word. Their role is to preach, to teach and to judge. It is not sufficient for them merely to say what is right or wrong as the mullahs do; they must *act* to promote Allah's will.



## The Sharia

The *Sharia* is the Islamic code of law. It consists of rules drawn from the Koran and the Hadiths, interpreted over a millennium. Aside from the occasional edicts of Moslem rulers, addressing specific situations, it is the only law in Islamic lands; there is no secular code. The Sharia regulates religious, social, political and private life.

Punishments are generally of the "eye for an eye" nature. Maiming is a common form of punishment; monetary fines, except in the form of damages, are unknown. A murderer is killed unless the family of the victim agrees to accept a blood-price instead. A man convicted of killing his neighbor's goat must pay the value of the animal to its owner. A thief loses his right hand for a first offense; his left foot for the second; his life for the third. Perjurers have their tongues cut out.

For a Moslem to be convicted of a crime, it must first be proven that the offense was committed intentionally. Thus, deaths, injuries or monetary damages caused accidentally are not punishable by law. In order to prove guilt, the plaintiff must produce two adult male Moslem witnesses, or one man and two women. Failure to do so results in a verdict of not guilty.

All cases are heard before a religious court; these are overseen by a full-time judge known as a *qadi*, or in smaller towns, by the mullah. Although the laws

are harsh, they are interpreted fairly. These courts have the advantages of being swift and virtually incorruptible. No amount of money will tempt a qadi; even the influence of a high-ranking person is rarely effective.

Non-Moslems, unless protected by treaty as in Tredroy, have *no* legal rights in Moslem lands. However, the Koran teaches the Faithful respect for "peoples of the Book." Jews and Christians will be tolerated by good Moslems, though they do not officially have any legal rights. Others are not so lucky, and may be robbed, beaten, enslaved or even killed with impunity. Despite the lack of legal rights, any non-Moslem who commits a crime is punishable to the full extent of the law.

### ***Marriage, Divorce and Dowries***

In Islam, marriage takes the form of a contract between husband and wife. The groom negotiates the contract with the bride's *wali*, usually the father or oldest brother. The amount of the bride-price must be mentioned in the contract, and is paid directly to the bride. The groom receives no dowry from the bride or her family. The bride has the right to refuse a match her *wali* has made for her, but may not marry without his permission unless she has been previously married. The Koran allows a man to have up to four wives at one time, but he must treat them all equally; a woman may only have one husband at a time.

A divorce is easy to obtain under Islamic law. A man may divorce his wife at any time by simply declaring that they are divorced, in public, three times; he need not have a reason. Women may obtain a divorce, with the husband's consent, by paying a fee to him for her release. She may also be granted a divorce if the husband is guilty of cruelty, adultery or desertion.

Adulterers are punished with death by stoning; fornicators with flogging. Anyone found guilty of making a false accusation of adultery is subject to flogging.

### ***Inheritance***

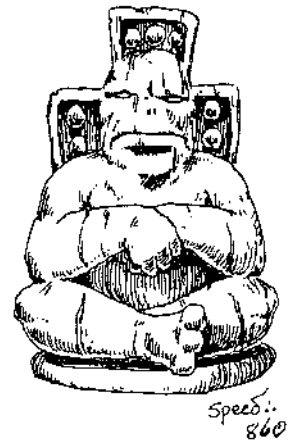
Under the Sharia, two-thirds of a dead man's estate is distributed among his relatives according to law. The remaining third may be divided any way the deceased wished. A complex system determines the share received by each male blood relative; the size of the share is determined by the degree of kinship, with the first son receiving the largest. Widows are guaranteed one quarter of the two-thirds portion of the estate (divided equally among the wives). Fiefdoms and feudal titles are handled in a fashion similar to that in Christian countries, except that fiefdoms are occasionally divided among surviving sons, rather than going entirely to the eldest.

### ***Alcohol, Usury and Slavery***

In al-Haz, it is illegal to sell or consume alcoholic beverages. Although drinking is tolerated in al-Wazif as a custom of the Christian minority, it is frowned upon, and public drunkenness is a serious crime. In both countries, violators are flogged.

The charging of interest is considered a sin and is prohibited by the Sharia. This prohibition applies only to charging interest to other Moslems, however, and does not protect infidels from greedy or unscrupulous lenders.

It is illegal for one Moslem to hold another believer as a slave, regardless of the circumstances. In fact, if a slave sincerely adopts the Faith (as determined by a mullah), he must be freed within a month. It is perfectly acceptable to own Christian or nonhuman slaves.



### ***Hinduism and Buddhism***

In addition to the major faiths of Europe and the Middle East, Hinduism and Buddhism were brought to Yrth by Asians swept up by the Banestorm. Adherents of these religions are most common in Cardiel, where they reside in small urban communities and rural villages. Even there, perhaps only one person in 1,000 is a believer.

#### ***Hinduism***

The three central themes of Hindu belief are reincarnation, the eternal war between the Gods and the Demons, and dharma — the ultimate law of all things. The greatest of the deities are the members of the two triads, one male and one female.

The male triad consists of Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Protector and Shiva the Destroyer. Their consorts, Sarasvati (the Past), Lakshmi (the Present) and Parvati (the Future), make up the female triad. These beings appear in many incarnations or *avatars*, each governing a different aspect of life or the universe.

Hindus believe that every soul is reincarnated, and that the next incarnation depends on how well it followed the dharma assigned in its previous life. Unrighteous persons may be reincarnated as serpents, worms, dogs or even demons. The righteous may, become human beings again, with a station and status proportionate to their righteousness. Exceptionally holy men become immortal and are released from the cycle of reincarnation, going to heaven to live with the Gods.

*Continued on next page...*

## Islamic Sects

When the Banestorm first struck, Islam had for several centuries been divided into two rival sects, the Sunnis and the Shi'ites. Members of both groups were brought to Yrth, where their differences remained unresolved. Eventually these factions formed separate nations — al-Haz for the Shi'ites, al-Wazif for the Sunnis. The original split was caused by a dispute over succession in the early days of Earth's Caliphate, but this is virtually forgotten by all but the most educated of Yrth's faithful. Today, nationalistic rivalry aside, the main point of contention is magic. The Koran specifically forbids its practice, yet without Moslem wizards, Megalos would surely have triumphed by now. The issue of magic in the eyes of Allah could possibly sunder Islam permanently.

### *Hinduism and Buddhism (Continued)*

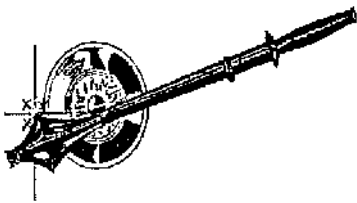
#### *Buddhism*

Buddhists also believe in reincarnation, and that life is only pain and suffering. The world is only an illusion in which evil and unrighteous persons must languish. Only through extreme holiness and meditation can one realize the emptiness of the world and transcend it, breaking the cycle of rebirth, thus reaching Nirvana — a state of eternal bliss. In Nirvana, a soul becomes one with the Absolute, the all-encompassing deity of cosmic truth.

Buddhism holds that the Hindu deities exist, but that they are merely souls in various powerful incarnations. It is not necessary to worship them to obtain Nirvana, and a man can exceed the gods in holiness.

Holy men who are believed to have reached (or be close to reaching) Nirvana are venerated as Buddhas. These Buddhist "saints" are looked to for spiritual guidance and aid, and their carved images adorn Buddhist temples, monasteries and homes. Not only are Buddhas adored in their final incarnations, but as they appeared in their past lives as well. Buddhist legends and fables consist of stories of the Buddha's actions in past lives, and the lessons to be learned from them.

Buddhist monks live solely from the alms they collect, and do not own and manage farms and great estates as many Christian orders do. They are famous for their serenity and wisdom, and for their ability to frustrate the Church's Inquisitors — they view all life as torture, and death can only bring rebirth or possibly Nirvana.



#### *Shi'ism*

Shi'ite mullahs are decidedly uncomfortable with the use of magic. Although it is not illegal in al-Haz, it is closely supervised. The general consensus is that magic is necessary but dangerous, and possibly sinful. It is held that Allah will forgive those who cast magic for the cause of Islam. To use magic spells for any other purpose will earn the sorcerer a lengthy stay in Hell.

Some mullahs want to outlaw the use of magic entirely, insisting on the strictest possible Koranic interpretation. As the Megalan threat has declined, their numbers have grown, but they are still a minority. In regions under their control, however, any display of arcane power is likely to attract swift punishment unless hostile infidels are physically present.

#### *Sunni*

The Sunni mullahs of al-Wazif openly approve of the magical arts, and view their study as part of the holy pursuit of scholarly understanding. The scriptural prohibitions are conveniently ignored. If pressed, most Sunni theologians will state that by magic the Prophet meant only *black* magic, and that Allah never intended for His people to be left defenseless before Christian wizards.

As a result, the practice of magic is widespread in al-Wazif, where all wizards are *required* to serve for a period of two years in the Caliph's armies. There are even Islamic universities which instruct students in the ethical practice of sorcery. Wazifi magicians are concerned over the rising animosity towards them in al-Haz, and fear that someday they will be forbidden access to Geb'al-Din.

#### *Balikites*

These are the followers of Balik Abdallah al-Firuz, a fanatical Shi'ite mullah from northwestern al-Haz who preaches that magic is an abomination and forbidden by God. All magicians, he claims, are evil men who must be slain in the name of Allah. Balik has declared a jihad against practitioners of magic everywhere. Moslems killed while trying to slay a mage are martyrs, earning instant admission to Paradise. This powerful belief makes Balikite assassins totally fearless.

Throughout western and northern al-Haz, wizards have fallen prey to gangs of Balikite fanatics. Balik himself has been condemned, somewhat half-heartedly, by the Shi'ite mullahs. The Sultan, however, is furious. One of his most trusted advisors was dragged from his bed and flogged to death, merely because he was *rumored* to be a mage. The Sultan has offered a fortune in gold to any man who brings him Balik's head. Balikites have even struck in al-Wazif, where — if caught — they are publicly tortured to death. Mages in Islamic countries have taken to hiring bodyguards, and imagine Balikites lurking in every shadow.

# Judaism

Judaism is the oldest human religion of Yrth, and is the mother religion of both Islam and Christianity. There is no Jewish kingdom on Yrth, but the sons of Israel persist in spite of their hardships.

## History

The Jews of Earth at the time of the Banestorm were a scattered people. Forbidden in most places to own land, they formed isolated communities within the cities and towns of both Christian and Islamic kingdoms. Once on Yrth, dispersed even more widely than before, many Jews perished or were forcibly converted to other faiths. Those who remained carried on as before, living in close-knit communities according to their own law.

Today, Judaism thrives in most of the major cities of Yrth. While there are pockets of strong anti-Semitism in Caithness and Megalos, Jews are tolerated in most places. As a general rule, they are well-educated; most adult men are literate. Still forbidden to own land or hold noble titles, many Jews are craftsmen, merchants, scholars and healers. Because their laws do not forbid the lending of money or the charging of interest, many bankers are Jewish.



Yrth's largest Jewish communities are located in the cities of Megalos and Tredroy. All Jews speak a scholarly form of Hebrew used to study the religious texts, as well as the local language.

## The People of the Covenant

Judaism has a great deal in common with the religions that developed from it — especially Islam. All Jews believe that God is one and that man was created in His image. Good deeds are rewarded in Heaven; sinners are punished in Hell. Idolatry is evil, as are murder and adultery. Charity is mandatory. The word of God is revealed in the Scriptures; His laws were given to the Jews through Moses.

Judaism stands apart in two things. First, it is very difficult to *become* a Jew. In general, you have to be born one, though sincere converts willing to undergo circumcision are accepted. Jewish tradition holds that God made a covenant with the people of Israel, and they are His chosen people. He cares for them and will someday send the Messiah to lead them back to the Promised Land where they will rebuild the Temple and enjoy prosperity. In return, they obey His Commandments and worship Him alone. Jews do not seek converts — the People of the Covenant wait patiently for the Messiah, maintaining their cultural heritage by marrying within the faith.

Secondly, Judaism is a religion of literature. Most Jewish men and many women are literate in at least Hebrew. The Jewish scriptures consist of three primary bodies of text: The Law (the Pentateuch or Torah), the Writings (Psalms, Proverbs, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Job, Esther) and the Prophets (the remainder of the Old Testament). Included in the Prophets is the entire history of the Jewish people — religious, political and cultural — up to the destruction of the Temple and the Diaspora. The Talmud is the collected wisdom of the rabbis since that time, and contains almost two thousand years of interpretation and clarification of the Scriptures. This is the law by which the Jews live. To study the Torah and the Talmud is a holy act — scholars and students are honored by the Jews.

## Jewish Ceremonies

Orthodox Jews have strong rituals or rules of conduct by which they live their lives. This is most clearly seen in the *berakhol* or blessings, which accompany the performance of a broad spectrum of everyday human actions. These small rituals serve both as a reminder that there is no human behavior in which man cannot be met by God, and as a defense against hostile environments.

There are also a variety of ceremonies closely tied to the life cycle of an individual Jew. First is the rite of circumcision and naming for males, held on the eighth day after birth. Female children are named on the first Sabbath following their birth. Then, on his 13th birthday, a male child is called publicly to recite the Torah benedictions, thus signifying his religious coming of age; this ritual is known as his Bar-mitzvah.

Marriage involves a double ceremony. The first is the betrothal, which includes the reading of the marriage contract and the giving of the ring. A year later is the marriage proper, consisting of the recitation of the seven marriage benedictions. The ceremony is to be held under a canopy that symbolizes the bridal bower.

The burial service is the last, and the simplest. The body is clad only in a simple shroud and buried as soon as possible after death. There are no official observances connected with death, though the family observes a mourning period of no less than 30 days.

Jews observe a strict dietary law called *kashrut* (adj. *kosher*). Among other laws, meats and dairy products may not be served at the same meal; seafood without fins and scales is prohibited; no animal may be eaten unless it chews its cud and has a split hoof; carrion-eaters are forbidden; animals must be killed in a prescribed fashion; and certain foods are mandated for specific occasions (such as bitter herbs and unleavened bread for Passover).

In addition, there are many customs which are not mandated by *kashrut* but are followed by most Jews. For instance, during the feast of *Purim* (celebrating Esther and Mordecai's triumph over the evil Haman) it is traditional to get so drunk that the celebrant "can't tell 'Bless Mordecai!' from 'Curse Hainan!'."

## ***Rabbis***

Like Islam, one does not need the aid of a member of the clergy in order to be a good Jew. A formal clergy does exist, however. Jewish clerics are called *rabbis*. To become a rabbi, one must study at a rabbinical school in one of Yrth's major cities. Having attained a degree in the study of the Scriptures and the Talmud, the new rabbi must find a congregation who will hire him. He enters into a contract with the community, under which he leads group prayer and interprets the Talmud in exchange for financial support. Like all good Jews, rabbis are expected to marry and have children.

Cantors are members of the congregation selected to be the chief singer and leader of the liturgy in a synagogue. They require no formal training.

## ***Greco-Roman Cults***

In some places on Yrth, humans still worship the Gods of the ancient Greeks and Romans. Though they may bear two different names, one Latin and one Greek, the gods are the same. These cults are mostly secret — except in Cardiel — since the Church regards such beliefs as heretical or pagan. They are most common in large cities, and often have wealthy aristocrats as adherents.

Any given cult is usually devoted to only one god or goddess, although all the deities of the pantheon are believed to exist.

Worship usually consists of sacrifices made to the god. Goats, fowl, fruit and wine are the most frequent sacrifices — human sacrifice is rarely practiced. In return, the god is expected to give divine aid to the supplicants, granting their wishes and requests. This can be a tricky business, however, for the Gods of the ancients are a tickle and temperamental lot. A request out of proportion to the sacrifice made, or one which goes against the god's general nature, is likely to anger the deity. This may result in refusal of all subsequent requests or even bring down the wrath of the god on the worshippers themselves.

The major Greco-Roman gods, with both their names and their spheres of influence, are listed below.

Zeus/Jupiter: king of gods and men, the weather.

Apollo: the god of truth, prophecy, archery, music, medicine and the sun; the most popular of the gods on Yrth.

Hera/Juno: Zeus' wife; the goddess of marriage and patron of wives.

Athena/Minerva: goddess of wisdom and household crafts.

Ares/Mars: the god of war; his worship among common soldiers and gladiatorial slaves is tolerated and even encouraged by some Megalan commanders.

Aphrodite/Venus: the goddess of love and beauty.

Artemis/Diana: the huntress, also goddess of childbirth and midwives.

Demeter/Ceres: goddess of agriculture, crops, grain and fruit.

Poseidon/Neptune: god of the sea; many superstitious Christian sailors pay him lip service.

Hermes/Mercury: messenger of the gods, he is the patron of commerce, invention, cunning and theft. He is very popular among the thieves of Megalos and other large cities.

Hephaestus/Vulcan: god of smiths and artisans; his followers are invariably members of smiths' and masons' guilds.

Dionysus/Bacchus: the god of wine, fertility, revelry and drama; rumor has it that Emperor Diophrates himself has upon occasion invoked his name.

## **Nonhuman Races**

### **The Elder Folk**

The native races of Yrth have existed for tens of thousands of years. The long-lived Dwarves and Elves in particular are ancient beyond reckoning, and are called the Elder Folk by humans. To human scholars, their history is dull and uneventful, but their culture holds great fascination. All of the elder races speak their own languages. Many Dwarves and Elves speak English also.

Both Elven and Dwarven — and to a lesser extent Gnomish — society is based on their reverence for something known as the Eternal. It is not a god in the human sense, nor is It simply a religion or philosophy. The Eternal is a concept — the ideal around which the Elder races' culture is based. It is perfection, never changing, forever enduring. Mystical identification with the Eternal is the highest goal. Both Elves and Dwarves view the universe as gradually progressing toward communion with It, when all will become one, uniting into a single consciousness.

Although the races share reverence for the Eternal, they pursue communion with It in very different ways.

### **Elves**

Elves see the Eternal as manifested in the natural cycle of renewal — birth, death and rebirth, the changing of the seasons, etc. The harmony of Nature, the network of interdependent creatures and plants are examples of the world moving towards union with It. For this reason, the Elves have a deep respect and love for unspoiled nature — they strive to blend their communities into the environment. Elven homes are living shelters formed of carefully tended trees and brush. They live off the land, taking no more than they need, and leave undisturbed that which they can't use. Elves are incredibly protective of the wild lands in which they live.

For this reason, too, Elves do not partake in organized governments. They believe that each one of them is interrelated to the whole that moves toward It, and that it is for each to find his own place — to incline toward that which their nature takes them, governed only by their eventual dependence on the whole.

It is easy to see why the Elves remain aloof from humans, and why, if they adopt a human religion, it is invariably pagan. Humans hunt for sport and trophies, clear forests for timber, plow under wildflowers in order to plant crops. Orcs are even worse, destroying simply for the pleasure of it. Some Elves believe Orcs to be agents acting directly against the Eternal for their own evil goals. Others think them just too stupid to know better. All wish them wiped from the face of Yrth. To this end, the Dark Elves summoned the Banestorm to destroy them. But it backfired, and now the Elves are afflicted by a plague of humans — less destructive perhaps, but far more numerous and intelligent than the Orcs.

There is no Elvish kingdom in Ytarria, although the settlements in a given region often cooperate with each other. Individual Elvish communities are loosely organized. Most decisions affecting the group are made by a council of elders, after hearing the opinions of any adult who wishes to speak. Reaching a decision may take a long time, and even then is not truly binding. Elves have strong respect for free will, and will not force obedience on one another.

Creativity is also respected by the Elves, who adore music, poetry, dancing and art. Elves as a rule have no concept of ownership or material worth. They will never be merchants. Yrth's bounty is to be shared equally by all, and they have a well-known distaste for any product not directly derived from natural materials. Elven dead are buried, so their bodies will fertilize the soil. Thus from death comes life; from evil, good. Few Elves partake in any organized religion, the Dark Elf cult (see sidebar) being the one major exception.

### **Dwarves**

Dwarves seek the Eternal in the very bones of the earth, where things remain unchanged for eons. Rather than communing with nature. Dwarves seek spiritual perfection in their craft. The creation of things that endure is the highest good. A Dwarf sees the Eternal in the materials that come to life under his hand — stone and iron, silver and gold. A craftsman's product should be functional and beautiful, but most of all it should last. Master craftsmen are accorded respect second only to that given their kings. The great Dwarven halls are as much shrines as they are homes — outsiders are unwelcome. For the Dwarf, every arch, every column embodies the Eternal.

Dwarves view the surface world as a chaotic and dangerous place. They have little regard for what goes on above ground, and are indifferent at best toward its inhabitants. Dwarves rarely venture out of their halls except to trade. They consider banishment from the underground realms to be the ultimate punishment. In fact, a few humans who have lived for a time with the Dwarves believe that all Dwarven merchants are criminals who practice their trade through no choice of their own. Naturally, no self-respecting Dwarf merchant would admit to such a thing.

In addition to their skill as smiths and masons, Dwarves are known for determination, stamina, and the size of their egos. Few Dwarven smiths can resist the idea of one of their fine weapons being passed from father to son among the short-lived humans, outlasting generations. Dwarves value durability not only in the objects they create but in themselves as well. Dwarven warriors pride themselves on being able to march further and fight longer than soldiers of any surface-dwelling race. If a marble column can bear a mountain for centuries without complaint, then so must a Dwarf endure hardships silently. Much of the Dwarves' vaunted endurance may be attributed to sheer stubbornness.

### **Gnomes**

Gnomes are distant, surface-dwelling cousins of the Dwarves. Their concept of the Eternal is less refined than that of their subterranean relatives or the Elves — they believe simply that one should be at peace with his environment. Gnomes resent being disturbed by outsiders, but are usually hospitable nonetheless. They have long memories, however, and dislike anyone who disrupts their quiet, contemplative lifestyle. Most Gnomes live in small villages of stone houses, although a few live in caves.

### **Orcs**

Orcs are brutal, destructive creatures and the ancestral enemies of the Elves and Dwarves. They do not venerate the Eternal — they despise It. Though they barely understand It (from time to time idealistic Elven emissaries have tried to

### **The Dark Elf Cult**

The Dark Elves are those who believe in using magic to improve on nature, guiding it actively towards union with the Eternal. Most Elves consider this perverted, not to mention dangerous, and ostracize followers of this cult, forcing them to live in their own separate communities. This suits most Dark Elves quite well, however, since they prefer to conduct their studies in private, away from those who may condemn or censure. Despite their spectacular failure with the Orcs, the Dark Elves still work for the downfall of Orcs and the new human menace, to "purify" their world.

Dark Elves are particularly unfond of visitors, and their active and continuous use of magic makes their communities quite dangerous places for the uninvited. They tend to make their homes in the darkest, deepest and most remote areas of their chosen habitat.

Magery 2 and pure Elven blood are the sole requirements for acceptance in this cult.



### **Banestorm Revisited**

While most historians hold that the Dark Elves are shattered and disillusioned since the monumental failure that produced the Banestorm, others aren't quite so sure.

There are rumors that the Dark Elves are recruiting new members — many Elves feel highly threatened by man's encroachment on traditional Elf territory, and are willing to listen to anyone who proposes to put a halt to it.

Their mightiest wizards have been studying the records left by those who summoned up the Banestorm — they think they've figured out what went wrong! If further research succeeds, the Dark Elves propose to conjure a spell even mightier than the Banestorm — a spell that would return everyone to their plane or world of origin...

explain It to them), they see It as an affront to their honor. Orcs measure honor, and therefore social rank, by the amount of power one exhibits over his environment. And an Orc's favorite way of showing he has power over something is to destroy it. An Orc's entire life is spent trying to accrue greater honor and status within his tribe — the most vicious and destructive become chieftains.

Ogres are related to Orcs, but are bigger, dumber and meaner. Strictly stone age in technology, ogres wander about singly or in small groups, looking for something to kill and eat.

## The Newcomers

Although the most numerous, humans are not the only intelligent race that the Banestorm brought to Yrth. It also transported Goblins, Kobolds, Halflings, Centaurs and Reptile Men from their respective worlds.

### Goblins

The Goblin-folk were brought to Yrth by the Banestorm at the same time as humans. There are two varieties of Goblin: the small, intelligent, civilized people which live mostly in Megalos, and the larger, savage Hobgoblins.

Goblins are remarkably adaptable. Although their native culture and religion have long since vanished — most Goblins are Christian — they are a very powerful segment of Megalan society. There are two Goblin duchies in the Empire, and Goblin merchants can be found in every major city. In general, Goblins are quick-witted, clever and somewhat conspiratorial. Though no more innovative than humans, Goblins learn very quickly, and are more apt to try new things. One can always observe the latest fashions, technology, spells and philosophies in the wealthy Goblin communities. The literacy rate among Goblins is slightly higher than in other races.

The vast majority of Goblins speak English. The Old Goblin language is rarely heard anymore. The exception is the *traders' tongue* of the Goblin merchants. Derived from pure Old Goblin, it is unintelligible even to most scholars, having many specialized slang words relevant to the merchant profession. Goblin merchants use this language when dealing with one another, and especially when two or more are trading with non-Goblin merchants. This gives them a distinct edge over their competition, whose conversations can easily be overheard and understood.

Hobgoblins live in primitive tribes in remote areas. They are less intelligent and destructive than Orcs, although they live primarily by raiding human farms and villages for food. Hobgoblins effectively have no technology (TL0), but often possess stolen weapons of higher quality.

### Halflings

Halflings are a simple, quiet people found throughout human lands. Halflings are diminutive, averaging four feet in height. They are quite agile and nimble-fingered, and excel at those crafts they practice. All Halflings have adopted human language and religion (most are Christians), but retain numerous eccentric customs.

Halflings are of cheerful disposition. They greatly value hospitality, both as hosts and guests. Anyone who sets a generous table will receive an automatic +1 reaction bonus from Halflings. On the other hand, Halflings disapprove of rude or selfish persons, and dangerous-looking or outlandish characters. They will avoid such people if possible, preferring to dodge a confrontation. Rare indeed is the Halfling who will attack someone who hasn't threatened his life, or at least his comfortable home.

### Paganism — The Old Religion

This faith is derived from the pre-Christian religion of the Druids, with elements of Elven mysticism thrown in. Opposed and oppressed by Christian and Moslem rulers alike, it is nevertheless widespread. Practitioners of the ancient Celtic rites are usually called pagans. Many pagans regularly attend Sunday services or Friday prayers, while meeting in hidden forest glades to conduct their own secret rituals. Most pagans are good, well-meaning folk, but a few are as evil as the priests and mullahs claim.

Followers of the Old Religion are highly factionalized, but all practice a form of nature worship. Pagan faiths honor nature, joy in life, bravery, strength and wisdom; some cults treat prowess in battle as the highest good. Elves who accept a human religion are almost always pagan, and many rise high in the priesthood.

There are two primary deities. Names vary, but the first is most often called Mother Earth — a combination of the old European nature goddesses and the Elven Eternal. She stands for peace, birth, growth and the summer. Her consort, the Horned God, represents war, death, decay and the winter. Magic is a natural, neutral force which may be turned to good or evil purposes. Upon death, souls are reincarnated into animals or intelligent beings, over and over again.

*Continued on next page...*



## ***Kobolds***

These runty, blue-skinned humanoids can be found in most of the large cities of Megalos and Cardiel. Their native tongue is now English, their own language and culture having been lost. They have no religious beliefs to speak of.

Kobolds are essentially a race of urchins. Lacking the skill and industrious nature to be farmers, or the size and strength to be bandits, they survive by begging and petty theft. Groups of Kobolds may be found living in alleyways, under bridges, and in particular shabby slums. Occasionally they will be led by a *human* child, who even at a young age is much smarter than they are.

Either Kobolds enjoy poverty or they are too stupid to notice, but they are a basically cheerful people. They especially delight in mischief and practical jokes — this is one area where they are actually quite clever. A Kobold will go out of his way for a laugh, and will laugh at just about anything — as long as the joke is not on him.

## ***Reptile Men***

Reptile Men are not at all related to humans — they seem to be descended from dinosaurs. They prefer hot, open plains and savanna, and often live in desert and badlands areas where other races can't survive. There they live in small, savage tribes. Reptile Men are decidedly carnivorous.

Reptile Man tribes do not appear to practice any kind of religion as men or even Elves understand it. Of course, few have ever really gotten close enough to find out without becoming lunch. However, a few *civilized* Reptile Men can be found in big cities, usually working as bodyguards, mercenaries or slaves. The Reptile Men of al-Haz follow a strict and intolerant form of Islam. They are an insular community, dealing with humans only as necessary, and their reaction to infidels of any species is very hostile. The Emperor of Megalos employs an elite company of Reptile Man guards, who are supposedly unbribable and completely loyal. Most folk give them a wide berth, and the clannish, xenophobic Reptile Men seem to prefer it that way. Christian Reptile Men are *extremely* rare.

Those Reptile Men who choose to live among men must be, in order to be accepted, “more human than human.” These rare individuals are usually extraordinarily devout followers of the local religion, literate and very cultured. Such a Reptile Man is liable to become quite popular among the local aristocrats, his status as a curiosity making him a favorite party guest. Few indeed are the Reptile Men who can stomach this treatment.

## ***Centaur***

Centaur are nomadic plains hunters. They are a hearty folk, with little use for civilization or its amenities. Centaur are wild and free; they will not tolerate any attempt at restraint or control. Nonetheless, they are a good people; they look out for each other and are hospitable to strangers.

There are only a few small bands of Centaur on Yrth. They can most easily be found either roaming the plains in the Nomad Lands (indeed, some of the Centaur tribes have allied with nomads, who consider them magical and lucky), or on the fringes of large forests near Elven settlements.

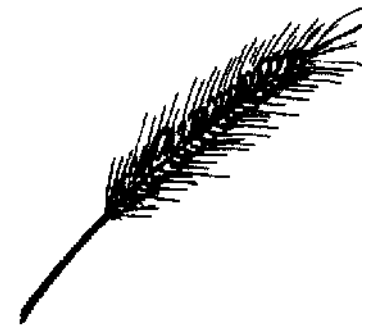
A typical centaur band consists of 20 to 200 individuals. The traditional leader of the band is the Blacksmith. Every Centaur blacksmith keeps a small forge and anvil which is pulled about in a cart as the band moves. The puller is usually either the smith's apprentice or a minor troublemaker doing penance. The smith's importance is easy to see — good shoes and hunting weapons are essential to the Centaur way of life. Also, the smith is the keeper of the community purse, since it is his duty to deal with Dwarves and other races for the iron and steel that represent the community's only major external need.

## ***Paganism*** ***(Continued)***

Pagan rituals focus on the changing of the seasons, the phases of the moon, the weather, and the natural cycles of birth and death. They are aimed at maintaining harmony between man and the spirits of nature. Services are always conducted outdoors, often on the night of the full or new moon. The most important ceremonies occur at the solstices and the equinoxes. Ceremonies usually consist of dancing, singing, processions and a sacrifice. Most often, sacrifices consist merely of fruit, grain or occasionally an animal. A very few sects, however, practice human sacrifice — giving the vast majority of innocent pagans a reputation for evil.

The oak tree and mistletoe are sacred to worshippers of the Mother. Pagan symbols vary from group to group, but the sickle, the pentagram and the ear of wheat are common.

Pagan priests go by many names — druids, witches, wiccans, horned ones — as many as there are pagan sects. Most are female, and invariably possess a high level of magical aptitude. Their spells are oriented toward nature and the elements, especially Earth. Leaders of the Old Religion dress normally except during ceremonies; dress there may range from long robes and stag-horned helms to “skyclad” — nothing at all.



## ***Giants***

Because of their size, Giants have been feared and avoided by humans. Errant children are told that “the Giants will come eat you,” and even the mightiest human warrior feels a twinge of fear when confronted with an opponent twice his size and strength!

As a result, Giants avoid humankind whenever possible — although larger, a Giant is no match far a group of heavily-armed knights!

Giants lend to band together into small groups of 6-30 individuals in remote wilderness areas. They can be found in all varieties of climate, fostering the rumors that there are many different varieties (Ice Giants, Mountain Giants, etc.) In reality, they are of the same racial stock, although some may have developed unique abilities to deal with their particular environment.



# KINGDOMS

# 3

This chapter describes each of the major countries and regions of the continent of Ytarria, the “known” portion of Yrth. The first section on each nation provides general information on its history, geography and society. The second section provides brief sketches of specific areas within each country, including politics, prominent personalities and organizations, and current events.



# Megalos

Megalos is the mother-country of the Christian nations... but she is *not* a loving parent. The Megalan symbol is the dragon, and it's appropriate. Megalos is very old, very rich, very strong and very unhappy with any lands that have the temerity to remain free of its control. Consequently, Megalos is almost always at open war in one direction or another, and never truly at peace with any bordering country.

## History

Megalos sees itself as a nation destined to rule. World domination was the stated goal of its founder and first Emperor, Simon Menelaus, and it is the goal of its leaders today. Despite recent setbacks, the history of Megalos is one of expansion and conquest, invasion and crusade.

Menelaus founded Megalos in 1200 A.D., the end of the Banestorm's most active phase. The fledgling Empire found easy prey among the disorganized immigrants; by the time of his death, Menelaus ruled most of northeastern Ytarria. But to the south, the great goblin clans stood firm against the armies of the Dragon. The Holy Kingdom of New Jerusalem defied them in the west, and in the northwest, fierce pagan nomads roamed.

Menelaus' descendants did not give up, however, and wasted little time in expanding their new realm. Thanks to the efforts of Christian missionaries, the goblins — already converted — joined the Empire by treaty in 1229. In a series of vicious campaigns, in which Imperial battle mages played a crucial role, the nomads were pushed beyond the Whitehood Mountains by the end of Megalos' first century. Only the Hospitallers of New Jerusalem, hard-pressed but determined, stood fast against the Empire.

In 1350, Octavius Magnus, a warlord whose realm lay adjacent to the Moslem tribes of the south, engineered the unification of Megalos and New Jerusalem. Known for his smooth tongue, keen intellect and hatred of non-believers, Octavius negotiated a truce for the purpose of launching a crusade southward. This was exactly what the Hospitallers had been longing for, and in their haste to march south, they quickly agreed to join the Empire. Octavius, of course, would lead the Megalan forces, and in return for his services, he was to be given the newly formed Duchy of Craine.

Having achieved its goal of acquiring New Jerusalem, Megalos did not throw its full weight against the Moslems for nearly a century. When it did, the results were explosive. The wandering tribes of the south quickly banded together to form the great nations of al-Haz, al-Wazif and al-Kard. The Megalan nobility were not dismayed, but delighted — orcs and fur-clad barbarians had proved to be poor sport. Even as Wazifi armies reclaimed lost territory, al-Kard fell to crusaders in the 1460s. The Christian province of Cardiel was thus formed, and the younger sons of Megalan nobles flocked there to carve out holdings.

For the next century, the power of Megalos was at its zenith. The Empire was virtually invincible — or so everyone thought. The disastrous invasion of the Dwarven territory of Thulin's Folk proved otherwise. Driven by greed, the Megalan nobles began to squabble among themselves over spoils not yet won. Disgusted, the Hospitallers went home as a sudden counterattack by the Dwarves crushed the invaders. Seizing the opportunity, howling nomads quickly overran Megalos' northernmost counties, forcing the construction of the Emperor's Wall — a great rampart marking the northern border.

Soon afterward, men were discovered on the isles east of Megalos, and Imperial attention turned away from north and south as the Principality of Araterre was chartered and explored. In the west, expeditions were sent out to

## Names in Megalos

Naming practices in the Megalan Empire vary according to region, social class and race. The following can also be used as general guidelines for all Christian, English-speaking folk. Specific customs of those in Caithness and Cardiel will be discussed later.

### Commoners

Most people are known by a single name, with the addition of an *epithet* — a descriptive word or phrase. An epithet is like a nickname, but it is much more permanent! Examples are given below.

A few families pass down epithets from father to son. These are true family names, but they are still rare.

Most names are Celtic, Norman or Anglo-Saxon in origin, though changes in spelling may have occurred.

Some common names include Adolphe, Alan, Alfric, Andrew/Andre, Ashe, Berd, Brace, Bryan, Edward, Etin, Evan, Cerdic, Donnwulf, Francis, Gall, Geoffrey, Giles, Hal, Hoel, Hugh, John/Jon/Johan, Loyd, Lyon, Marc, Merid, Morgan, Neil/Neal/Niall, Olen, Oliver, Oren, Osric, Owen, Rann, Sean, Sigbright, Trent, Wade, Wallace, Warren, Wat, Will.

Women's names include Adea, Alyce, Anne, Arda, Ayleena, Blanche, Bonnie, Bronwyn, Catryn, Ceredya, Deilia, Giselle, Irena, Juliet, Justina, Katha, Marlys/Mary/Marie, Maye, Norla, Pearl, Rosemary, Sara/Sarah/Sharra, Susanna, Teressy, Vylene.

Since a single name isn't enough for anyone but a serf, an epithet is usually added. There are several kinds of epithets:

*Place of birth.* Walton of Simonton; Eggersby Sean; John o' the Ford.

*Occupation.* Arn the Shoemaker; Donal Coppersmith; Edward Clark (cleric); Tod Breakstone; Harald Brennan (hangman).

*Appearance.* Fat Will; Merid Redlocks; Norla Whiteskib; Too Big Oliver.

*Deeds.* Edwin Doorstop (who held a gate against marauders); Justina Wolfslayer; Sigg Three-Pies (he ate that many at one sitting).

*Background or habits.* Carre Halfelven; Elfric Elwyn's son; Adolph Earpuller.

*Continued on next page...*

push back the relentless hordes of orcs occupying that area, which was later settled and given to Conall of Craine as the Imperial County of Caithness.

Then, while the Emperor was occupied with Megalan political infighting, the province of Cardiel declared independence. Two generations later, Caithness followed suit.

The Empire was stymied. Incessant power struggles and warfare among the nobles left her unable to recover lost territories or conquer new ones. The next century was marred by constant internal bickering as one rash noble after another plotted to conquer, only to fail time and time again from lack of support. Today, the unity of the Empire is dubious at best. Yet Megalos remains Yrth's most powerful nation, and the fabled legions are still enough of a threat to keep its neighbors constantly on their guard.

Megalos is currently ruled by Diophrates XII, a powerful and licentious man just past the prime of life. His excesses and keen intelligence are both legendary. The former have nearly gotten him excommunicated more than once; the latter has kept him on the throne far longer than most Megalan emperors. It is generally agreed that if Diophrates were less interested in his revels and the hunt, Megalos' neighbors would be in trouble.

### ***Names in Megalos (Continued)***

A person may have more than one epithet, especially to distinguish him further from others — e.g., Young Peter of Greyhaven. Young Peter might keep that name until he was 80, long after his father Old Peter had died...

Likewise, epithets may change with deeds. Justina Wolfslayer was simply Justina until she was 12. When she started to go to market with her family, she was Justina of Trent. Her love of the bow made her Justina the Archer. Then, the winter that she killed a dozen wolves in two days, she earned her current name.

### ***Nobles***

Nobles will always have at least one epithet, which may often be a true family name. Frequently, a noble will be known among his peers by the name of his fiefdom: Baron Angus of Scariswic is simply Scariswic to others of the nobility.

Most Megalan nobles speak Latin, and many noble children (especially eldest sons) are given Roman-flavored names. Likewise, ruling nobles sometimes adopt Latin epithets, such as *Victrix* (victorious), *Bonus* (the good), *Equitas* (the horseman), *Artifex* (the artist), etc. Such epithets are often incredibly boastful in nature.

Some common Latin names are Aloysius, Brutus, Claudius, Flavius, Honorins, Julius/Julian, Leo, Marcus, Maximianus, Procopius, Rufus, Tiberias, Titus, Valerian,

### ***Goblins***

The Goblins of Megalos (except in rural areas) no longer use their ancestral language — but many retain traditional Goblin names. This is not a hard-and-fast rule; some Goblin nobles have Latin or part-Latin names (e.g., Jelkejek Viridis, or Jelkejek the Green). And many humans in Goblin fiefdoms will have Goblin names.

Common Goblin names are Baajikiil, Baaky, Dakiiri, Gykkii, Jandig, Jittotii, K'jaakis, K'tiiki, Potij, Shiikus, Toov'tekki, Taukopy, Viitagi, Yig'oor, Yivirrl. Names are used interchangeably by males and females. In general, consonant sounds are explosive; vowels are often lengthened, and most names have two or three syllables.

### **Geography, Flora and Fauna**

Megalos dominates eastern and northeastern Ytarria, and its greatest cities are concentrated on its eastern coasts. The country is crossed by many rivers, and its center is dominated by the great lakes Acheron and Styx. Weather in Megalos is similar to that of Earth's Europe. Northern ports are ice-bound in winter; southern farmers raise crops year round. Winter storms drop snow on most of the country, and spring rains are vital to the success of each year's planting.

The eastern and southern portions of the Empire are thickly populated; rarely is a patch of uncultivated land seen. Large towns and even cities are common here. The northern and central regions are wilder. Large forests separate settled lands, harboring all manner of beasts. The far west is almost as heavily populated as the east, but the climate is drier.

The various regions of Megalos are connected by the Great Roads — built of heavy dressed stone, well-set, and maintained by slave labor. These roads are the best on Yrth, and are the property of the Emperor himself. Woe to he who blocks or damages them. Barges ply all of the major rivers; harbors are crowded with vessels of all types.

Megalos is a normal-mana region.

### **Society**

Megalan society is essentially feudal, though somewhat more advanced than elsewhere in Yrth. Caithness and Cardiel tend to be regarded as rural backwaters. Megalan aristocrats are particularly offended by Cardiel's religious tolerance, and by (horrors!) Caithness' knighthood for women. Any Megalan noble will have a -1 reaction to any member of the Caithness or Cardiel feudal hierarchy, though familiarity may erase this prejudice.

The feudal hierarchy of Megalos is extremely static; most people retain the rank they were born into. Only under the most extraordinary circumstances will a commoner be granted noble or even knightly status. An achievement that would win advancement in other countries will probably be rewarded with money or favor in Megalos.

In Megalos, however, one can *buy* rank. A man may rise from humble origins to governor of a city, if his mind is sharp enough. All it takes is money — and in the great port cities there is plenty to be made. Those with enough

money (50 to 100 times the monthly cost of maintenance of the desired title) can purchase a newly created title by making a gift to the appropriate lord. These titles do not carry duties, lands or income, and are little respected in other countries, but are socially quite genuine in Megalos. Knighthood, on the other hand, cannot be bought — it *must* be earned.

The Church is very powerful in Megalos, and provides another route to higher status. Although the formal priesthood is limited to men with aristocratic background (some great nobles bear high ecclesiastical titles), most monastic orders are open to anyone. Of course, a *good* monk enjoys only the respect his position accords him; the fleshly benefits are forbidden.

### Social Rank in Megalos

Nobility and rank in Megalos are very important, and often rather convoluted. The following ranks are commonly used, and generally are considered to convey the Status Level indicated. However, relative status can differ greatly, and though Princes outrank Dukes, a powerful Megalan Duke can hold lands and influence that makes him much more powerful than the average Prince (or some Kings, for that matter). Members of the Royal Council are all considered to be of Status 6, no matter what their actual title.

Generally, the eldest son of a titled lord is referred to by the next lowest title — e.g., the son of a Duke is a Marquess, the son of an Earl is a Viscount, etc.



### Megalan Ranks and Titles

Level	Male	Female*	Form of Address
7	Emperor	Empress	Imperial Majesty
7	King	Queen	Royal Majesty
6	Prince	Princess	Imperial Highness
6	Duke	Duchess	Your Grace
5	Marquess	Marchioness	Your Lordship
5	Earl/Count	Countess	Your Lordship
4	Viscount	Viscountess	Your Lordship
4	Baron	Baroness	Your Excellency
3	Baronet	Lady	Your Lordship
3	Landed Lord	Lady	Lord/Lady
2	Knight	Dame	Sir/Dame
2	Governor	Lady	Your Honor
2	Guildmaster	Guildmistress	Master/Mistress
1	Squire	Mistress	Master/Mistress
1	Captain	—	
1	Craftsman/ Merchant	—	
0	Freeman		
-1	servant		
-2	thief		
-3	beggar		
-4	serf/slave		

\* Megalan women of common birth are generally treated as one rank lower than male commoners. Wives of nobles have the same social rank as their husbands.

### Arms Control

Megalan law places harsh restrictions (which vary slightly from place to place) on weapon ownership. These laws are intended to maintain order — the order of the ruling classes. None of these restrictions apply to the knightly or noble classes (Status 3 and above).

*Plate armor* may not be owned or worn by anyone below the level of Knight.

*Scale and chainmail* may not be owned or worn except by couriers, city and castle guards, and the armed forces. However, writs of exception (official certificates giving the bearer permission to wear chain or scale) are common; in some jurisdictions, they can be had for a bribe as low as \$200.

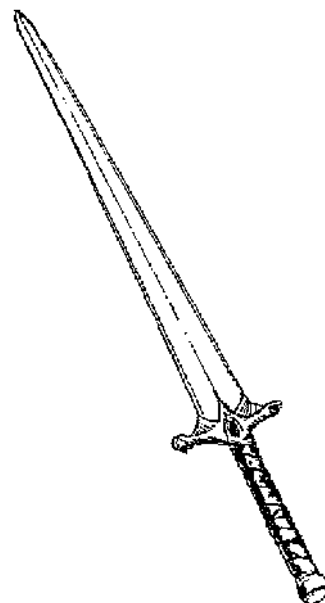
*Missile weapons* are allowed only to the armed forces, foresters and guardsmen. Lords who are secure in the love of their people will ignore short bows and slings used for hunting, but longbows and crossbows are *strictly* illegal to the common folk.

*Pole weapons* are limited to the armed forces, city guards and nobles' retainers.

*Swords* are not permitted to anyone below the level of Freeman (Status 0).

*Bladed weapons* are not legally permitted to be worn by beggars or serfs (though many wear them anyway); they may legally carry staves for self-defense.

*Magical weapons and defenses* are not permitted by law to anyone below Rank 2.



### *The Arena*

The arena is the chief entertainment in Megalan society. Fortunes are won and lost on arena wagers. A noble cannot hope to maintain social status without sponsoring a stable of gladiators — or better yet, hosting a game. Every town has an arena; the largest cities have several. Private estates have their own small arenas, where a few favored guests can observe whatever their host considers entertaining.

Arena events are bloody affairs. They may include gladiatorial contests, magical duels, ceremonial torture and executions, battles against monsters or animals, trials by ordeal, and anything else that a depraved despot can think of to entertain a bored populace.

Characters may enter the arena voluntarily. Gladiators can easily earn \$500 for surviving a battle — more if the event is especially unfair, spectacular or well-sponsored. They may also find themselves participating against their will, as prisoners or slaves.

### *Honhumans*

Megalos, though human-ruled, is cosmopolitan. Most villages are monoracial — they may be of humans, Goblins or Halflings, but rarely a combination. Cities, however, harbor all possible races and half-breeds.

Megalos has a large Goblin population. Initially they resisted joining the expanding empire, but later saw that it would be to their advantage. To this day, the duchies of Yibyorak and Sho'joor, and many lesser fiefdoms, are held and largely populated by Goblin families.

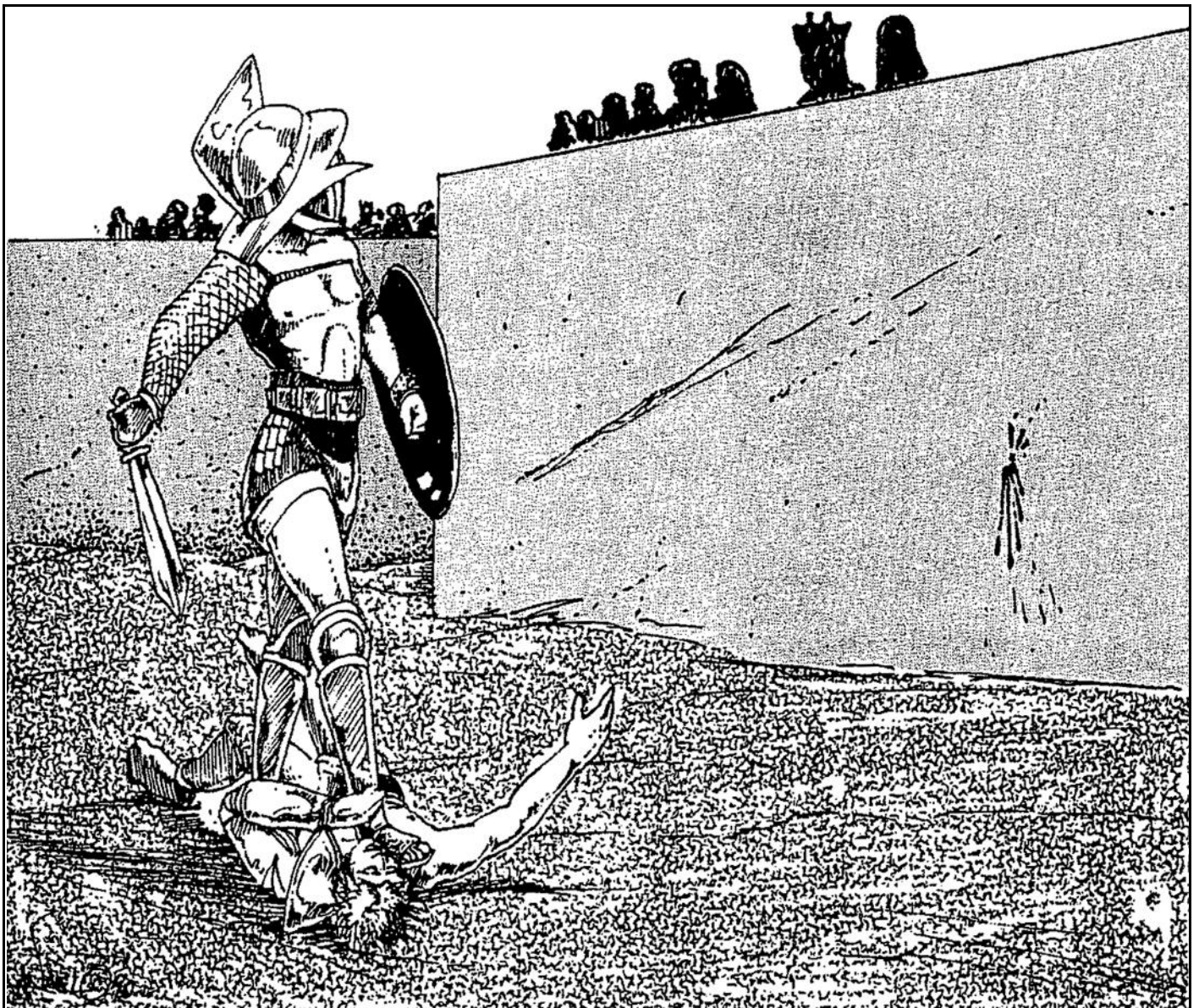
Like any nation bordering mountains, Megalos trades with the Dwarves. The attack on Thulin's Folk is still remembered among the long-lived Dwarves, however, so trade is somewhat limited. They hold no love for Megalos and will not sell their best work to the folk of the Dragon.

Halflings are common in Megalos. Of every 20 farm villages scattered through the land, one will be a Halfling town. They choose their own mayor, who reports to the local human lord or governor; they are good, quiet citizens.

Elves are rare, especially in eastern Megalos, because there are so few of the wild lands they love.

### *Magic*

Magic is common and strong in Megalos, and magery is accepted and admired throughout the higher levels of Megalan society. Serfs, peasants and freemen generally have a healthy respect for it. Wizards' guilds wield great



political power. Even the smallest villages have a part-time mage who can cast a spell or two, or just has a useful knack (see *GURPS Magic*, p. 86).

Although the current Emperor is no mage, many past rulers have been powerful sorcerers. All Megalan rulers are either wizards or advised by wizards. The exceptions don't live long.

### ***The Legions***

Megalos is almost always at war, so it keeps a large standing army of professional soldiers, supplemented by levies raised at need. Known simply as the Imperial Legions, they are reputed to be the best fighting force in Yrth. Actual quality of the legions varies widely, depending on whether they are led by professional soldiers or the spoiled younger sons of noblemen. The Legions welcome non-nobles into their ranks, and its best officers are often commoners or even freed slaves. Almost all of the Legions are pure infantry, with a few small mounted units for scouts. In wartime, the Legions are supported by the elite heavy cavalry of the Megalan knighthood, called up for duty as part of their feudal obligations. Although they are formidable individual fighters, the knights have little group discipline; their effectiveness in any given battle depends on the strength of their leader.

Each legion has a corps of wizards attached; Megalan armies depend heavily on magic. This is one reason they make so little headway in mana-poor Caithness!

Most powerful lords keep their own legions as well. When the quarrelsome nobles aren't busy fighting one of the Empire's neighbors, they fight each other. Strictly speaking, such infighting is against the law, and the Emperor's own legions will intervene occasionally to settle battles between neighbors. Usually, though, they are ignored out of political or economic expediency.

### ***The Law***

Megalan law follows the typical feudal pattern except in a few areas. Punishments tend to be severe; death and slavery are more common than mutilation. The state can always use slaves, and a whole slave works better than a maimed one. On the other hand, a wealthy offender can bribe his way out of any difficulty except high treason — sometimes it's called “paying a stiff fine,” but the effect is the same.

Trial by ordeal is popular in Megalos; such trials are put off until the judging noble's next arena spectacular, where they form a favored part of the entertainment.

### ***Slavery***

Despite the Church prohibition on the enslavement of Christians, slavery is very common in Megalos. The ban is circumvented by having the local bishop excommunicate a convicted criminal for his sins so that he may be legally clapped in irons like any pagan. Criminals, political troublemakers and prisoners of war are put to work by the state or sold to nobles for their own use. Megalos is dotted with huge slave-run farms, quarries, and lumber camps; this is the source of much of its wealth.

It is illegal to free a slave in Megalos without Imperial permission, which is rarely granted. Valor in battle or the arena, or extraordinary artistic ability, are the only roads to freedom.

### **The Northern Marches**

With the exception of the Blackwoods and the Emperor's Forest, this is the wildest region of Megalos. Cultivated lands are separated by forests of pine and

### ***The Emperor's Guard***

Hundreds of years ago, Megalos won an “unconquerable” isle by the simple expedient of freeing a thousand enslaved Reptile Men and telling them it was theirs — if they could take it. They took it. Their descendants became loyal Megalan warriors; from their ranks was drawn one of Megalos' most feared legions, the *True Dragon*.

True Dragon remains the Emperor's elite bodyguard. Renowned for their ferocity, the Reptile Men are completely loyal. Few humans are comfortable enough in their presence to even suggest a bribe! Those who are rarely have anything to offer that would interest the inhuman, uncivilized, self-satisfied guards. And, by ancient custom, the guards are permitted to *eat* anyone caught attempting a bribe...

### ***Ah'ziranthl Dbansis Rxtlyin***

Age 33, 6'9", 325 lbs., green scales.  
ST 16, DX 13, IQ 12, HT 14.

*Advantages:* Toughness +3; Comfortable Wealth; Alertness +3; Combat Reflexes; Danger Sense; High Pain Threshold; Legal Enforcement Powers (10 points).

*Disadvantages:* Odious Personal Habit; Ugly; Duty (-15 points); Honesty; Reputation -3 (everyone, all the time); Sense of Duty (to Emperor); Mild Shyness; Intolerance (non-Reptile Men).

*Skills:* Area Knowledge-12; Axe Throwing-13; Axe/Mace-13; Brawling-15; Broadsword-18; Crossbow-13; Fast-Draw-14; Fast-Draw-14; First Aid-15; Interrogation-14; Knife Throwing-13; Leadership-15; Shield-15; Shortsword-15; Spear Throwing-13; Stealth-12; Tactics-12; Two-Handed Sword-14.

Ahz (as he is known to his few close friends) has been the Captain of the True Dragons for three years (his predecessor died as a resist of tasting the Emperor's wine one night). He is a strict disciplinarian, and doesn't relax around *anyone*. He doesn't particularly *like* the Emperor, but he feels very strongly about his responsibilities, and will carry them out without question — even if it results in his own death!

### **Brennan**

Age 34; Black hair and bend, blue eyes; 6'1", 175 lbs.

ST 13, DX 11, IQ 12, HT 13

*Advantages:* Charisma +1; Toughness (DR 1).

*Disadvantages:* Social Stigma (outlaw, -3); Stubbornness.

*Skills:* Shortsword-14; Shield-10; Tactics-12; Leadership-12; Stealth-11.

Brennan's real name (which he reveals to no one) is Lennox of Heydon. Lennox was enslaved when a local squire blamed him for a rape the squire himself had committed. Lennox vowed he would have his revenge on the young nobleman and the Earl who had been so quick to condemn him. After winning his freedom in the arena, he became a soldier in the Legions, where he learned weapon skills and infantry tactics. Known for his icy calm in the face of death, he was given the name Brennan — meaning hangman — when he was chosen to serve as his unit's executioner in cases of desertion.

A charismatic if somewhat hard-hearted leader, Brennan has gathered a large band of outlaws and escaped slaves. Contrary to the rumors, however, Brennan has no intention of leading a slave revolt — his goal is vengeance, pure and simple.

### **Walsham, Guildmaster of Myrgan**

Age 40; Balding, gray hair and brown eyes, pot belly; 5'9", 180 lbs.

ST 9, DX 10, IQ 14, HT 12.

*Advantages:* Language Talent +2; Literacy; Wealth (Wealthy).

*Disadvantages:* Greed.

*Skills:* Fast-Talk-14; Merchant-16; Sahudese-13; Arabic-14; Northlands-14; Latin-14.

Walsham went to Sahud with Rufus' son as an interpreter. When things went awry, the Baron blamed Walsham for the disaster; Walsham barely managed to convince Rufus that he was not a traitor. In fact, Walsham *thought* he was striking an private deal with the Heavenking, cutting Rufus out of the profits. Now he's embroiled in a war of his own making — and frantically searching for a way to avert it.



fir with a few oaks, birch and plane. They contain all manner of wild creatures — treetrippers, squirrels, foxes, deer, elk, etc. — including such dangerous beasts as wolves, bears, wild boar and the dreaded nightstalker (see p. 129). Along the northern coasts seals and walrus are common. Whales and other sea-monsters are occasionally sighted.

Wheat, oats, rye and hay are the most common major crops; also grown are beans, turnips, cabbage, lettuce and carrots. Farmers in this area also raise cattle, woolen (see p. 131), sheep and pigs. Lumber is a major export item.

### **Teridar**

Teridar is the richest city of northern Megalos. It is the seat of both an Earl and an Archbishop, and has one of the few Thomasite hospitals in Yrth. Located on a south-facing cove at the mouth of a fertile river valley, Teridar enjoys mild winters for a northern city.

This region also boasts the greatest lumber camp east of Lake Acheron. It is run by the slaves of the Earl, Sigmund Bonus. Courtesy of his slaves, Earl Sigmund sponsors some of the most lavish arena spectacles in Megalos. One regular event is known as the *Libertatum*, in which four slaves battle each other for potential freedom. The Earl petitions the Emperor to release the victor — no guarantees, but he'll ask.

Recently, the slaves have been restless. It is rumored that one of the few gladiators to actually be freed has returned to seek vengeance and to liberate all the Earl's slaves. Known only as Brennan (Gaelic for “hangman”), he is supposedly gathering all the escaped slaves he can find into an liberating army (see sidebar). Sigmund discounted the rumors — such stories are frequently told by desperate men praying for freedom — until bandit activity suddenly increased. Upon each occasion of banditry, the culprits left a calling card — a noose of coarse rope.

### **Myrgan**

The most northern of all major Megalan cities, Myrgan thrives on trade with the Nomad Lands — exchanging cheap common materials for exotic furs, magical components and other rare luxury items — and also vies with Quartedec for the summer Sahudese trade. Although the lands around Myrgan are fertile during the short northern summers, trade is the lifeblood of the city.

As one of the few unchartered cities in Megalos, Myrgan is directly ruled by the Viscount Rufus Hostilius. There is great unrest among the city's merchants, who resent Rufus' 20% tax on their foreign trade. The heavy-handed Viscount has put down guild uprisings twice in recent years; a third attempt is almost certain.

Last trading season, Hostilius sent his youngest son as emissary to the Heavenking of Sahud. The boy was merely supposed to deliver a proposal that Sahud and Myrgan enter into an exclusive trading agreement; instead he committed his father to a High War with one of the Heavenking's champions. When the champion appeared in Rufus' hall and demanded that the duel be fought in the ancient karate style, the hot-headed Viscount had the obviously insane man thrown out. Now the Heavenking has declared a Low War against Myrgan. No one quite knows what to expect, but the townspeople fear the worst.

### **Kethalos**

The County of Kethalos, in northwest Megalos, is a troubled one. Located on the Johns River, it had prospered from trade with the nomads from across the bay, and its independent fishing operations. But recently the nomads have turned nasty — waylaying trading vessels, attacking peaceful fishing boats, and even invading some of the nearby villages.

A few years ago, Count Marcus granted the city of Kethalos a charter at the insistence of the townsfolk there, and then withdrew to his country estate. The nomad chieftains, who had great respect for Marcus as a warrior, had been peaceful. Unfortunately, Marcus took most of his soldiers with him. The barbarians, seeing that the Count's men were few, jumped to the wrong conclusion. Assuming the Count was dead or off at war, they quickly became aggressive.

The townsfolk immediately called on the Count for aid, but Marcus petulantly reminded them that they had asked for autonomy, and now they had it. The barbarians were their problem. He told them to have their vaunted city guard deal with the threat. This did not go down well with the Count's coastal vassals, who are suffering along with the city folk. Everyone agrees something must be done, and many look to the Count's son Darius, a sturdy young knight (see sidebar). Some have seriously suggested hiring professional help to *remove* the obstinate Marcus.

### Azer

The city of Azer is the only major port on Dyecastle Island, just off the eastern coast of Megalos. Once heavily wooded, the island was known for its excellent shipbuilders. Today the artisans are still there, but the timber must be imported from Teridar and elsewhere.

Azer's other claim to fame is the Templar College of Battle Magic, located on a hill overlooking the city. The Templars' ambitious research efforts sometimes yield spectacular results — local gamblers run pools on how long it will be before the next explosion rocks the hilltop fortress. Young, hot-headed students (most of whom are training for the Legions rather than the Knights Templar) come to the city for entertainment. Magical duels are forbidden, but invariably occur, and always draw a crowd.

Recently, the Bailiff of the College, Father Sir Richard of Valmont, invited a



group of Jesuits to build a mission on College lands. Strange events began to happen soon afterwards. A fire mysteriously started in the College library, and members of the building crew became ill the night before construction was to begin. Those who dislike the Jesuits claim that the mishaps are signs of God's disapproval of the order. Richard, however, is convinced that foul play is involved (see sidebar).

### The Midlands

Wild lands are rare in these parts, except for the Emperor's Forest. Wild animals larger than squirrels and rabbits are rarely seen. Near Lake Acheron, however, ducks and geese thrive. Crops are the same as those in the north, with the addition of flax (for linen), sugar beets, and orchards of apple and cherry trees. The hills just west of the capital are also Megalos' major source of tin and iron ore.

### Megalos

Megalos, seat of the Emperor, is Yrth's greatest city. It is first in everything — the wealth of its citizens, the size of its port, the magnificence of its cathedrals, and the number of its thieves, murderers and conspirators. The Imperial

### Sir Darius of Kethalos

Age 23; Sandy brown hair and brown eyes; 5'11", 165 lbs.

ST 14, DX 11, IQ 9, HT 12.

Advantages: Legal Enforcement Powers (15 points); Status 3; Wealth (Wealthy).

Disadvantages: Honesty; Gullibility; Duty (-5); Sense of Duty (-5); Chivalric Code of Honor.

Skills: Broadsword-14; Shield-10; Riding-12; Lance-12; Bow-11; Tracking-10.

Though an excellent knight, Marcus' son Darius is not a promising leader. Good-natured and handsome, Darius' only interests are hunting and jousting. Marcus is concerned that his son might become a tool of his enemies, and with good reason — boy *isn't* very bright...

### Antiochus the Firemage

Age 38; Black hair, blue eyes, ruddy complexion; 5'10", 160 lbs.

ST 10, DX 12, IQ 14, HT 10.

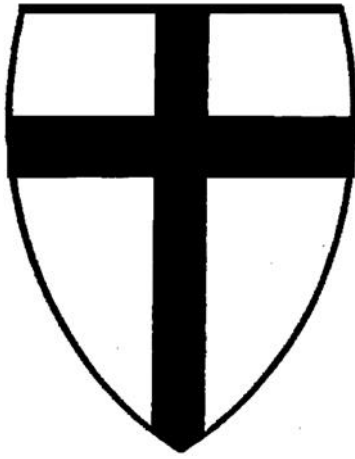
Advantages: Magery 2; Literacy; Wealth (Comfortable).

Disadvantages: Pyromania.

Spells: Ignite, Create, Shape, Resist and Extinguish Fire; Cold; Fireball; Explosive Fireball; Flame Jet (all at level 14).

Antiochus, despite his age, is the problem child of the Azerian Mages' Guild. In addition to his love of setting fires, Antiochus is something of a hot-head. He is frequently involved in duels and disputes with young students from the college, and openly expresses his disdain for "those hypocritical, ecclesiastical, so-called sorcerers." Father Sir Richard privately suspects that Antiochus caused the fire at the College, and some of Antiochus' friends have wondered the same thing. In fact, Antiochus did set the fire. but it wasn't his idea alone — many wizards would like to see the growth of the Jesuits checked.





capital is home to every race; even Elves and Reptile Men are occasionally encountered on its streets. The city is so large that grain and foodstuffs must be brought in by ship from all over the Empire to feed it. If any foreign navy were powerful enough to blockade the harbor, its people would begin to starve within a month.

Although no enemy force has attempted to scale its walls in more than 500 years, Megalos has never been a city at peace. As the Imperial capital, it is plagued by warfare between rival factions of the Imperial court. Political assassinations are commonplace, and the knights and men-at-arms of opposing nobles fight duels and brawls in the city's streets and taverns. And in the alleys and slums lurk countless cutthroats who would kill their own mothers for a few coppers.

The current situation at court is tense, even by Megalan standards. Rumors that the Moslems are preparing for war have been ignored by Diophrates, who is presently preoccupied with the mystery of the Blackwoods (see sidebar, p. 53). To make matters worse, an assassination attempt was made on the Emperor — by a demon! Diophrates' life was saved by his elite bodyguard of Reptile Men and by Jordan Siegebrieker, Grand Master of the Templars (see sidebar). A mage of the Templar order then divined that the demon's master was none other than Diophrates' own court wizard, Phocas. The accused man was summarily tortured and imprisoned and, although he still protests his innocence, is soon to be beheaded.

### *Jordan Siegebrieker*

Age 51; Dark brown hair and brown eyes; 6', 170 lbs.

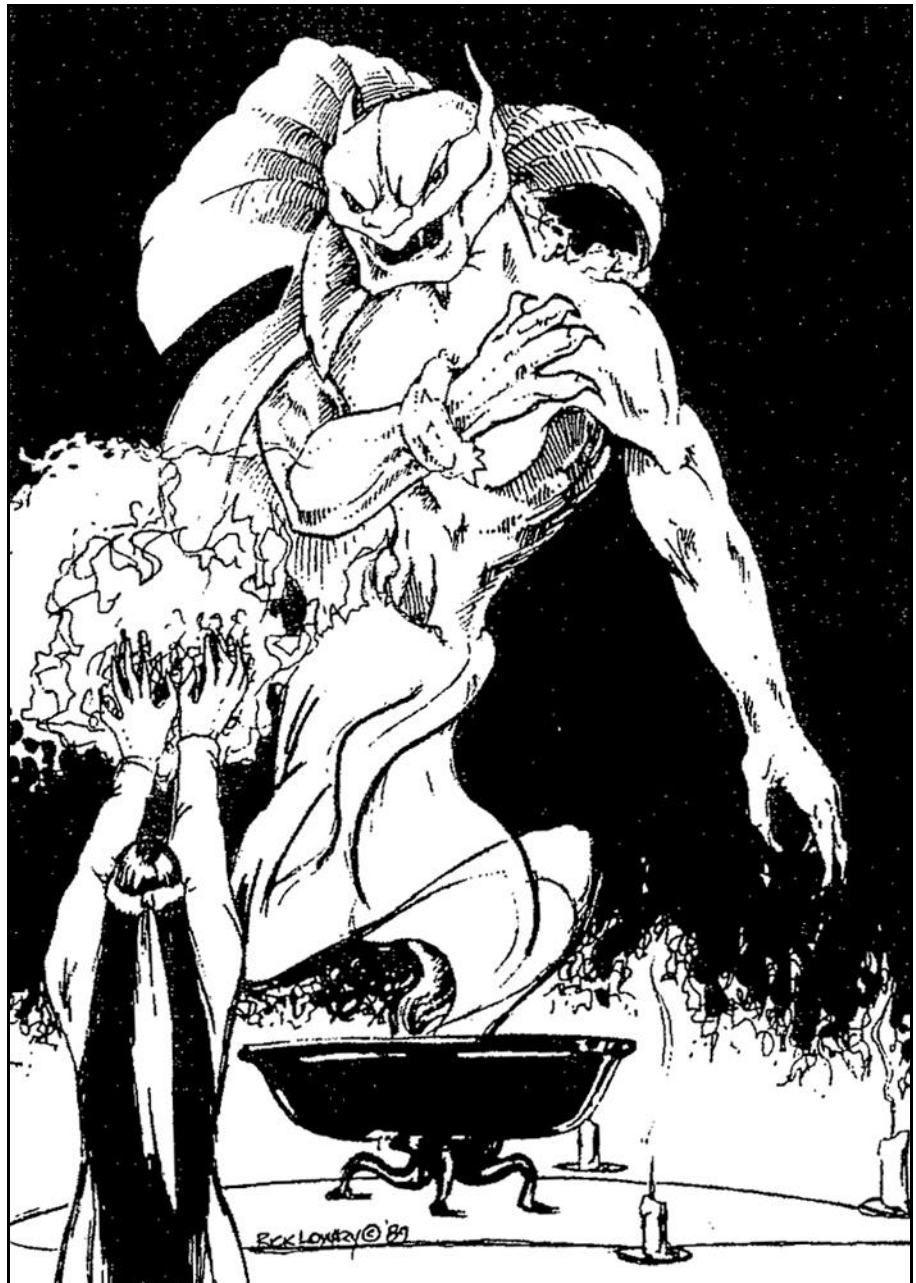
ST 14, DX 13, IQ 14, HT 12.

*Advantages:* Status 6; Clerical Investment; Literacy; Charisma +3; High Pain Threshold.

*Disadvantages:* Templar Vows; Duty (-5 points); Megalomania.

*Skills:* Administration-12; Brawling-14; Broadsword-16; Diplomacy-16; Fast-Talk-14; Heraldry-13; Lance-17; Leadership-14; Riding-15; Savoir-Faire-14; Shield-15; Strategy-12.

As Grand Master of the Templars and confidant of the Emperor, Jordan may well be the most powerful man in Megalos, if not all Yrth. This is no accident. The Grand Master has long viewed himself as heir to the Menelaen dream — the conquest of Yrth. He has spent his life building his power base, which consists of the Templars, their Jesuit allies, several Archbishops and a number of important nobles — and may soon include the Emperor's Legions as well.



The death sentence has touched off a wave of anti-clerical sentiment among the Emperor's Councilors, most of whom distrust Jordan and question his motives. Some of Phocas' fellow mages in the Emperor's service have even insinuated that it was Jordan who sent the demon in the first place, with the aid of his Jesuit allies.

### **Hidelban**

The Duchy of Hidelban is one of the breadbaskets of the Empire. Though located well inland, this small city is located on the River Bressel, which is navigable for most of its length. The region is well watered by creeks and streams, although an unusual drought has caused many of them to dry up. This year's harvest will probably be poor, and many cattle will have to be slaughtered due to lack of winter fodder.

The region hit hardest by the drought is the barony of Scariswic, about two days' ride northwest of Hidelban. Although the drought has been severe, the villagers of the barony have another name for their suffering — the Maskill Curse. Local legends tell of a former baron, Claudius Maskill (see sidebar), who went mad after delving too deeply into the dark arts. Claudius was supposedly slain by a young knight in his service, but not before he had laid a terrible curse on the knight and his descendants. Claudius was interred in a stone mausoleum on an islet in the center of a local stream; to even look upon the place is thought to bring bad luck.

The current baron, Angus of Scariswic, is a direct descendant of that accursed knight. In addition to the drought, wolves have begun attacking livestock and even humans. Scariswic town has been infested by hordes of rats, and bats have taken up residence in the local cathedral's bell tower. Of late, Angus' own daughter has been frequently gazing at Claudius' tomb in the midst of the almost dry stream bed. Her father has tried everything, but nothing seems to cure her grisly fascination with the place.

Still denying the possibility of the curse, Angus looks to his neighbors and competitors for the source of his problems. Blaming impending clerical and mage wars in Megan, grain merchants throughout the Empire, or any and all of Megalos' enemies, Angus wants for an easily confrontable solution to his problems. He has yet to find one.

### **Mehan**

The Duchy of Mehan is one of the richest in Megalos. Its harbor opens not onto the ocean, but onto the great Lake Acheron. The Mehanian fleet controls trade and fishing on Acheron, a virtual inland sea. The Duke of Mehan controls land on both sides of the water. Wool, grain, furs and copper ore from the southern foothills of the Whitehood Mountains pass from Mehan via boat to both Megalos and Yiby-orak, and thence to the sea. Mehan mustard is also a major export item. Additionally, Mehan is an important religious center. St. Paul's Cathedral — where the Curia holds its conclaves — is a popular pilgrimage site. Petronius, the Archbishop of Mehan, rules the coastal town of Thysdretum to the south and is second only to the Duke in influence.

Despite its reputation for orthodoxy, the Archdiocese of Mehan is plagued by heresy. For some time, on the northwestern shores of Acheron, dwelled wizard-hating heretics who called themselves Penitentines (see sidebar, p. 50). Since they were quiet, and lived in a remote area, no one paid much attention.

Recently, however, a leader has risen among them who preaches that they must not only abstain from magic and contact with nonhumans — whom they regard as demons — but take direct action. Heretics began appearing in Mehan and performing acts of terrorism. Mages' houses and shops were burned; Goblin merchants were beaten; a few people were even killed. Soon a rival cult appeared



#### ***Claudius Maskill***

Age 284; Vampire; black hair and eyes, white skin; 6', 150 lbs.

ST 26, DX 13, IQ 15, HT 18.

Advantages and Disadvantages: Magery 3; also see *Vampires* in Chapter 4.

Skills: Shortsword-13; Savoir-Faire-14; Occultism-15; Latin-15.

Spells: Suspended Animation; Awaken; Link; Forgetfulness; Madness; and prerequisites of GM's choice (all at level 15).

Centuries ago, Claudius was trapped in his lair when Angus' ancestor diverted a nearby stream. The vampire woke to find himself surrounded by running water. Being a powerful sorcerer as well as one of the undead, he saved himself with a Suspended Animation spell, setting an Awaken spell to go off when a potential victim entered the crypt. That victim was Angus' daughter, Lydia. He charmed her and, feeding upon the victims she brings him, waits for the drought to free him. When that happens, Claudius will reclaim Scariswic and destroy the family which has tormented him.

The PCs could become involved in this affair in one of two ways. The first is obvious — the characters are vampire hunters who are hired (or volunteer) to rescue Lydia from the clutches of the evil monster (and ensure that the Barony continues to produce revenue for the Emperor!).

Of course, the PCs don't *have* to be good guys — Maskill is going to need allies of some sort, and an amoral band of characters might just fit the bill. After all, Claudius must spend all day in a tomb — *someone* has to take care of business!

### ***The Repentant Pious John***

Age 36; Blond hair and blue eyes;  
5'8", 145 lbs.

ST 10, DX 11, IQ 13, HT 11.

Advantages: Charisma +3; Magical Resistance +3; Strong Will +3.

Disadvantages: Fanaticism; Intolerance (of mages and nonhumans); Social Stigma (heretic, -3).

Skills: Bard-12; Tactics-11; Theology-14; Shortsword-11.

Pious John is the leader of the Penitentine sect. When he was very ill as a child, his parents naturally sought help from a healing mage. The wizard told them that John was naturally resistant to his spells. When the lad recovered on his own, they became convinced that the boy was divinely chosen.

As an adult, John began preaching the doctrine of *repentance through action*. To reach Heaven, he says, one must strike down evil rather than merely abstaining from it. God will protect those who battle sorcery, as He has protected John himself. Those who perish are freed from Purgatory and attain Heaven. Pious John's following is growing daily, and attacks on wizards by club-wielding Penitentes are on the rise, despite the Manites' reprisals.

### ***Poachers in the Forest***

There are several groups who may be responsible for the recent poaching in the Imperial preserve. Any one of them, or possibly more than one, could be behind the killings — which one is left to the GM. And whoever the culprits are, they're dangerous — only a well-armed group with at least one mage would dare tackle some of the beasts which are being killed.

*Wazifi agents* are collecting the magical and alchemical ingredients. After getting them out of the forest, they are taken to Dekamera where they are smuggled onto trading vessels bound for al-Wazif. The Caliph's wizards have been ordered to prepare for a major invasion of Megalos, and this operation is part of their plan.

*Manite heretics* are poaching in the forest. Believing that those with magical aptitude are God's chosen, the heretics also believe that any creatures with magical properties exist for *their* use, and not the Emperor's pleasure. They are carrying their trophies north toward Mehan, where Manite wizards are battling rival heretics and Church authorities.

*The Blackwoods* mystery is connected with the strange mutilations. Whatever is behind the forest's growth is also responsible for the poaching. Perhaps the ingredients are necessary for the powerful sorcery at work in the Blackwoods.

*It's an inside job.* Someone at Hunt Tower, perhaps even the Marquis himself, is no doubt in league with the poachers.

— the secret wizardry society of the Manites. Its members believe that those able to use magic are God's chosen. Their mages began to retaliate against the Penitentes. Now the Duke and the Archbishop must deal with an all-out war between rival heretical factions. Local wizards are divided: some are in favor of the Manites' actions, if not their theology; others fear an anti-magic hysteria among the general populace.

Meanwhile, the young Duke Thomas Mehan has been spending more time at court trying to curry favor than home overseeing his problems. This has only added to the bad feeling in the duchy.

### ***Hunt Tower***

Hunt Tower is the principal lodge used by the Emperor when he hunts in the Emperor's Forest. This forest of pine, oak and maple encircles a small mountain range in which lurk truly fierce monsters; the rest of the forest contains only safe beasts — nothing more formidable than tigers and gryphons. Poaching in the forest is a capital offense.

Technically speaking, the tower, the town which serves it and the forest itself are the fiefdom of Prince Miltiades, the Royal heir. Megalan emperors learned long ago not to bestow large, powerful fiefdoms upon family members, who might then use those resources to take the throne for themselves. Therefore, it has been customary to place the Emperor's Forest in the care of the Prince, since it has no significant population from which to raise troops. Of course, few princes are willing to live so far from court, so management of the Forest has been traditionally left to the family of the Emperor's huntsman — currently the Marquis Andre Verdien.

The Marquis is under tremendous pressure from the Emperor to crack down on poaching. Recently, His Imperial Majesty came upon the carcass of a gryphon — its feathers plucked out and its tongue and talons hacked off. The mutilation of the corpse suggested the culprits were not simply seeking a trophy. Since the incident, more butchered creatures — most of magical nature and very dangerous — have been found by the Marquis' wardens. All the facts point to a shopping list of magical components; wizards who have examined the remains confirm that the body parts taken are rare and potent magical ingredients. It is not known who is taking them or what their purpose is (see sidebar).



### ***The Southlands***

This warm region is as heavily settled as the lands to the north. It is known for its great cotton and hemp plantations, vineyards, olive orchards and fine cattle.

### ***Ekhans***

The Duchy of Ekhans and its surrounding fiefs are as famous for their rich plantations, vineyards and orchards as for their huge herds of beef cattle which feed much of Southern and Midland Megalos. In the center of this rural splendor

lies the prosperous city of Ekhans, primary seat of the controlling Duchy. Ekhans is one of the oldest and most prestigious ducal holdings in Megalos, and its current lord, Duke Aston Valentim, is no different than his elite, aristocratic predecessors,

But underneath the temperate calm of Ekhans lies a powder keg awaiting but a single spark to ignite. The serfs who tend the lush vineyards and orchards have had ever-increasing problems with their cattle-herding brethren, building fences to keep them out — fences which indiscriminately cut across the land, making the necessary drives to market follow long and arduous routes. The herders fight back by ripping down fences — and anything else which gets in their way. So far Duke Aston has only dealt with individual incidents which have come into his court. If he does not awake to the true extent of the problem soon, it is likely to be unpleasantly thrust upon him.

### **Dekamera**

The city of Dekamera, situated on the estuary of the River Regina, boasts one of Yrth's finest ports. Though not as large or as busy as that of Megalos, its sheltered harbor enjoys mild weather year-round. Dekamera is the center of trade between al-Wazif and Cardiel and the eastern Empire. Its importance has been even further enhanced by the pirate activity to the south, much to the delight of Dekamera's merchants. Pleas for aid from Sho'joor and Zehan have fallen on deaf ears.

The Earl of Dekamera, Gavin Magnus (see sidebar), fancies himself a great admiral. Last summer, he raided several Wazifi coastal towns with his private fleet — without the Emperor's knowledge. The results were disastrous. Not only was the Earl's oldest son captured by the Moslems, but the Emperor was so furious that he demanded that Gavin's second son be sent to the Imperial court as hostage, to insure that Gavin would not act so impetuously in the future. Now the Earl must raise the enormous ransom demanded by his son's captors. Those who know the tight-fisted Earl, however, expect him to attempt a rescue mission — despite the risk of further Imperial displeasure.

### **Serrun**

The Archdiocese of Serrun, home of the Order of St. Olybrius, is prosperous. Of all the Church's prelates, the Archbishop Nikolai of Serrun is the greatest feudal lord. The vineyards and farmlands of the region benefit from the mild climate; merchants grow rich from the local textile trade. Serrun cotton cloth is in demand all over Yrth.

Despite the fact that Serrun is located overlooking the coast, it is a very minor seaport due to the shallow harbor, rocky cliffs and unpredictable currents around the offshore isles. Only smaller boats can safely navigate Serrun harbor. Thus much of the trade is overland to Dekamera, Zehan or Ekhans, with only a few smaller merchants working out of the ports at Serrun.

For many years, Archbishop Nikolai has spent more time in Megalos and Mehan, participating in palace intrigue and Church politics, than he has governing Serrun. The local nobles, who resent Nikolai's stingy policy towards slave-holding, have not failed to take advantage. Led by Count Sergius of Shambray (see sidebar), the nobles have steadily tried to undermine the Archbishop's authority. In the city itself, the merchant and craft guilds have repeatedly petitioned the Archbishop for a charter.

Trouble in the city peaked recently when Olybrian inquisitors received information that the members of the Weavers', Spinners' and Cloth Merchants' Guilds were conducting secret sacrifices to the Greek goddess Athena. The Archbishop responded by placing all the guild members and their families under interdict — forbidding them to receive the Sacraments or attend Mass until they

### **Earl Gavin Magnus**

Age 53; Graying brown hair and gray eyes; 5'10", 200 lbs.

ST 14, DX 10, IQ 11, HT 12.

Advantages: Legal Enforcement Powers (15 points); Status 6; Wealth (Filthy Rich); Literacy.

Disadvantages: Bad Temper; Duty (-5 poults); Impulsiveness; Overconfidence.

Skills: Broadsword-12; Shield-10; Seamanship-14; Leadership-13.

Earl Gavin is not about to pay an *infidel* ransom money — no matter what the Emperor says. But he's not stupid enough to personally lead an expedition to rescue his son. No doubt the Earl would like to find some mercenaries capable of carrying out the mission *discreetly*. This is an ideal opportunity for a party of PCs to not only make a fast buck, but also stumble across clues to the Wazifi invasion plans (see sidebar, p. 86).

### **Count Sergius of Shambray**

Age 47; Black hair and eyes; 5'9", 160 lbs.

ST 10, DX 13, IQ 13, HT 10.

Advantages: Legal Enforcement Powers (15 points); Status 5; Wealth (Very Wealthy); Literacy.

Disadvantages: Duty (-5 points); Bully; Greed; Lecherousness; Sadism.

Skills: Shortsword-14; Fast-Talk-14; Savoir-Faire-14; Sex Appeal-12.

Sergius of Shambray is a perfect example of Megalan nobility at its worst. His only concerns are satisfying his own perverse desires and acquiring as much power and money as possible. His agents planted the seeds of discontent among the townsfolk of Serrun, and then falsely reported that the guildsmen were conducting pagan rites. Sergius himself urged the Archbishop to take swift action, and when His Excellency was called away, stepped in to play the role of the people's savior. Foiling the plots of a man such as Sergius could make a long and satisfying campaign.



### ***Captain Rashid al-Marqab***

Age 31; Black hair and eyes, olive skin; 5'10", 160 lbs.

ST 11, DX 13, IQ 12, HT 12.

Advantages: Charisma +1; Literacy; Patron (the Caliph).

Disadvantages: Social Stigma (Moslem pirate, -3); Duty (to the Caliph, -5 points).

Skills: Shortsword-16; Seamanship-14; Leadership-12; Tactics-12; Holdout-12; Stealth-13; English-12.

Rashid is an agent of the caliph of al-Wazif, specifically sent to Min in order to create trouble. His first mission was to create dissension among the Megalan nobility, which he has accomplished nicely. His second mission is to build a fleet with which to intercept the Megalan navy, once Wazifi armies have attacked Craine. Rashid has Tolbert completely fooled as to his true purpose, and stands ready to take control of the fat fool's barony as soon as the noble's usefulness has ended.

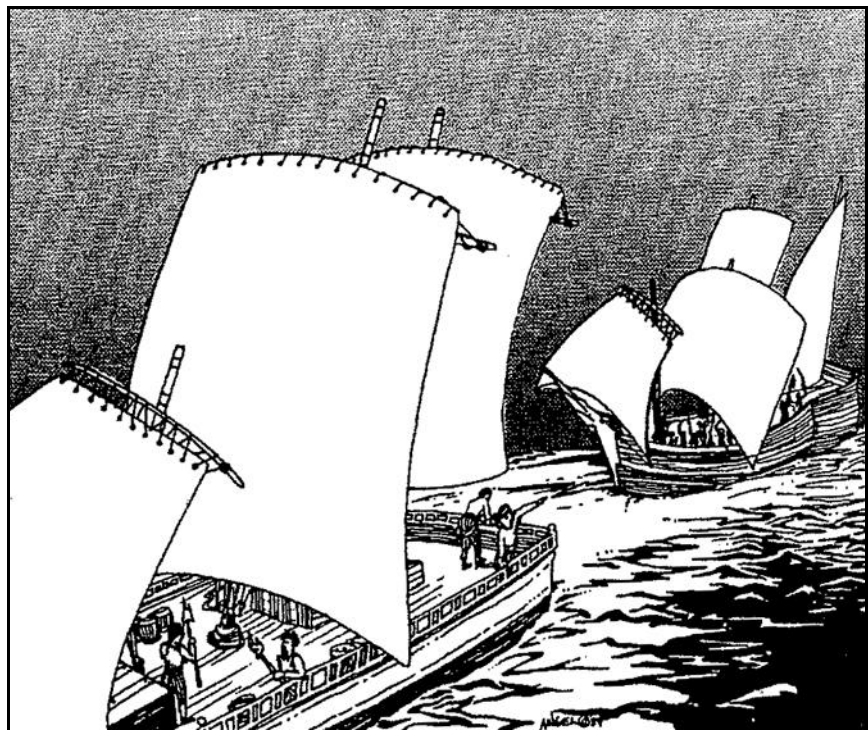
repent of their pagan practices. The guildsmen protested their innocence and eventually took to the streets, burning the Archbishop in effigy on the steps of the Ser-run Cathedral. Count Sergius quickly stepped in and offered to mediate, just as Nikolai was called to the capital on urgent business. In the meantime, the bishop of Shambray — Sergius' personal confessor — has agreed to minister to the guildsmen's spiritual needs.

### ***Min***

The city and barony of Min is located on a peninsula at the southernmost tip of the Megalan mainland. Lacking good farmland and a harbor deep enough to accommodate large merchant vessels, Min is not well-off. The region's major industries are milkfish farming, fishing and clam-diving, mostly off the chain of islands west of the city. Without this income, Baron Tolbert of Min would be a pauper. Not since Min served as the staging area for the invasion of al-Kard 500 years ago has anyone paid much attention to it — until now.

Min has become a haven for pirates. While the harbor isn't deep enough for heavily laden cargo ships, it's just fine for the pirates' small war galleys and quick, shallow-drafted sailboats. Using Min and surrounding islands as their base, the pirates have all but cut off access by sea to neighboring Sho'joor and Zehan. No shipping to and from Cardiel is safe, and most traders have begun giving Min — and Sho'joor and Zehan — a wide berth.

Baron Tolbert disavows any connection to the pirates, claiming he is as much a victim — and hostage — to the buccaneers as his neighbors. Yet Tolbert consistently refuses any aid offered him. His family honor forbids it. Of course, if the Count of Zehan would only grant him *this* fiefdom, and if the Duke of Sho'joor would give him *that* town... why, he could easily hire enough troops to oust the scoundrels on his own!



### ***Sho 'joor and Zehan***

The cities of Sho'joor and Zehan are located on a large, deep bay on Megalos' southern coast. Traditionally they have been stopping points for vessels traveling from Megalos to the Islamic countries or vice versa. Lately, pirate activity has forced them to travel to either Dekamera or Sauvons instead. This

has proved a sore blow to the cities' economies, and to the pocketbooks of their rulers.

Duke Yivirrl of Sho'joor and Count Aloysius of Zehan were caught off guard by the pirates, who appeared in strength almost overnight. Although they had several Imperial ships at their disposal, they had almost no navies of their own. Since then, one of these war-galleys has been captured by the pirates and another called to duty elsewhere. There is no doubt in the nobles' minds that Baron Tolbert is responsible, but appeals to the Earl of Dekamera, who is benefiting from their misfortunes, have been ignored. Emissaries to the Emperor's court have apparently failed to even obtain an audience — if they ever reached the capital at all. Several attempts have been made to get a ship through to Araterre, but thus far all have been intercepted by the pirates.

## The Western Empire

The lands west of Lake Acheron are drier than the eastern parts of Megalos. They are dominated by the ominous Blackwoods in the east and rolling plains in the far west and the north. In addition to the standard crops, peaches and pecans are harvested. Cattle, woolens, hardings (see p. 131) and horses are the most common livestock. Antelope, bison and zebra roam the western plains, as do a few small herds of wild horses. Of course, the Blackwoods might contain *anything*...

### Yibyorak

The Goblin duchy of Yibyorak is a rich one — and getting wealthier all the time. It is a fertile region and well situated along the trade route which links Keyhole Bay with the east. The Duke's current pet project is the construction of a canal which will allow larger vessels to sail directly to Lake Acheron and Mehan. Its completion will help Goblin merchants take over much of the trade which currently belongs to Dekamera.

Yibyorak is a city of merchants; money and goods are constantly changing hands. Not surprisingly, it is also a city of thieves. Its citizens accept this, and regard their losses as part of the price of doing business. Lately, though, things have gotten out of hand. A new organization has taken over the town's underworld — a very *efficient* organization. Its members call themselves the Brothers of Mercury (see sidebar), and they wear medallions bearing that god's insignia. Their loyalty to one another is so great that they will readily die rather than betray one of their own. The Brothers' skill is such that supposedly impregnable homes have been burgled, right under guards' noses.

The thieves' success has been so great that they have become the primary concern of Yibyorak's governor, Taavjekii. He has offered a \$100 reward for each cultist captured or killed, and \$10,000 for their leader. It is also rumored that he is hiring spies to infiltrate the organization. In any event, bounty hunters and out-of-work mercenaries are flocking to Yibyorak hoping to make a quick fortune.

### Hyrnan

A shadow of fear hangs over the barony of Hyrnan. From the walls of Hyrnan Town on the northern shore of Keyhole Bay, the Blackwoods can be seen on a clear day. Although no one can remember a time when the forest wasn't there, old-timers seem to remember the barony as being *larger*.

Folk in Hyrnan had always assumed that other fiefdoms existed a few miles to the north, on the other side of the trees; the fact that nobody in living memory had ever *met* someone from those parts simply wasn't mentioned. Official Megalan maps, for hundreds of years, had shown that area as cultivated land.

### *Shuuv'kopekk*

Age 44; Goblin; Black hair and green skin; 5'4", 120 lbs.

ST 9, DX 13, IQ 14, HT 11.

Advantages: Night Vision; Literacy; Magery-2.

Disadvantages: Impulsiveness; Greed.

Skills: Streetwise-14; Merchant-14; Occultism-12.

Spells: See Secrets; Wizard Eye; Glass Wall; Dispel Magic; Mass Sleep; Thunderclap; Great Voice; Hush; prerequisites of GM's choice (all at level 15).

The Goblin wizard Shuuv'kopekk is the mastermind behind the Brothers of Mercury. His identity, however, is unknown to any of the thieves save the cult's high priest — a human named Diosthenes, who is Shuuv'kopekk's servant and mouthpiece.

Shuuv'kopekk uses his magical ability to produce the effects of Mercury's "blessings," and collects the offerings left by the adoring thieves. Using his Great Voice spell, the "god" designates targets, disables magical safeguards, and otherwise aids the thieves.

The majority of the thieves of Yibyorak now worship Mercury, and his cult has come to dominate the city's underworld. Although many of the newer converts are still skeptical of the god's power, all become sincere believers eventually. Cultists are fanatically loyal to one another — the knowledge that traitors are ritually disemboweled is but one reason.

It has recently come to Shuuv'kopekk's attention that Diosthenes is less than happy with his cut. With such a large price on the cult leader's head, the Goblin is seriously considering turning his henchman in and collecting the reward himself.

But six years ago it was discovered that the entire area was thick forest! Was the forest *growing*? Had it swallowed up entire towns and villages, or, as some folk whispered, had those places never existed at all?

Clearly, this was treachery and intrigue at its blackest, aided by powerful magic. At first, hardy adventurers entered the wood seeking to solve the mystery or search for booty in deserted towns. Later, small bands of soldiers were ordered in to scout the terrain. None returned. Finally, three years ago, the Emperor sent one of his legions to Hyrnan with orders to clear the forest. Just weeks after the assault on the trees began, the survivors returned, ill and starving, with tales of horror — and vowing never to return. Since then, the Emperor has turned the matter over to his wizards, but the Blackwoods has proven impenetrable to even the most powerful scrying spells.

### ***Madness in the Forest***

Those who survived the invasion of the Blackwoods told the tale of the legion's demise. At first, all went well. The soldiers, armed with axes and saws, began felling trees, while the battle mages blasted entire groves with magical fire. In two weeks, they had advanced two days' march into the forest... then things started happening.

It began with an attack by ferocious wolves, larger than any seen before. Their howling filled the night, surrounding the soldiers, making it impossible to sleep. Any man who strayed even a few feet past the sentries' fires was dragged into the trees, where his anguished cries could be heard as he was torn to pieces. During the day, the beasts retreated, but as more land was cleared, the grisly remains of the previous night's victims were discovered.

Supplies ran out, and the wolves kept game away from the soldiers' camps. A party was sent back to Hyrnan for more men and food, but their torn bodies were discovered just beyond the edge of camp the following morning. The officers argued: should they send a larger party? How large? Half the Legion?

When the fever struck, nerves were already strained by lack of sleep and food. Some men simply died. Others became too weak to work or even stand. A few became delirious, attacking their comrades. Voices were heard, calling out from the trees, beckoning the soldiers to come lie in their cool shade. Those who answered the call were never seen again.

Finally, the surviving officers ordered the retreat. An eerie silence descended on the forest as the soldiers made their exit. Some of the survivors have now gone mad, and talk gibberish or stare silently into space.



If the Blackwoods was not growing before, it certainly is today. Terrified commoners have abandoned the fields which border it, and none fell its trees. Slowly, the forest is claiming the neglected lands, and as it advances, the peasants retreat further. Hyrnan's lord, Baron Tunstall, has failed in his efforts to reassure his subjects, and his remaining knights and men-at-arms refuse to pass under the evil wood's boughs. He has pleaded with Diophrates to send more soldiers, but the Emperor refuses to risk more men until his wizards solve the mystery (see sidebar).

### ***Bannock***

Situated at the mouth of the River Conn, Bannock supports itself on the trade between Caithness and al-Wazif. An oft-beleaguered town, Bannock has traded hands at least six times in the last 200 years. Its population is mixed Christian and Moslem, with enough of each to make forced conversion of the infidel impossible without mass slaughter. Thus, Bannock is one of the few towns in Megalos where mosques can be found (though all are poor and constantly harassed).

Since its last ruling family, the Earls of Bannock, was wiped out and their keep leveled by the invading Wazifi during the Mages' War, the fiefdom has remained without active feudal governance. The new lords have chosen to remain near Megalos — the current Earl, Barris Tremaine, has never even visited his holding. The city of Bannock is chartered and run by the various merchants' guilds who are quite happy with their freedom.

But once again war along the southern border threatens, heralded by the increasingly large numbers of Kharijites to be found in their city; the people of Bannock are understandably frightened.

### ***Quartedec***

The fief of Earl Hadrian of Quartedec stretches from the northern edge of the Blackwoods to the Emperor's Wall and the shores of Lake Styx. The earldom is famous for its horses, the best of which are descended from captured nomad stock. Quartedec's rich, sometimes marshy, grasslands are broken by bands of pine forest which harbor all manner of wild creatures.

Quartedec is the primary source of Dwarven goods in Megalos. Traders from Zarak gather here to exchange weapons, armor and jewelry for foodstuffs and cloth. Quartedec also has a thriving community of Dwarven smiths — one of the few permanent settlements of surface-dwelling Dwarves on Yrth.

Relations with Zarak have been strained by the discovery of gold in one of the streams which flows down out of the Bronze Mountains and Dwarven territory. Soon even the tiniest rivulet running out of the mountains was being panned. Inevitably, some miners entered the mountains themselves, angering the Dwarves. This, and the sudden drop in the demand for Dwarven gold, prompted the Dwarves to claim that the gold — obviously carried out of *their* mountains

by the water — belongs to *them*. Now a strange disease has appeared among the miners. At first the victim's fingers become black and swollen; then the infection creeps up the arms. When it reaches the neck the person strangles to death. Some claim that God is punishing the greedy panners. Others say that Dwarven mages have put a curse on the gold, pointing out that the local Dwarven smiths refuse to work or accept this “black gold” as payment for their services (see sidebar).

### **Arvey**

Snuggled in the southern foothills of the Bronze Mountains, the Barony of Arvey once marked the western border of Megalos, back in the early 1300s. Today it is the second largest trading center with the Dwarves of Zarak. Though few of the mountain-folk make their homes in the city, one can always find them traveling the streets or merchanting their finely crafted wares.

### **Craine**

The greatest city in western Megalos is Craine; the Duke of Craine is the region's dominant lord and his fiefdom is the largest between Caithness and Lake Acheron. The duchy is a land of rolling plains and slow-moving rivers, dotted with stands of pine, oak and poplar. This is excellent country for raising livestock; cattle, buffalo and sheep are common. Craine, located on the River Conn, is also a major center in the Caithness-Megalan trade.

Since the duchy's creation, it has been torn by war. Founded as a result of Megalos' first incursions into Moslem lands, Craine is the traditional staging ground for invasions of al-Wazif and Caithness, and has been besieged many times, most recently during the Mages' War. Occasionally, the grand duchy has fallen under Moslem rule, only to be liberated by Imperial forces. There is a large minority of peasants who remember their Moslem roots, although very few practice any rites of Islam (and those who are caught are persecuted ruthlessly). Further south, closer to the al-Wazif border, there are a few small mosques, fiercely protected by the local inhabitants.

In recent years Duke Bran, together with the Grand Master of New Jerusalem and the Archbishop of Raphael, has been the primary agitator for a new crusade against the Moslem kingdoms. The knights and legionnaires of Craine often look toward their eastern counterparts with a critical eye, considering them to be soft and lacking in dedication. This is more true today than ever before, due to the constant rumors that the Wazifis are preparing for a new invasion of Megalos. Christian spies reported a gathering of forces across the southern border, then their reports ceased. Worst of all are the whispered tales that the Caliph's wizards have discovered a magical weapon of tremendous power. It is Bran's contention that Megalos must strike first. The Hospitallers support him; their rivals, the Templars, don't. The Church is similarly divided. In any event, the Emperor's attention is elsewhere, much to Duke Bran's chagrin.

### **Raphael**

The Archdiocese of Raphael is located on the rolling plains south and west of Craine. It is the youngest Archdiocese in Megalos, created in 1855 after the series of wars which established the current southern border between the Empire and al-Wazif. At least half of the current inhabitants had Moslem grandparents, though all the folk are now nominally Christian.

A young, vital city, Raphael supports itself through horse breeding and trade with al-Wazif. As one might expect from its location, it has seen more than its share of conflict. The city was almost leveled during the Mages' War, but the survivors wasted no time in rebuilding, dedicating their handiwork to Jesus and the Emperor. Fearing Wazifi expansion once again, the town is heavily fortified and awaiting only the Emperor's word to march.

### **Border Intrigue**

People on both sides of the Wazifi-Megalan border know that war is brewing, and they're nervous. Townsfolk are repairing their city walls and raising militia. Even the laziest of mercenaries can find employment in the Duchy of Craine. Here are a few possibilities for PCs:

*Espionage.* Nobles of both countries are anxious to know what preparations are being made on the other side of the border. They also know that many a city has fallen when traitors threw open the gates to the invaders. The party might be hired to infiltrate a city guard in order to aid a besieging army, or to ferret out such traitors in the local guard.

*Envoys.* PCs could be hired to carry important missives to neighboring nobles, perhaps requesting aid or support. Enemy agents will try to stop any messages from being delivered, or insure that the messengers receive a cold welcome.

*Raids.* A raid might be staged in order to gain an early advantage in the upcoming hostilities. The target might be a strategic fortress or town, or an enemy noble or officer.

### **Black Gold**

It is highly likely that the PCs will scoff at the “rumors” that the gold is tainted. When they look at it, they are likely to dismiss its slightly dark coloration as merely impurities. If they cany it around too long, however, they will begin to have problems. Each day that a character carries even one coin be should make a HT+2 roll (15 or higher automatically fails). A missed roll indicates that the disease has set in. Over the course of the next 1d weeks, the PC's arm will start to blacken. When it reaches his neck, he must make *daily* HT rolls — failure results in death! Up to this point, the process can be reversed and cured by a simultaneous casting of a Cure Disease and Remove Curse.

There are a number of possible causes behind this curse — the GM should pick one he likes (or make up his own!).

*Morthrinn's Bane.* Morthrinn (one of the seven Dwarf kings; see sidebar, p. 106) is attempting to stir the humans up against the Dwarves. He will then claim that his anti-human policies of the past decades are obviously correct, and gain in stature.

*Glowing, Glowing, Gone!* A secret society from an advanced TL has been hiding out in an underground base beneath the mountains. The gold is contaminated by radiation or toxic waste from their power plants.

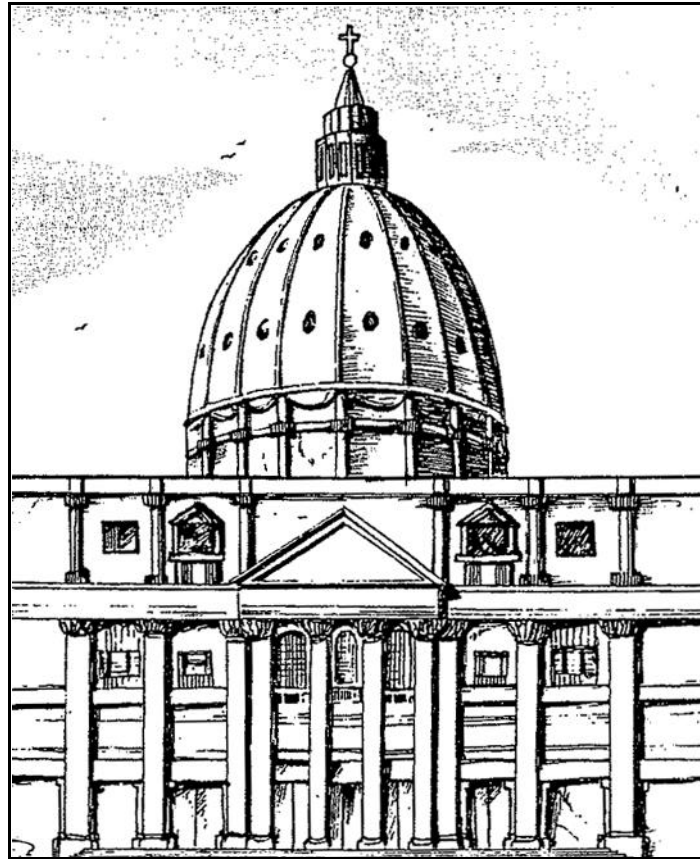
*Dragonfire.* An ancient and evil dragon has recently awakened and placed a curse on the gold to try and drive the humans away from “his” territory.



## New Jerusalem

Set west of the Duchy of Craine on the banks of the River Conn, New Jerusalem is not exactly a part of the Megalan Empire. Originally settled by the Knights of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem when they arrived on Yrth, New Jerusalem remained a thorn in the Empire's side for a long time. It wasn't until 1350, when warlord Octavius Magnus negotiated a peace treaty, that the Hospitallers agreed to join the Empire so their combined forces could destroy the infidels to the south. This unity lasted throughout the crusades, and even today the Hospitallers will answer when the Empire calls — when it suits them. They pay taxes to the Emperor according to the treaty, but they have never sworn him fealty, and consider themselves to be independent agents.

The city is run by members of the Church, the Grand Master of the Order also controlling the city and its surrounding lands. At the center of the city stands the Grand Hospital, the primary seat of the order, and its spiritual center. These days New Jerusalem is a prosperous place; free peasants work the adjoining farms and there is strong trade down the River Conn. The Order also has a large treasury — money paid by the Emperor for services rendered.



For the last century, the Hospitallers have sent most of their might against Caithness. They have been one of the few truly effective fighting forces in that low-manna area. But their heart is no longer really in that war against fellow Christians — not with rumors of al-Wazif arming to the south, and recent incursions of the Kharijites into Megalos. Sir Gilford Perrennius, the Grand Master of the Order, is agitating within Megalos for a return to the crusades, but some of his most fanatical knights find even this too little too late. They are ready to shed their ties with the lazy Emperor and strike a crushing blow against al-Wazif by themselves. Perrennius feels this tactic is doomed to failure, causing dissension in the Order. One of the most rabid knights, Sir Geoffrey Freeman, is now calling for a new Grand Master who'll lead them in their duty. Perrennius, who's spent much of his time lately in Craine and Megalos, has yet to react to this latest development.

### Sir Guildford Perrennius

Age 48, 6' 2", 215 lbs., black hair, grey eyes.

ST 12, DX 13, IQ 14, HT 12.

*Advantages:* Wealth; Clerical Investment; Common Sense; Legal Enforcement Powers (10 points); Literacy; Patron (Order, 12 or less); Status +2.

*Disadvantages:* Chivalric Code of Honor; Duty (to Order, 15 or less); Religious Intolerance; Sense of Duty (Order).

*Quirks:* Likes to drink a hot cup of tea before bed; Insists on sparring every day; Talks to his horse, Mayfair, about problems.

*Skills:* Administration-14; Area Knowledge (Megalos)-13; Brawling-12; Broadsword-15; Diplomacy-14; Fast Talk-12; Intelligence Analysis-12; Interrogation-13; Lance-14; Leadership-15; Politics-14; Riding (horse)-13; Savoir Faire-14; Shield-15; Shortsword-14; Strategy-12; Tactics-12.

Sir Guildford is a consummate politician. Unfortunately, he is also a bit more cautious than many of his hot-headed brethren would prefer. Guildford realizes that war is inevitable — but he wishes to delay it as long as possible while he tries to improve the position of the Hospitallers.

### Sir Geoffrey Freeman

Age 35, 6' 0", 195 lbs., medium-brown hair, blue eyes.

ST 14, DX 12, IQ 11, HT 12

*Advantages:* Wealth; Clerical Investment; Combat Reflexes; Legal Enforcement Powers (10 points); Literacy; Patron (the Order, 12 or less); Status +1.

*Disadvantages:* Bad Temper; Chivalric Code of Honor; Duty (to the Order, 12 or less); Religious Intolerance; Fanaticism.

*Skills:* Area Knowledge (Megalos)-12; Axe/Mace-12; Brawling-13; Broadsword-16; Carousing-13; Fast-Draw (Broadsword)-12; First Aid-11; Interrogation-12; Knife-11; Lance-15; Politics-9; Riding (horse)-12; Shield-15; Shortsword-11; Swimming-13; Two-Handed Sword-12.

Sir Geoffrey is the *de facto* leader of the Hospitaller radical arm. He is young, strong, intelligent and absolutely rabid in his hatred of Moslems. Although not immodest enough to come out and say it, Geoffrey is convinced that *he* would be a good choice as the next Grand Master!

## Araterre

The islands south of the Megalan mainland remained largely uninhabited until the sixteenth century, when a resurgence of the Banestorm deposited large numbers of Earth humans into the region. When Megalan mages discovered this, the Empire sent expeditions to help the new arrivals acclimate themselves to Yrth — and to censor the knowledge that they brought with them. After any traces of dangerous technology had been erased, the Megalans helped the islanders establish their own aristocracy — subject to the Emperor, of course.

The Principality of Araterre consists of the islands south of the Duchy of Sho'joor, stretching from Isle Entelle (Ental Island) northward to Isle de Nord. On the Principality's southern border are the Ring Islands, a region of high mana, dangerous creatures and strange events. Westward, across several hundred miles of open ocean, lies Cardiel. To the east is Bilit Island, whose human population remains to this day fiercely independent of both Araterre and Megalos.

### History

Prior to the sixteenth century, the southern islands could boast only three concentrations of humans: Drift Abbey on Ental Island, Mallory on Bartow Island, and the strange, isolated people of Bilit Island. In 1556, the first Aralaise, folk from Renaissance France, came to the islands. Over the next fifty years they appeared in ever-increasing numbers until the flow suddenly stopped in 1606. During this period the major settlements of Araterre were founded, but they had no unified government.

Early on, handpicked Megalan wizards and Church agents journeyed to the islands to monitor the technological knowledge carried by the newcomers. Mages made certain that no one entered or left the islands without a careful screening. In the meantime, they slowly installed an aristocracy loyal to the Emperor, elevating amenable Aralaise to high office, and providing each with an adviser who watched their every move.

Church inquisitors stamped out Protestant heresies, and placed carefully chosen puppets in the highest ecclesiastical offices. One order they could not stamp out, however, was the Society of Jesus. The martyrdom of early Aralaise Jesuits served only to increase the order's popularity and its members' resolve. Recognizing the better part of valor, the Curia, after obtaining a few minor theological concessions, gave the Jesuits its full approval. The Society of Jesus lost no time, and by 1800 was spread throughout Christendom.

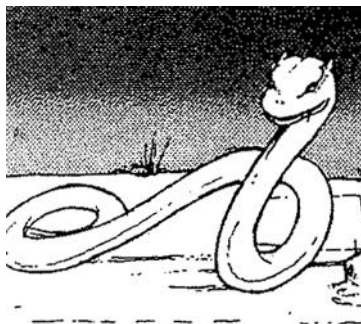


### *Language and Names in Araterre*

The inhabitants of Araterre speak a dialect of English known as Aralaise. This tongue is a blend of English and early French, and defaults to either at -2. In some remote villages on the southern islands, people speak what is known as *Old Aralaise*, which speakers of modern French understand at -1. Old Aralaise defaults to normal Aralaise at -2, and -4 to English.

Names in Araterre follow the same pattern as those in Megalos save that Latin names are not used by the nobility, and all names have a strong French flavor. Epithets referring to a place use the preposition *de* rather than *of*, hence *Arnod de Sauvons*. When the place name begins with a vowel, this is abbreviated, as in *Remis d'Ansonne*.

Common names in Araterre include Antoine, Aramis, Arnod, Bernard, Etienne, Gillaume, Guy, Henri, Jacques, Jean, Louis, Mathieu, Michel, Philippe, Pierre, Raymonde, Simon, Thibod, Thierry and Xavier. Women's names include Allisende, Anne, Bernadette, Danielle, Giselle, Jeanne, Lisette, Magdalene, Marie, Monique and Sybille.



### **The Ring Islands**

Lying off the southwestern coast of Isle Entelle is the archipelago known as the Ring Islands. Although no one on Yrth (including the PCs) knows it, these islands are the remnants of two huge craters created by meteorites eons ago. All of the islands are heavily wooded, and the southern ones hold the only tropical forests known to the folk of Ytarria. The Ring Islands are completely wild; except for a few scattered pirate havens, intelligent races shun them and do not settle there.

One reason the islands are uninhabited is that they lie within a high-mana region infested with ferocious monsters. Moreover, in many areas the mana is *aspected*, being particularly favorable to some types of magic and hostile toward others. The nature of the mana in the islands may change radically from one locale to the next, for no apparent reason and without warning. (See *GURPS Magic*, p. 84, for more about aspected mana.) This has caused many forms of wildlife to develop magical properties; some exist only in one tiny area.

Among the bizarre and dangerous creatures rumored to live in the islands' forests are an acid-breathing species of dragon, a tiger-like cat whose hide magically changes to match its surroundings, and a carnivorous flying mammal that stuns its prey with its shrill screech. The waters around the islands are also purported to contain numerous sea serpents. In addition to these the Ring Islands are also home to many normal animals unknown elsewhere on Ytarria, such as apes, crocodiles, and giant snakes.

By the year 1625, the Principality of Araterre was established on paper. It was not until 1644, however, that the region was officially opened to the world. Today, Araterre remains technically part of the Megalan Empire, but geography and technology conspire to make the principality all but independent. The Prince, Arnod de Sauvons, sends his annual tribute to the Emperor, and lends the comparatively awesome sea power of the Aralaise navy to Megalan military ventures, but otherwise rules the islands as his own. Still, a Megalan counselor is present in the Aralaise court at all times, observing and advising the Prince.

### **Geography, Flora and Fauna**

The islands of Araterre are similar in climate to southern Megalos, save that they are warmer and wetter. There is sufficient room on the larger islands to grow grain and raise cattle, and fishing is a major industry. Important cash crops include tea and grapes. Araterre is also Ytarria's only source for several spices and dyes.

The islands have long since been denuded of their forests; only a few preserves remain. Most land is under some kind of cultivation save that on the southwestmost portion of Isle Entelle, which is still wild and shunned because of its proximity to the mysterious Ring Islands.

Araterre is a normal-mana area, except for the Ring Islands, where the mana level is high.



### **Society**

Araterre has a complete aristocracy, from the Prince (see sidebar, p. 61) on down to petty local lords — titles and social ranks are the same as those for Megalos — but the nobility holds little actual power in the islands. Supported by taxes, levied upon lands held by the nobility and tariffs paid by Aralaise merchants, the Prince holds the financial power of Araterre. Lesser nobles, on the other hand, find themselves constantly on the verge of bankruptcy, caught between increasing taxes, frozen rents, and a cultural aversion to commerce. Aside from the Palace, the real powers in Araterre are the Church, which controls the hearts and minds of the people, and the merchants, who control their pocketbooks. Only the constant struggle between the two factions keeps them in balance; were they to unite, they might easily overpower the aristocracy.

There are no nonhumans native to Araterre, but Goblin merchants are common in its cities, as are Kobold gutter rats.

### **Technology**

Despite Megalan efforts, the technology of Araterre is substantially higher than that found elsewhere in Yrth, especially in the area of sailing and shipbuilding. Only Aralaise vessels are equipped with the complex rigging and navigational devices that make long, open ocean voyages practical. The fact that only the Aralaise, living on isolated islands, really *need* such technology, and that they guard their secrets jealousy, has kept their sailing techniques from being adopted in other lands.

Aralaise engineers also excel in the fields of architecture, plumbing and irrigation, and siege engines. All knowledge of gunpowder, however, was wiped out by the Megalan wizards... or so it appears.

### ***Magic***

By contrast, Aralaise wizards are generally less skilled and respected than their mainland counterparts. Many Aralaise still retain deep-seated misgivings about the use of magic. Though not forbidden or repressed, the study of magic is generally not encouraged, except, ironically, by the Church. Most powerful Aralaise mages are clergymen, belonging either to the Thomasite or Jesuit orders.

### ***The Law***

Aralaise law is similar to that of Megalos, though formal courts with judges appointed by the ruling noble are more common. Araterre has many professional barristers, who argue cases before the courts for a fee. They participate only in purely civil matters, however.

Criminal cases, in which the condemned may be executed, maimed or enslaved, are still heard by the nobility. Only a noble may sentence a man to death. Commoners are hung; aristocrats are beheaded. Slavery, though still legal, is less common in Araterre than elsewhere in Megalos. Imprisonment, however, is very common.

### ***Sauvons***

Sauvons is the political and cultural center of Araterre, and is considered by some to be the intellectual and artistic capital of Ytarria. It is a sprawling city, containing over half the population of Araterre within its liberal boundaries. Sauvons boasts many buildings which are remarkable in their own right, and fantastic by the standards of Megalos. Among them are the Cathedrale de Saint Michael and Prince Arnod's Palais de Sauvons. The University of Sauvons, Ytarria's most prestigious academy, is attended by wealthy nobles' sons from all over the Empire.

The city, and much of the population of the surrounding islands, are supported by large milkfish farms along the nearby coasts.

Dueling is a popular pastime among the rich youths of Sauvons. Many fencing academies are located here, so there is no lack of young hotheads for opponents. Dueling is, however, illegal within the city proper. To be caught by the clumsy city watch may be more amusing than dangerous; to encounter the Sabreurs Royales — the Prince's elite bodyguard — is quite another matter! A foreigner who attempts to duel with a broadsword will be ridiculed as a clumsy oaf; wearing armor will earn the name coward as well. This will most assuredly frustrate and enrage many a stout knight. Should a knight agree to doff his armor and fight on with his heavy blade, he will be quickly humiliated unless possessed of phenomenal skill.

Outside Araterre, the broadsword is still the preferred weapon, and fencing is neither as well known nor as respected. See pp. 60-63 for optional Fencing rules.

### ***Drift Abbey***

Drift Abbey was founded in the year 1175 by a group of Benedictine monks. Whether the monks journeyed from the mainland, or were dropped there by the Banestorm is unknown, but they were the first to set foot on Isle Entelle.

Later, when the Church sent its inquisitors to assure the proper spiritual development of the Aralaise newcomers, they made Drift Abbey their headquar-

### ***Adventuring in the Isles***

Player characters might wish to journey to the Ring Islands for a number of reasons:

*Pirates.* The islands serve as a haven for numerous pirate bands that prey on shipping along the al-Haz/Cardiel coast. PCs might join a pirate crew themselves, or be bounty hunters seeking a particularly infamous captain. They might even be agents of the Sultan sent to infiltrate a pirate fleet and discover the location of their secret hideout.

*Trophy-hunting.* Many of the exotic beasts native to the islands will fetch a high price on the continent, alive or dead. PCs might be collecting pelts or hides, or seeking new specimens for the Emperor's private menagerie.

*Jesuits.* On the large island in the center of the eastern ring, the Society of Jesus has a hidden mission, unknown to all but the order's highest brethren. The settlement's very existence is one of Yrth's best kept secrets; even the Emperor's wizards are oblivious. What goes on there is equally mysterious. The Church would pay PCs dearly for such information, assuming they could substantiate their story.



ters. In due time, a sizable town grew up around the abbey, and most of the monks moved elsewhere seeking to preserve their life of isolation and solitude. Drift Abbey went on to become the seat of the Aralaise Archbishop, though he rarely spends much time away from the intrigues of the capital.

The current Archbishop is Jacques-Jude LeBlanc (see sidebar, p. 61), a former monk of the Benedictine order. Ironically, most of the lower ecclesiastics — bishops and the like — are of the Jesuit order, to LeBlanc's evident displeasure. His position is secure by virtue of the Curia's backing and distrust of the Jesuits, but his power is frequently undermined by their collective influence. LeBlanc is not concerned so much with his spiritual authority anyhow; it's his political clout which is threatened most, and which is his highest concern.

### **Bilit Island**

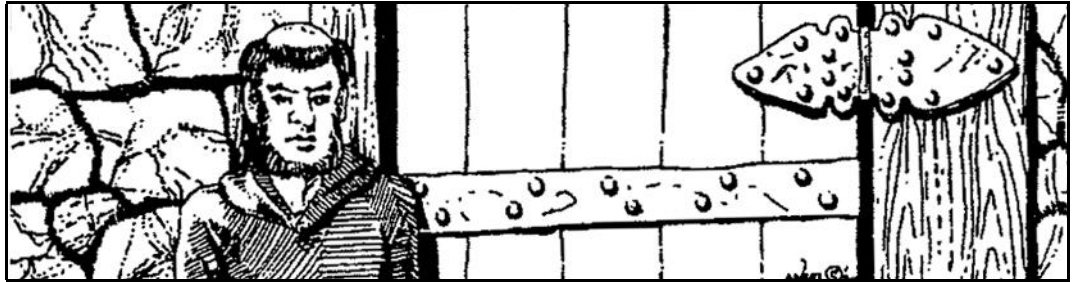
Bilit Island lies 300 miles to the east of Sauvons. The folk of this large and well-forested isle have remained independent of Megalos despite repeated invasion attempts by the Imperial navy. Their ferocity has earned the island not only independence, but a dire reputation as well. Old sailors and legionnaires boast of *surviving* a Bilit campaign, not of the battles won.

The people of Bilit Island are not the descendants of Europeans, but rather of Mayan and Toltec Indians. There are perhaps a half dozen large cities on the island, each ruled by a warrior-king. The cities are in constant conflict with one another, their wars are characterized by ever-shifting alliances. But each time the threat of outside invasion has arisen, the city-states set aside their feuding long enough to rout the invaders.

The men of Bilit worship many gods — rain, sun, moon, war, death, and the elements. They appease these gods through sacrifices, usually of animals and jewelry, but occasionally with human victims. Their hereditary priests have tremendous power — political and magical — and are second only to their semi-divine kings. In war, the islanders wield bronze clubs and swords, obsidian tipped spears and arrows. They do not make weapons and tools of iron or steel, but prize those they gain through capture or trade. There are no nonhumans on Bilit Island, and nonhuman visitors are rare indeed. Such visitors may be regarded as curiosities, demons, or even divine messengers.

Bilit Island is a source of many sought after trade goods. Jade, obsidian, and other precious stones can be found there, as can the hides, furs, and feathers of rare animals and birds. Certain fine woods such as mahogany are also a major export item. Most important, however, are the large gold deposits in the central hills — the only major source of gold in Ytarria not controlled by Dwarves. Islamic and Christian traders frequently come to the island to barter steel weapons, wines, and other mainland goods for jewelry and gold.

PCs can easily find jobs as guards with one of these expeditions; the islanders are easily offended, and often turn upon their visitors. Or they might decide to try to steal the riches of a city or mine, but they had better have a way to get off the island quickly if they're discovered. A very few adventurers have lived among the islanders and learned their language; one or two of these have become powerful lords.



### **Ansonne**

The city of Ansonne was at one time the second greatest of Araterre, regarded as a smaller version of Sauvons. But in the last ten years, under the rule of Prince Arnod's younger brother Remis, the Duc d'Ansonne, it has declined significantly.

Those folk who are in a position to know trace the city's decline to Remis' chief adviser, a Wazifi merchant named Jafar al-Siyassi. Remis has shown little interest in governing, leaving it to al-Siyassi to run the city to his own profit. Jafar is rumored to be heavily involved in smuggling and other illegal activities, and even worse, Remis is said to dabble in the black magical arts. Whether or not these accusations are true, there is no doubt that under Remis' rule Ansonne has become a den of thieves and miscreants, and is in dire need of cleaning up.

## **Optional Rules: Fencing**

The following rules are offered to expand the Fencing skill. This section is *not* mandatory — indeed, GMs who dislike “cinematic” combat might prefer to skip them entirely. Only characters who grew up in Araterre (and have at least Status 2) will have had the opportunity to learn Fencing. If a non-native wishes to learn it, the GM should require a 10-point Unusual Background.

It should be noted that “fencing” refers to many different styles of combat, not all of them related. In fact, the modern sport of fencing did not originate until after the era of the French Revolution. For *much* more about fencing, see *GURPS Swashbucklers*.

### **Weapon Skills**

For the purposes of Fencing, rapier, smallsword and saber are mutually unfamiliar weapons. Each is at -4 to one skilled with another. Since fencing skill relies greatly on training the reflexes, it takes 100 hours of training to be familiar with another fencing weapon.

### **Basket Hilts**

A basket hilt is a metal guard on the hilt of a sword, wrapping around the swordsman's hand. It is intended to protect the hand from blows, and can itself be used as a weapon. They can be used on any weapon, including two-handed weapons. A basket hilt weighs one pound, has PD3 and DR5 and adds 25% of

the cost of a good weapon. This PD applies only to the sword hand and only when the weapon is in hand. The basket hilt gives a PD1 to the entire body when used against melee weapons (acting as a very small shield), but does not count against missile weapons and does not protect against attacks from behind. This PD also applies only when the weapon is in hand, not when it is sheathed. DR only applies to the covered hand. A basket hilt costs the same no matter the quality of the weapon. For example, a good broadsword costs \$500. A basket hilt for it costs \$125. A fine broadsword costs \$2,000, but a basket hilt for it still costs \$125. Of course, much more money could be spent on elaborate decoration. Araterre armourers are the only craftsmen that regularly produce baskethilted weapons.

A normal basket hilt will not allow wearing a gauntlet on the sword hand; one could be custom built so that a hand wearing a gauntlet would fit. This would double the cost of the hilt. A hand inside a gauntlet that is inside a basket has the DR of both but the PD only of the basket.

A basket hilt changes the balance and grip characteristics of a weapon. There is a -2 penalty for unfamiliarity unless the user has spent one day familiarizing himself with the different feel of the hilt.

### ***Punching with the Hilt***

The hilt of many weapons can be used in close combat. With any weapon larger than a dagger, a blow with the pommel is +1 to punching damage but -2 to hit. Using a basket hilt as a weapon in close combat is done at -1, but any other use of the same weapon in close combat is at -2. The basket acts as brass knuckles, giving +2 to punching damage.

### ***Cloak (Physical/Average)***

This is the skill of using a cloak, both offensively and defensively. This was actually studied as a skill. Treat a cloak in close combat as if it were a shield (sidebar, p. B 114).

There are two types of cloaks used in combat: a large, heavy, full-length cloak such as travelers wear, and the smaller, light-weight, torso-length dress cloak of a 17th-century Earth gentleman.

#### ***Heavy Cloak***

The *heavy cloak* is used as a shield: Treat the defensive maneuver as a block, figured at 1/2 Cloak skill. Its PD is 2.

The offensive maneuver with a heavy cloak is to attempt to envelop the opponent. The cloak is treated as a thrown weapon at Cloak skill (SS 12, Acc 1, Max 2, half-damage doesn't apply). The maximum aiming bonus is +1. A thrown heavy cloak may be dodged or blocked. It may only be parried by a weapon of 2 lbs. or more. A heavy cloak weighs 5 lbs.

At a 1-yard range, the attacker may hold onto the heavy cloak while throwing it. If the throw misses or the defender is successful, one turn is needed to ready it again for offensive or defensive use. If the throw is successful, the attacker may attempt to pull his opponent off balance. Roll a Quick Contest of ST; the attacker is at +2. If the defender loses the contest, he is at -2 DX the next turn. If he loses by five or more, he is pulled off his feet to his knees. On a critical failure, the defender falls down. It takes a successful DX roll and one turn to remove the cloak. In the meantime, the cloak blinds the defender and prevents any attack or active defense.

### ***Prince Arnod de Sauvons***

Age 40, Dark brown hair and brown eyes; 5'11", 190 lbs.

ST 12, DX 11, IQ 11, HT 13

Advantages: Legal Enforcement Powers (15 points); Status 6; Wealth (Filthy Rich); Literacy.

Disadvantages: Compulsive Behavior (hunting); Duty (-5 points); Enemy (Princess Acarie).

Skills: Administration-9; Bow-12; Falconry-11; Fencing-13; Riding-14; Savoir-Faire-13; Tracking-12.

Arnod has but one true love — and it is not his wife. The Prince of Araterre is an avid hunter, and at the very least goes riding every day. Next to beast-slaying, Arnod loves beautiful young women. It is widely known that the Prince has at least one mistress. As the Princess Acarie has yet to bear a male heir, some of Arnod's advisors are urging him to divorce her and marry someone younger. The Princess, who has ambitions of her own, would rather see Arnod dead than have this come to pass — she'll lead a much better life as his widow than his jilted ex-wife.

### ***Defaults to DX-5,***

### ***Buckler-4 or Shield-4***

### ***Archbishop Jacques-Jude LeBlanc***

Age 52; Graying black hair and blue eyes; 6', 165 lbs.

ST 10, DX 11, IQ 14, HT 10.

Advantages: Status 5; Literacy; Clerical Investment.

Disadvantages: Benedictine Vows; Duty (to the Church, -5 points).

Skills: Administration-14; Bard-12; Diplomacy-14; Latin-14; Savoir-Faire-12; Theology-14.

The Archbishop of Araterre is an extremely able and clever politician. He is no more capable, however, than the wealthy merchants who currently hold the Prince's ear. This does not deter LeBlanc by any means; he works tirelessly to increase the political power of the Church within the principality.

The Society of Jesus, however, is a constant thorn in the archbishop's side. LeBlanc is of the Benedictine order which originally founded Drift Abbey, but it is the Jesuits who dominate much of Araterre's religious life. The archbishop feels that the Jesuits are constantly undermining his authority and seek to replace him with one of their own. For this reason, LeBlanc often speaks against the Society in the Curia, and advocates their dissolution.

## Light Cloak

The *light cloak* is more versatile. It has PD 1; but it can be used more creatively as an attack weapon. A light cloak weighs 2 lbs. As an attacking weapon, it may:

- Be thrown over the opponent's head,
- Entangle the opponent's weapon or arm (1-hex reach), or
- Be snapped at an opponent's face (1-hex reach).

*Throwing* the light cloak is similar to throwing the heavy cloak (same range modifiers), but it cannot be held onto, can be parried by any ready weapon, and requires no DX roll to remove. The opponent is blinded until he takes an action to remove the cloak.

*Entangling the opponent's weapon* allows the cloak wielder to retain his hold on the cloak. Roll a Quick Contest of the attacker's Cloak skill (minus any modifiers to hit — see *Striking at Weapons*, pp. B110-111) and the defender's Weapon Skill (or DX if carrying a ranged weapon). It counts as an attack. If a melee weapon is entangled, the defender must win or tie a Contest of Weapon Skills before he can use his weapon again. Each attempt counts as an action. If the cloak user wishes to attack with another weapon the next turn, he is at -2 if he retains his hold on an entangling cloak. A Contest of DX versus Cloak Skill is needed to free a missile weapon from the cloak.

*Entangling the arm* is a Quick Contest of the attacker's Cloak skill -2 for hit location (p. B109) and the defender's DX. If the defender is holding a melee weapon in either hand, he has the opportunity to parry the cloak before the Quick Contest. The defender must win a Contest of ST to free an entangled arm. A weapon in the entangled hand may be used at -6 but any aim is spoiled.

*Snapping the light cloak in an opponent's face* is done at Cloak-5. If the attack is successful, the attacker may be blinded for a turn. Any defense may be used against this attack. Critical success on the Cloak skill roll does 1 point of damage to one eye (roll randomly to determine which one), blinds the opponent for one second and mentally stuns him. Otherwise, making the attack roll by 5 or more will blind the opponent for one second (with no damage to the eyes) if he fails his defense roll. If the attacker makes the attack roll by less than 5 and the defender fails the defense roll, the defender's DX is reduced by 1 for the next turn only.

*Damage to cloaks* is handled by the rules in the sidebar on p. B120. A cloak has DR 1. It takes 5 points of cutting damage to render a heavy cloak useless. An impaling attack of 2 points of damage is needed to penetrate a heavy cloak — damage over that amount gets through to the cloak wielder. It takes 3 points of cutting damage to render a light cloak useless. Any impaling damage over 1 point gets through to the character. Crushing damage has no effect on cloaks. Note that the cloak is damaged (and impaling attacks get through) only if the defense roll was made by only the number of points of its PD.

## Knife (Main Gauche) (Physical/Average)

**Defaults to  
DX-5**

This is the skill of using a knife in the off-hand, offensively and defensively, in conjunction with a weapon in the other hand. It includes the Knife skill, but not Knife Throwing.

The advantages of this skill over the Knife skill are:

1. The parry is 2/3 of the skill.
2. There is no penalty for using the off-hand on defense.
3. There is no -1 penalty for parrying with a knife.

*Attacking* with the Main Gauche skill is at -4 for being in the off-hand, unless the character is using his better hand, or is Ambidextrous.

## Initial Carving

Swashbucklers who wish to carve an initial while fighting can do so if their skills are high enough. Determine where the initial is to be carved and the number of strokes necessary to carve the initial — a Z takes three, for example. The first cut of the initial is at no minus beyond the normal minus to hit that particular body part. Thus, an initial on the chest is at -0 for the first stroke, a letter on the forehead is at -5, and so on. If the first stroke does even 1 point of cutting damage, anything but metal or a similarly hard material will be marked. An *impaling weapon may make a 0 HT scratch for initial-carving purposes*. This will cause a scar if made on skin, and will rip cloth but not armor.

The remaining strokes of the initial are more difficult to place accurately. They are at -4 (in addition to any body-part modifiers) for an initial roughly four inches by four inches. This modifier is necessary to insure that the strokes are aligned well with the first stroke. If a subsequent stroke attempt is failed by 4 or less, the slash is made, but it is not properly connected to the previous lines — there is either a gap or an overlap — roll a die. This can be very bad form — it might even change the initial to a different letter! It is possible to attempt to connect lines that are too far apart (try again, same modifier), or simply start over in another spot. The victim might object to the erasing process, however, which involves at least half a dozen criss-cross lines. Missing by 1 is no big deal — an initial doesn't have to be perfect, just legible. Initial carving should only be attempted in a combat situation by the very skilled, or those named Inigo, Ignatz or Irene.

Curved letters, such as C or S, require a GM ruling. An additional -2 for the wrist movement involved is recommended, but the number of strokes necessary is left up to the GM. Every letter except "I" should require at least two strokes. The hardest letters to carve correctly are not necessarily curved letters, but ones where the exact juxtaposition of lines is critical. These include K, Y, R, Q, etc.

Lower case letters are considered inappropriate for initials in any literate society. Allowances can be made for artistic temperaments, however.

A PC may All-Out Initial-carve, of course, giving up his defense to inscribe two strokes in a single turn — don't forget to figure in the -4 for the second stroke. As another option, a single All-Out Carve, done at weapon skill -10, will make any one initial in one turn. This *may* boggle the victim enough that he'll be mentally stunned and unable to attack in his turn, at the GM's option. However, this is not automatic, and will only be true for minions, not major NPCs.

This skill is primarily used with a rapier, though it can be used with other fencing weapons. The main gauche user may parry one attack with the knife at 2/3 main gauche skill. A different attack may be parried in the same turn with the other weapon, at its normal parry. Any type of knife or dagger may be used as a main gauche, but they are all liable to breakage — see sidebar, p. B111.

### **Off-Hand Weapon Training**

**No Default**

Anyone who has learned to use a weapon with the master hand can learn to use the same weapon with the offhand. This eliminates the -4 off-hand penalty, but only for that particular weapon. Cost is 2 points for each penalty point removed; that is, 2 points buys -3, 4 points buys -2, etc. Off-hand training can also be applied to other skills and to train the off-hand skill up if the master hand is lost or crippled.

## **New Maneuvers**

### **Attacking with Two Weapons at Once**

A character may attack with two weapons at once. If the character does not All-Out Attack, each weapon is at -4, in addition to any off-hand and hit location penalties. Such an attack is difficult to defend against if aimed at a single foe. The defender's attention is diverted: -1 to defend against each attack of a two-weapon attack aimed at a sole opponent. The usual restrictions to defense apply; only one block or parry per turn is allowed (unless using a fencing weapon). In a Cinematic campaign (p. B183), two different opponents may be attacked at once in this manner.

### **Corps-a-Corps**

Corps-a-corps — “body to body” — is the fencer's term for close combat. All normal rules apply — see p. B111. Note that swords, cloaks and bucklers are hand-icapped in close combat.

If a fencer *wants* to keep an opponent in close combat, he can attempt to *bind* his opponent's weapon (lock blades). To do this, he must begin his turn in a front hex of his opponent. He then steps into the opponent's hex and announces his intention to bind the opponent's blade. He must win a Quick Contest of Weapon Skills to lock blades that turn — that is his action, successful or not.

If he does not win the Quick Contest, treat it as any case of two characters in the same hex. If he succeeds, the blades are locked, and the opponent is free to perform any normal action (at an additional -2) that doesn't involve the locked blade. However, if the opponent wishes to leave the hex *with his weapon*, he must win or tie a subsequent Contest of Weapon Skills — he is at +2. If he tries to break free, and fails, that is his whole action. He may try each turn (stepping out of the hex the turn he succeeds), or perform some other legal action. Simply dropping the weapon will allow him to step back out of the hex that turn, but the person who locked the blade may flip his opponent's weapon to any adjacent hex he desires by making a weapon skill roll.

The fencer who initiated corps-a-corps does not need to do anything to keep the two blades locked together. He may release the bound blade at any time. He may perform any other close combat action *at an additional -2*, such as stabbing with a dagger in the off-hand, attempting to grab with an empty off-hand, etc. In a locked-blades situation, apply a -2 to all actions (except an attempt to break free of the bind) by either opponent, above and beyond any close combat modifiers.

Any fencing weapon can bind any other fencing weapon. Knives, shortwords, broadsword, etc., cannot bind or be bound by other blades. However, there is a type of main gauche that is made specifically for binding sword blades. Treat it as a large knife that costs an extra \$20 and cannot be thrown.

### **Fast-Talk During Battle**

During a fight, a swashbuckling fencer may attempt to Fast-Talk his opponents into letting down their guard in some way — especially useful against many enemies at once. Although talking counts as a free action, to be convincing the Fast-Talker really has to look as if he is seeing a rabid, frothing dog charging down at the group as he shouts, “Look out, mad dog!” This means he is at -2 to any physical action and defense until his next turn — this can be a risky maneuver. Roll a Quick Contest between the character's Fast-Talk or Acting and each of the opponents' !Q. The GM may allow a plus to a deceitful PC's skill if the player comes up with a truly plausible diversion.

If the Fast-Talker wins the Quick Contest, the losing character is considered Mentally Stunned for 1 turn only — he may make no action and his defense is at -4. He has turned his head, or checked his shoe-laces, or whatever. Critical failure by the duped party or critical success by the liar is treated like total surprise — see p. B122. The deceiver may then make any legal action that turn, but any DX-based maneuver is at -2.

If the other character ties or wins the Quick Contest, he gets his normal action on his turn — he's not taking his eyes off his man, even if there is a mad dog charging down on him!





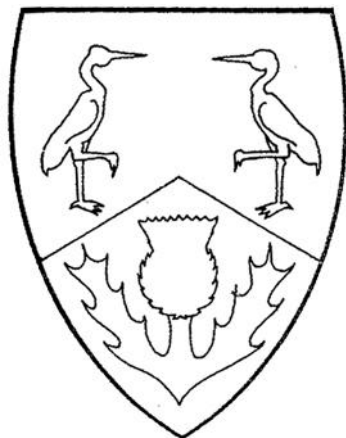
## Caithness

The youngest of Ytarria's kingdoms, Caithness is still sparsely populated and underdeveloped. In a hundred years, it may be a serious rival to its more mature neighbors, Megalos and al-Wazif. Today, it is little more than a handful of rustic baronies and lord-holdings scattered across thousands of square miles of virgin territory.

### Names in Caithness

Caithness parents usually follow the customs of their Megalan ancestors (see sidebar, p. 41) when naming children. However, unusual or even fanciful names are sometimes bestowed. This custom is most often seen among nobles. Examples include Aylara, Bandellan, Galardon, Pinetall, Renown, Torrior, Vulnavia.

Such names may pass into common usage if they "sound good," especially if the bolder becomes widely admired. For instance, Peredur of Durham, later famed as Peredur Orcslayer, was the first to bear that name... but hardly the last. Peredur is now a common name all over Caithness!



### The Great Desert

The Great Desert, to the west of Caithness, is a barren place indeed — no mana, no water, and very little life. The desert seems to be retreating, year by year, but it is a slow process. (No PC would know this, but in fact the desert was one of the products of the Dark Elves' magical disaster, some 900 years ago.)

Dead cities, built by unknown races, can be found within the desert — sometimes. The shifting sand covers them and uncovers them at will.

The only inhabitants of the desert are small tribes of Reptile Men, who tolerate and even enjoy the heat. These fierce wanderers will prey (literally) on any travelers they can catch. When there are no travelers about, they exist on lizards, insects, and other small game.

Because they are spread so far apart, Caithness' local nobles have always enjoyed considerable autonomy. Yet throughout most of the kingdom's brief history, these semi-independent regions have been bound together by a series of strong rulers.

In recent years, however, the unity of the kingdom has suffered. The current king, 20-year-old Conall VI, is only now earning the respect of his nobility, though he has sat upon the throne since the age of six. Conall is maturing into a clever and charismatic ruler, but many barons and lords continue to pay only intermittent attention to their feudal duties, fondly remembering when there was almost no king at all. A few are even reputed to be plotting rebellion, before the young king becomes too strong to resist.

### History

Caithness was settled by pioneers from western Megalos about 200 years ago. A vast, fertile land between Megalos and the Great Desert, the region had long been considered ideal for colonization, except for two minor problems. It was poor in mana, and rich in orcs.

It was not until 1784 that a strong colony effort was organized. Its leader was Conall, third son of the Duke of Craine, an intelligent and ambitious young man who saw little future for himself within Megalos. Conall gathered a band of similar-minded settlers, determined to make an opportunity for themselves in these fertile Orc lands.

During their first few years in Caithness, the settlers spent more time fighting Orcs than building or farming. Twice before 1790, they were almost forced back across the Megalan border by the Orc tribes. Gradually, however, the battle lines pushed further west. By 1800, the keep of Redhall was established, and the small town around it was self-sufficient. By 1812, the Orcs had been driven back to the edge of the Great Desert. With nowhere left to hide, the Orc-chieftains led what was left of their tribes across the desert, leaving Caithness to the human settlers.

The years that followed were a period of peaceful building and growth, as more and more settlers moved into the region. In 1822, Conall was summoned to the Imperial capital, where he was honored in an extravagant ceremony that officially extended the borders to include the County of Caithness. Naturally, Conall was made its first Earl.

But Caithness, now strong and flourishing, was not long a Megalan county. In 1826, Conall declared Caithness an independent kingdom, and was crowned King Conall of Caithness by his friend and confessor, Constantine, the Archbishop of Clix-tus. Soon afterward, Constantine denounced the Curia of Archbishops as a corrupt institution, with no authority over the Church in Caithness.

Thus, Caithness became spiritually as well as politically independent of its motherland.

Neither the Emperor nor the Archbishops accepted Caithness' independence, and within the year, the Legions of Megalos were on the march. They were joined in New Jerusalem by the Hospitallers, who considered the invasion of Caithness holy crusade against heretics. Yet the Legions — so dependent upon their battle mages — met with little success in mana-poor Caithness. They were soon demoralized by the smaller, but much more determined armies of

Caithness, and withdrew. The Hospitallers, whose tactics did not revolve around magic, were left without an ally, and were forced to abandon their crusade as well.

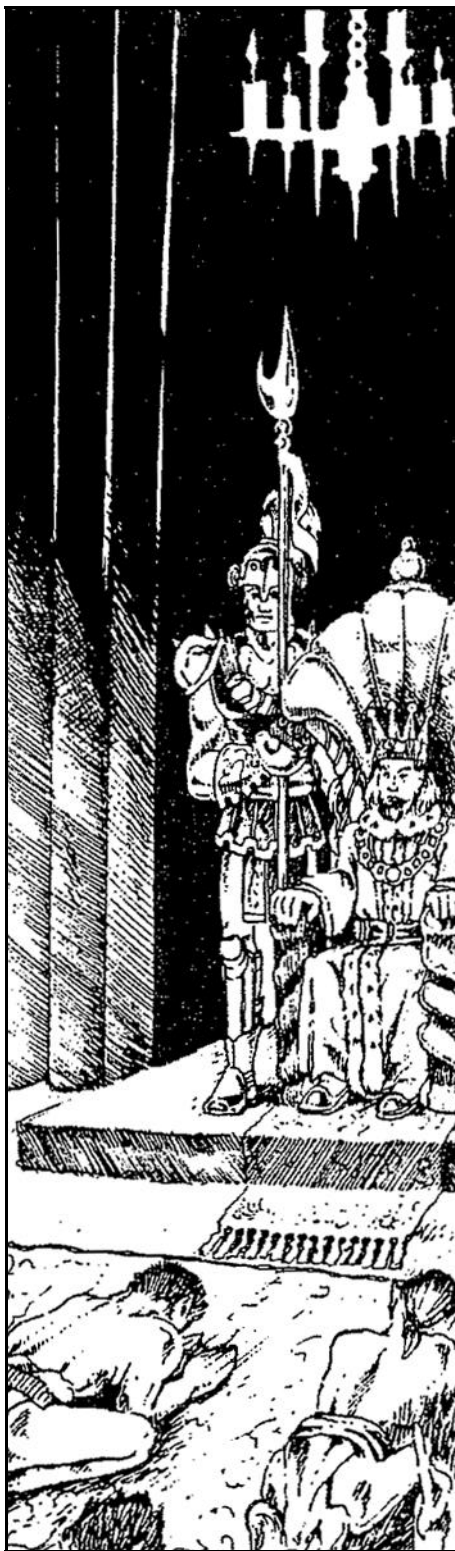
Over the next two decades, necessity forced the Empire to accept Caithness' sovereignty. Trade between Caithness and Megalos, interrupted by the war, resumed and grew. In 1844, Archbishop Constantine's successor, Giles of Fordham, met with the Megalan Curia; the differences between the two churches were resolved, and Caithness' Church was reunited with that of Megalos and Cardiel.

For the past 180-odd years, the descendants of Conall I have ruled Caithness from their traditional holding, Carrick. The kingdom has continued to expand its wealth, developing its vast arable lands for agriculture. Despite the periodic clashes, which continue to this day, the border between Caithness and Megalos has remained stable for two centuries, following the invisible line where, as one travels west, the mana level drops from normal to low.

In recent years, however, Caithness' traditional unity has suffered. In 1975, King Morill III died, leaving his six-year-old son Conall as his sole heir. Although Crown Prince Conall's mother, Queen Alys, struggled to maintain the prince's position and to protect him from harm, the power of the throne gradually declined over the next decade. During the long royal minority, many of Caithness' nobles chose to ignore the young prince-king entirely, conducting their affairs as they would. Regional lords warred among themselves, and few sent their proper taxes and levies to Carrick. When Megalan armies invaded in 1982, individual lordings had to turn them back without royal aid. They succeeded, but it was a costly victory for Fordham, the lording hardest hit by the invasion.

The Crown Prince was crowned Conall VI of Caithness in 1985, at the age of sixteen. Caithness' nobility, by and large, was unimpressed.

Since his coronation, Conall and his advisors have begun taking steps to reassert royal authority in the kingdom. Naturally, they expect some resistance from the more independent of Caithness' nobility. The situation has yet to erupt into civil war, but the atmosphere is becoming increasingly tense as Conall



### *The Great Forest*

This wood is the largest in Ytarria, larger than even the Blackwoods, and may be the greatest in all of Yrth. It is said by some that it and the Blackwoods were once part of a single great forest that covered all of central Ytarria before the Banestorm, but no one really knows. Some claim that the Blackwoods is growing so alarmingly in an attempt to reunite with the Great Forest and once more dominate the continent.

The Great Forest is home to many kinds of life, natural and fantastic. It consists primarily of pine, dark fir, and spruce trees, but there are stands of oak, plane and elm as well. Bears, deer, elk and boars are common, and gryphons, dire wolves, huge cave-bears, shagmaws, and even the elusive unicorn are reputed to dwell within its depths.

Many Elves live in the Great Forest, at least one community of Dwarves is located in the mountains that bisect it, and Gnomes live in the southern foothills west of God's Fence. Bands of Hobgoblins also prowl its edges, preying on hunters and human villages. There are even rumors that Orcs live in the woods, descendants of those who sought refuge there from the armies of Conall I.

To most humans, the Great Forest is a place of mystery. Even the hunters of Caithness rarely venture more than ten miles under its eaves, and the wood is 200 miles wide by 600 miles long! Adventurers entering the forest may seek gold in the mountains, the furs or hides of rare animals, or to establish a new trade route to al-Haz. It is also the only way to reach the land of the Djinn beyond God's Fence, without sailing through the Maelstrom, crossing the mana-dead Great Desert, or eluding Hazi guards and crossing the mountains.

### Women in Caithness

Because the people of Caithness respect ability as much as tradition, the kingdom also offers greater opportunity for women than any other land in Yrth. The tradition that in the absence of a male heir, a female heir could inherit lands and title was established early on, when Caithness suffered from a shortage of nobility. When a father dies, leaving as his heir a minor son, the boy's mother rules as regent until he reaches 16. Today, the lordings of Durham, Blythe, and Deerwood are ruled by landed Ladies.

Caithness' women entered the chivalry in 1934, with the knighthood of Dame Devin of Fordham. As the ruling Lady of Fordham, Devin personally led her forces against the Megalan legions in the invasion of 1932; in honor of her victories, King Cerdic II knighted her. Most of the chivalry tried to forget Devin's knighthood — Cerdic was considered a rather eccentric king.

But Devin became a heroine for Caithness' young noblewomen. Many of them appealed to her to take them as squires; after politely refusing for three years, Devin finally accepted Lady Teress of Durham into her service. Teress trained and studied almost with a vengeance. Within four years, she was besting her brother squires afoot and on horseback, and was a model of courtly graces. Yet Devin could find no knight willing to grant her spurs, and she would not weaken Teress' claim to her knighthood by dubbing the squire herself. (Though it is possible to knight one's own squire, it is traditional in Caithness for a squire to be granted spurs by another, presumably disinterested knight.)

Another two years passed until Sir Trent Longoak, Grand Master of the Order of the Stone, visited Fordham. There, Sir Trent met Squire Teress, and was much impressed. After conferring with both the squire and her knight, Sir Trent knighted Teress, making her the first female Knight of the Stone.

Dame Teress' knighthood, conferred by a much-respected Grand Master rather than a whimsical king, lent credibility to the notion of female knights. Within a decade, there were a dozen knighted ladies in Caithness. Though still a minority, women knights are becoming increasingly common; today about one in five Knights of the Stone is a woman. Among traditional knights, women are only one in ten, and the Dragons — a priesthood as well as a chivalric order — remains exclusively male.



attempts to reclaim the prerogatives that many lords have come to regard as their own.

*For a more detailed look at Caithness politics, as of 1988, see the GURPS Fantasy supplement Harkwood.*

### Geography, Flora and Fauna

Caithness is bordered by the Great Desert on the west, the legendary Great Forest to the south, Megalos to the east, and the mountains of Zarak to the north. By treaty — which the Megalans violate every few years with a minor invasion — the Caithness-Megalos border is set at the line where the mana level drops from normal to low. Thus, Caithness officially includes hill country bordering al-Haz and al-Wazif, as well as the entire Great Forest, though these areas remain essentially unexplored.

Rolling plains, like those of western Megalos, dominate Caithness, and are broken up by frequent woods and a few regions of deep forest. Most of Caithness' rainfall comes in the form of storm systems from the western ocean, which for some reason cross the Great Desert before yielding their moisture. Thus, Caithness is damper than its neighbors to the east and southeast.

Caithness is only sparsely populated, even in the well-settled Northlands. Towns are small and far apart; only a handful of communities, such as Durham, Carrick, and Sterling, can be

even loosely termed cities. Roads between towns are well-marked dirt or gravel tracks, though maintenance is sporadic and bridges are frequently washed out.

Most of Caithness' trade moves along its two major rivers, the upper Conn and the Smoke. Since both of these rivers flow into Megalos, where the Smoke joins the Conn at the duchy of Craine, the empire is by far Caithness' most important trading partner. In times of war, Caithness' merchants suffer, though her rich agriculture sees that the people seldom go hungry. Ironically, much of the trade between northern and southern Caithness is routed along the rivers and through Craine, at a considerable cost increase.

The only crops by Caithness' farmers in sufficient quantity for export are peppers and grains, including wheat, rye, corn and barley. As a result, the kingdom is well known for its beers and liquors; Sterling Gold and Redhall Red are traded as far away as the Imperial capital, where they command premium prices. Wine, on the other hand, is rare and expensive in Caithness, where the

climate is too chilly for grapes. To be served wine — which must be imported — in the manor of a Caithness noble is a great honor. Failure to compliment a host on the quality of his wine is a grave insult, regardless of how poor the vintage may be.

## Society

Caithness' society is essentially a much less complex and more tolerant version of Megalan feudalism. The frontier mentality is still strong in Caithness, and its manifestations can be seen in many facets of the kingdom's culture. Competence and self-reliance are highly valued, while pomp and pretense are scorned. Formality almost invariably gives way to function; the lord who gets down and helps dig the moat commands far greater respect than the prissy noble who sits under an umbrella sipping wine while his peasants toil.

There is a very definite strain of machismo running through Caithness' culture. Pastimes like hunting, horse-breaking, hawking and hound-training are well-respected, while artistic pursuits such as painting, sculpture and poetry tend to be forgotten. Some of Caithness' knights do require their squires to study the arts — especially poetry — but the resultant verse is limited to laughably poor doggerel and clumsy sonnets. Knights seldom continue to write after their knighthood. Caithness dances tend to be rowdy, foot-stomping reels, very different from the stately, graceful pavaues of Megalos.

Women are generally welcomed in any of the manly pursuits they wish to join; hawking is especially popular among Caithness' noblewomen, yet it is considered in no way effeminate. But ladies who stick to more feminine activities, such as needlework, are not disdained. Instead, they are valued as the flowers of culture, luxuries in a harsh world.

Caithnessers, from serfs to royalty, view Megalan society as pompous, pretentious, and decadent. Megalan nobility suffer a -1 reaction from Caithnessers, unless they have a manly reputation which extends into the kingdom (only a handful of western Megalan knights are likely to be known in Caithness). Megalan merchants are distrusted, and suffer a similar penalty. Due to the strength and nature of the Church in Caithness, locals will react at -1 to Moslems, and -2 to known pagans (except Elves, whose beliefs are seldom even considered by Caithnessers).

## Social Climbing

Unlike Megalos, Caithness offers ample opportunity for the talented and ambitious to advance themselves. The story of a slave becoming King would be an unlikely epic, but many worthy Caithnessers climb at least one rung on the social ladder during their lives. The proverb is “If Young Jack be not worthy, Old Jack can hang.” In other words, deeds are more important than breeding!

From the lowest level to the highest, here are a few ways in which a person from Caithness might increase his social status:

A slave or serf might perform some great service and be freed by his master, gaining Freeman status. Or he might flee his lord and change his name, becoming a Freeman while gaining an Enemy.

A Freeman might distinguish himself with administrative ability, or by profitable trading and adventuring, and be appointed Mayor of a town. Or he could pursue a military career, becoming an officer. A brilliant career as a merchant or craftsman can bring considerable wealth and a limited degree of Status, but titles cannot be purchased in Caithness.

A Mayor or Captain who serves his lord well might be made a Governor — a minor hereditary lord who governs a territory, usually including a large town, without holding in fief. The best way to do this is by helping the greater lord deal

## Gaming Social Climbing

When a new PC is created, the player may choose his Status, paying the requisite point cost for the level chosen (see p. B18). Once the character enters play, however, any changes in his Status should be a result of events in the campaign. At the lower levels, increases in Status are fairly easy to come by — a knight, preferably another PC, might accept a promising young freeman as a squire; a mercenary might assemble a small company and become its captain; for a great service, a lord might grant an unlanded knight a manor, making him a landed knight. Such events can be worked into the campaign easily, without seriously disrupting the course of play.

At the upper levels — from Governor on up — any rise in Status is likely to be incidental to the main plotline of the campaign. For example, the campaign might center around a pioneering expedition into a wild section of Caithness. As the campaign progresses, the settlement overcomes hardships to develop and grow. As this happens, the leaders of the settlement are likely to rise in Status. The person in charge is likely to progress from Mayor to Governor and perhaps Landed Lord or even Baron, if the campaign lasts long enough; his closest assistants are likely to become knights or minor lords as well.

If a player is deliberately trying to increase his PC's Status, he should be provided roleplaying opportunities which will allow him to do so. When the PC has impressed his superiors sufficiently, by methods similar to those described above, he should pay 5 character points per level of Status increased. The appropriate event — a knighthood ceremony, for example — should be worked into the campaign to *transact* the Status increase.

If, however, the PC is simply being roleplayed well, in such a manner that the rise in Status is a natural but *accidental* result of campaign events, the GM may decide to confer a Status increase with no point cost to the character. In effect, the character points required to pay for the increase are a bonus given by the GM for good roleplaying.



### *The Order of the Stone*

King Conall I established the Order of the Stone in 1827, the year after his own coronation. He felt that his knights were more concerned with obtaining land and power than upholding the knightly virtues. He created the Order to provide worldly recognition of the ideals of chivalry — and to attract a contingent of knights loyal only to him. The Stone is a secular, not a religious, order; all Knights of the Stone swear fealty directly to the King.

The Stone from which the order takes its name is a great artifact brought from Megalos while Caithness was still a colony. Once the cornerstone of an ancient church, it now serves as the altar-stone of the first church built in Carrick. New knights of the Order take their oath while placing their hands upon the Stone, swearing to uphold justice in God's name.

Near the church, Conall raised a great building, called Stonehall, to house the Order. There he installed the most honorable knights in his service to train knights-errant. No land or rewards were promised — just a knighthood and a lifetime of trying to spread order in a chaotic world. Not surprisingly, the Order's ranks swelled with romantic young men, especially younger sons of noble families.

The established knights protested, unsuccessfully. Within five years, vigorous young knights were riding all over Caithness, capturing criminals, hunting bandits and righting wrongs. In the decades since, the sharp lines between traditional knighthood and Order knighthood have blurred. Knights of the Stone can swear fealty to a lord and become traditional knights. Traditional knights who have broken with their lord can sometimes be accepted into the Order. While there is still a distinction between the two types of knighthood, there is no enmity.

The Order owns enough land — mostly near Carrick — to support itself. A second chapter house has been built in Simonton, to serve knights in the southern part of Caithness.

Needless to say, the knights of Megalos consider the Order of the Stone to be a joke in poor taste. Even when relations between the two kingdoms are good, the Megalan chivalry considers the Knights of the Stone to be of a social rank below *real* knights. Hospitaller knights consider them to be godless defenders of heretics. The champions of the Stone therefore delight in visiting Megalos, when no more pressing matters demand their attention, and shaming the local knights into single combat.

In addition to the necessary combat skills, all Knights of the Stone must have the following: Reputation: Champion of Justice (+2 from Caithnessers; 10 points); Patron; Order of the Stone (reasonably Powerful organization, appears on a 9 or less; 15 points).

with some sort of civil, economic or military crisis, or by organizing and leading a successful settlement expedition into a previously undeveloped portion of the lord's fiefdom.

Any free person of Caithness may be knighted by the King, a Landed Knight, or a senior Knight of the Stone, thus becoming an Unlanded Knight. The spurs of knighthood may come as a reward for extreme bravery or prowess on the battlefield, if the person in question plays a crucial role in the outcome of a battle, or as the culmination of years of training as a squire under another knight. Squires are usually chosen from among the nobility, but promising commoners are frequently accepted as squires, especially by unlanded knights or by Knights of the Stone.

To gain a position higher than that of an unlanded knight or minor lord, a person must somehow acquire lands and persuade the King to recognize them as an estate or protectorate. In other words, the King must be persuaded that the person is worthy to be a ruling noble in his own right. This requires faithful service and an oath of fealty to the crown. Most new lords in Caithness are former governors, whose territories have grown and developed to the point that they merit separation from their parent lording. Often, the Lord of the parent lording will resist the governor's attempts to gain separate status for a territory, spawning rivalries which range from friendly to bloody.

To become a Baron, one must do one of three things — marry the baronial heir; step into the power vacuum left if a baron and his heirs are killed and hope the King recognizes one's worthiness to rule the barony; or be the Landed Lord of a lording which has grown to the point that it is ready for baronial status. It is even possible to become the King or Queen of Caithness, either by marrying the current sovereign or heir, or by leading a successful revolt.

### *Nonhumans*

Nonhumans are less common in Caithness than in Megalos. Only Elves and Halflings have established communities in the kingdom; members of other races — chiefly expatriate Dwarven craftsmen — live individually in the larger human towns. Dwarven traders are common in the Northlands, and Goblin merchants from Megalos are often seen along the Rivers Conn and Smoke, but they seldom stay any longer than is necessary to sell their stock. Reptile Men and Orcs are villains of legend to Caithnessers, and are likely to be tolerated only in the presence of a well-known hero or lord willing to vouch for them.

Nonhumans have all the rights of humans in Caithness, though those who have not accepted Christianity will suffer the same social and legal stigma as human non-believers. Any nonhuman in Caithness will speak English, with the exception of invading Reptile Men and Orcs, who are likely to speak only their tribal tongue.

Of all nonhuman races, Elves are the most freely ac-



cepted by the people of Caithness, who tend to regard them — erroneously — as skinny, rustic humans with pointed ears. Their communities may be found in many of Caithness' deeper woods; many of these communities are far older than any human towns in Caithness, the Elves having defended themselves against the Orcs that once dominated the region.

Halflings entered the kingdom from Megalos after the human pioneers had driven the Orcs out. They seldom dwell in human towns, preferring to live among themselves in small farming villages. It is this isolationism more than anything else that creates a distance between Halflings and their human neighbors. Even so, they are gracious hosts to those who visit their hamlets, and eagerly listen to any news from around the kingdom.

### ***The Law***

Caithness law follows the feudal pattern of Megalos, though it tends to be less severe. Cases are heard in public by the appropriate regional lord. Though trial by jury is unheard of in Caithness, the lord's decision is usually heavily influenced by the sentiments of the crowd gathered for the trial (although getting caught trying to bribe the crowd isn't a good idea...).

A heavy emphasis is placed on compensating the victim of a crime (or his family). For this reason, fines are the most common form of punishment, and are often quite large. If a convicted criminal cannot meet the fine (by selling goods, appealing to relatives, or selling years of service) he is sold to the Crown as a slave, at half the usual slave price. From these proceeds, the victim is compensated. Any remaining money is disposed of in the manner determined by the regional lord. The method used in Harkwood is typical; it divides the remaining portion of the fine between the barony, the lord or knight presiding over the trial, and person or people who apprehended the criminal.

*Slavery.* Slaves are much less common in Caithness than in other lands. Criminals who are sentenced to slavery become the property of the King, and are generally put to work maintaining the highways around the kingdom; it is illegal for private citizens to own slaves-by-law. Most privately-owned slaves are slaves by capture or by choice.

## **The Northlands**

### ***Carrick***

Castle Carrick is the traditional seat of the Kings of Caithness; it is located across the River Conn from Carrick Town. The holding of Carrick — technically a principality, usually ruled by the King's heir — is typical of Caithness' larger lordings and baronies, consisting of a small city of 20,000 or so, supported by lands farmed by a few hundred thousand serfs. Carrick benefits financially from rich cropland capable of producing a surplus for sale, and from trade with the Dwarves of Zarak.

Located within Carrick Town are the headquarters of the King's two most formidable assets — the Order of the Stone and the Silver Hand. Stonehall, the original chapter house of the Order of the Stone, is located on the river directly across from the castle. The headquarters of the Silver Hand, the King's network of spies, is called the House of Oak. Its location is a secret, and it is doubtful that the building is even constructed of oak.

Carrick is intensely loyal to King Conall despite his age. It is also one of the richest and most populated lordings in the kingdom. Of the neighboring lordings, Fordham, Deerwood and Tacitus are all loyal to the Crown. Baron Deneral of Marshall, however, has all but openly declared himself an enemy of Conall.

### ***King Conall VI***

Age 20; Blond hair, brown eyes; 5'11", 165 lbs.

ST 12, DX 11, IQ 12, HT 10.

Advantages: Legal Enforcement Powers (15 points); Status 7; Wealth (Filthy Rich); Charisma +2; Appearance (Attractive); Intuition; Literacy.

Disadvantages: Duty (-5 points); Sense of Duty to People of Caithness.

Skills: Broadsword-12; Shield-12; Riding-13; Lance-11; Savoir-Faire-12; Diplomacy-13; Leadership-13; Strategy-12; Tactics-10; Bard-12; Politics-12.

Conall is shaping up to be a savvy and charismatic king. Although still ignored by some of Caithness' nobility, Conall is slowly earning their respect, if not their friendship. The recent death of Lord Peredur was a sore blow to the young king, however, and one to the rebellious lords' advantage.

### ***Baron Deneral of Marshall***

Age 51; Graying brown hair and mustache, brown eyes; 5'11", 180 lbs.

ST 11, DX 11, IQ 13, HT 10.

Advantages: Legal Enforcement Powers (15 points); Status 5; Wealth (Filthy Rich); Charisma+1.

Disadvantages: Duty (-5 points); Greed; Megalomania.

Skills: Broadsword-11; Shield-12; Riding-12; Politics-13; Tactics-13; Strategy-15; Fast-Talk-14.

Despite recent setbacks, Deneral intends to be king within the next few years. He openly denies Conall's right to rule, and has seized lands on Carrick's side of their mutual border. Now that Conall is deprived of Peredur's support, Deneral's armies may soon be on the march.

### ***Lady Bronwyn of Durham***

Age 18; Blond hair and blue eyes; 5'5", 115 lbs.

ST 10, DX 12, IQ 11, HT 10.

Advantages: Legal Enforcement Powers (15 points); Status 4; Wealth (Filthy Rich); Ambidexterity; Appearance (Beautiful).

Disadvantages: Duty (-5 points); Sense of Duty to Folk of Durham; Overconfidence; Stubbornness.

Skills: Shortsword-14; Shield-13; Running-9; Bow-12; Riding-12; Leadership-11; Savoir-Faire-11; Tactics-9; Strategy-9.

Bronwyn, Peredur's granddaughter, is beloved by her people. Someday she will be a great noblewoman, but she is still very young. She shares her subjects' resentment of Conall, arising from the King's perceived slight to the late Peredur. She is not yet ready to join the rebellious lords, however.

## *Mershall*

The Barony of Mershall is the most northern of Caithness' lordings, being bordered by Carrick on the east and south, Tacitus on the west, and Zarak on the north. It is a cool, hilly region, well-populated, and heavily cultivated. The fields of the barony produce a surplus of grain, and its forests possess timber and game aplenty. Furthermore, iron and silver are found in the foothills bordering the Dwarven lands.

Despite its historic associations with Carrick and the Kings of Caithness, Baron Deneral of Mershall has made his opposition to King Conall quite clear, creating strife between Mershall and neighboring Tacitus and Carrick, who support the young king. When the previously flourishing trade with the Dwarves to the north dried up due to an alliance between the local Dwarven governor, Fedor Ironthews, and Elohar of Tacitus, the Baron responded by seizing numerous villages belonging to Tacitus and Carrick, making up for lost trade with the spoils of war. And last summer, Mershall marched on Tacitus in open war; only intervention by Conall's Knights of the Stone denied him victory. Were Conall not faced with problems elsewhere in the kingdom, he likely would have turned his armies on the Baron of Mershall already. Deneral knows this, and intends to strike first; he is merely waiting for the right moment.

### *The Order of St. George of the Dragon*

The 'Dragons' are a small and militant religious order centered in Photius, and unofficially devoted to the Archbishop of Caithness. Its members are monks as well as holy knights, and follow the Benedictine Rule. They are organized much like the Hospitallers, and swear a similar oath, though they do not disdain the use of magic as the Hospitallers do. There are no non-humans in the order, but as yet none have asked for admittance. Women are excluded.

The Order of St. George was founded by Sir Galen Dragonsbane — a friend of both Conall I and Archbishop Constantine — who slew two dragons during Caithness' pioneering days (he was eventually slain by a third dragon, long after the foundation of the order). In 1829, at the age of 29, Sir Galen took priestly vows, established the Order of St. George, and built its keep.

All Knights of St. George have the following:

Advantages: Literacy; Clerical Investment; Reputation: Defender of the Church in Caithness (+1 from Caithness Christians); Patron: Order of St. George (reasonably powerful, appears 9 or less).

Disadvantages: Vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience; Chivalric Code of Honor.

Skills: Theology (IQ); Latin (IQ-1); Broadsword; Shield; Riding.



## The Midlands

### Durham

The lording of Durham is Caithness' most famous. The legendary Lord Peredur Orcslayer gained his fame by driving out the last great horde of Orcish raiders in 1926. For more than fifty years, Durham has enjoyed a reputation for bravery and strength that intimidated even mighty Megalos into directing its invasions toward the less formidable Fordham. The lands of Durham are rich, and in times of peace Durham Town benefits greatly from trade on the River Conn.

But last winter Lord Peredur, at the age of 81, embarked on the final journey. With his death, his 18-year-old granddaughter and only heir, Lady Bronwyn, took charge of the lording. Peredur had served his King faithfully for decades, and Conall's father, King Morill, had intended before his untimely death to grant Durham baronial status. When Conall took the throne he swore privately to remedy the omission, but Peredur died before Conall could act. Now some say the fiefdom should rightfully revert to the crown, since there are no male heirs. The people of Durham felt that their lord died without his rightful due, and Conall's reluctance to immediately grant the untried Bronwyn the title of Baroness only made things worse. Today the lording is still loyal to the Crown, but emotions are running high. If Conall does not act quickly to salve its wounded pride, Durham may cease to be an ally.

### Photius

The Archdiocese of Photius is like unto a small kingdom itself. Its lands are subject only to Church Law; the King's law means little here. It is a wealthy, wooded region ruled directly by the Archbishop Gregorius. The folk of Photius are prosperous and content. Unlike their counterparts in neighboring lordings, serfs here pay only one tithe, since the Church and their feudal lord are one and the same — Gregorius is a generous man.

The city of Photius is Caithness' most impressive. It features the magnificent Adseveration Cathedral, built during the years of the Caithness' Church's independence. The cathedral has served as the rallying point in turning back several Megalan invasions. Next to it is one of the only two Hospitals of the Order of St. Alyce (the other is in Calder, the capital of Cardiel). The Alycite Sisters are known for their skill at the healing arts — many miracles have supposedly occurred within their walls.

Just north of the city is the fortress called St. George's Keep. It is the chapter house for the Order of St. George of the Dragon, Caithness' only order of religious knights. They occupy themselves primarily with local — i.e., Caithness' — concerns; they are not a crusading order like the Templars and Hospitallers. Founded close on the heels of the Order of the Stone, the Knights of St. George have a long-standing and friendly rivalry with that order.

### Sterling

Sterling is located just west of a large, untamed forest in central Caithness. Far from the drought-ridden fringes of the Great Desert and protected from the brunt of the Megalan invasions by the forest and the strategic genius of its Lord, Bruce, Sterling is peaceful and prosperous.

Sterling is best known for its fine liquors and beers. Sterling Gold, brewed from the rich Sterling barley crop, is widely acknowledged as the best beer in Caithness and western Megalos. Only slightly less famous is Sterling Silver, a clear white whiskey distilled in the lording. Both fetch premium prices as far away as Cardiel, and are known even in the Islamic lands where the consumption of alcohol is a crime.

### Lord Bruce of Sterling

Age 47; Brown hair and eyes; 5'11", 170 lbs.

ST 13, DX 12, IQ 13, HT 11.

Advantages: Legal Enforcement Powers (15 points); Status 4; Wealth (Filthy Rich).

Disadvantages: Duty (-5 points); Sense of Duty to Friends.

Skills: Broadsword-14; Shield-12; Riding-13; Lance-12; Administration-12; Strategy-16; Tactics-14; Leadership-14.

A master strategist, Lord Bruce helped organize Caithness' forces to repel the Megalan invasion of Fordham in 1982. Though a loner, Bruce is very loyal to his friends and allies. He sees the strategic need for a strong king, and certainly doesn't want to see Deneral on the throne. But if Conall doesn't shape up soon, Bruce might decide to take the throne himself... and he's one of the few men who could.



### Magic in Caithness

Wizards, as a general rule, avoid Caithness like the plague. In addition to being close to the Orclands, it is nearly mana-barren. Those wizards who *do* stay, however, tend to be both skilled and powerful.

The average Caithness mage is usually better equipped (magic items must be significantly more powerful than in a normal-mana area) than his counterpart from other countries. Plus, he has a distinct advantage over visiting sorcerers — he is used to dealing with the low-mana conditions!

Caithness wizards tend to congregate near major cities — or leave the country. Even a Caithness hedge-witch will be a powerful opponent when she travels to a regular-mana zone.



The woods east of Sterling are home to a large community of Elves. They are on excellent terms, relatively speaking, with the humans of Sterling, and occasionally even intermarry. The Elves jealously protect their territory, however, and do not acknowledge the King's sovereignty over their forest. In fact, those caught despoiling the wood are likely to wind up with an arrow in the back! The folk of Sterling are aware of this and take care to avoid offending the Elves, but strangers are not always forewarned.

### ***Lord William of Wallace***

Age 39; Sandy hair and brown eyes; 5'8", 200 lbs.

ST 12, DX 11, IQ 12, HT 11.

Advantages: Legal Enforcement Powers (15 points); Status 4; Wealth (Wealthy).

Disadvantages: Duty (-5 points); Gluttony; Overweight.

Skills: Broadsword-13; Shield-15; Riding-10; Savoir-Faire-13; Diplomacy-13; Strategy-12; Tactics-14.

William appears a fool, but he is actually a respectable foot soldier and an excellent strategist. Though known for his tact and diplomacy, William can deal out tongue-lashings second to none. He treats his subjects like sons and daughters. William was loyal to Morill because he respected him; his respect for young Conall is growing. It is unlikely that Wallace will side against the Crown should civil war erupt.

### ***Baron Cabble of Denton***

Age 45; Black hair and beard, brown eyes; 5'9", 175 lbs.

ST 13, DX 12, IQ 12, HT 11.

Advantages: Legal Enforcement Powers (15 points); Status 5; Wealth (Very Wealthy); Literacy.

Disadvantages: Duty (-5 points); Greed; Bad Temper.

Skills: Broadsword-12; Shield-9; Riding-11; Diplomacy-10; Administration-12; Law-12; Fast-Talk-14.

Cabble is an unpleasant taskmaster and not well-liked by his people. Oddly, he is a loving father and a strong if stingy administrator. Cabble does not want Conall to become a proper king, and will plot, intrigue or even murder to keep Carrick weak.

### ***Lord Walton of Simonton***

Age 42; Black hair and eyes; 6'2", 185 lbs.

ST 13, DX 12, IQ 11, HT 12.

Advantages: Legal Enforcement Powers (15 points); Status 4; Wealth (Very Wealthy); Combat Reflexes.

Disadvantages: Duty (-5 points); Impulsiveness.

Skills: Broadsword-13; Shield-15; Riding-12; Lance-13; Knife-16; Fast-Draw (Knife)-15; Leadership-12; Tactics-13; Strategy-11.

Lord Walton is keen-witted, tactless and impatient. His zeal for battle is unmatched. Though loyal to his friends, he is a vicious foe with few scruples. There is strong enmity between Walton and Cabble of Denton. Walton has no desire to be swept into the king's sphere of power, but will not war on Conall unless he turns out to be a tyrant.

## **The West**

### ***Wallace, Ferrier and Blythe***

These three lordings are located on the western fringe of Caithness, Wallace in the north, Blythe in the far south, and Ferrier midway between them. Located on the edge of the Great Desert, the farmers and herdsmen of these lands fight a constant battle with drought. In addition, they must guard against marauding desert folk, especially the marauding Reptile Men!

Both Baron Nabbick of Ferrier and Lady Tyani of Blythe dislike young King Conall. Struggling to survive on the desert's edge, they can ill afford the taxes they owe, and resent the Crown's demands on them. Lady Tyani, furthermore, holds a grudge against Conall's father, Morill, who refused to grant Blythe baronial status.

Wallace, on the other hand, has more water than the others, and is closer to Carrick. Its lord, William, was loyal to King Morill, but waits to see what kind of a king Conall shapes up to be before backing him fully. Recently, Wallace has experienced an influx of human refugees... from the west. Half-dead from thirst, they have been arriving from the wastes, claiming to be fleeing Castle Defiant (see sidebar, p. 110), beyond the Great Desert, which they say is under attack by hordes of Orcs. Immediately the lording was buzzing with rumors that the Orcs are returning, having heard somehow that the great Peredur is dead.

## **The Southlands**

### ***Denton***

This barony controls fertile lands and pastures and has access to a large tract of forest, all of which are well-used and managed. It's surprising to travelers, therefore, to see how poor and cheerless the people are. The reason — as residents of neighboring lordings will tell you — is Baron Cabble of Denton.

Cabble is widely known as an unpleasant, scheming man interested primarily in increasing his own wealth at the expense of others. In fact, it is a common joke that Cabble's true father must have been a traveling Megalan merchant, who passed those typically Megalan traits on to his bastard son. A case in point is Cabble's repeated attempts to gain control of Simonton. He has tried treachery, intrigue, and open warfare — all have failed embarrassingly.

### ***Sinwnton***

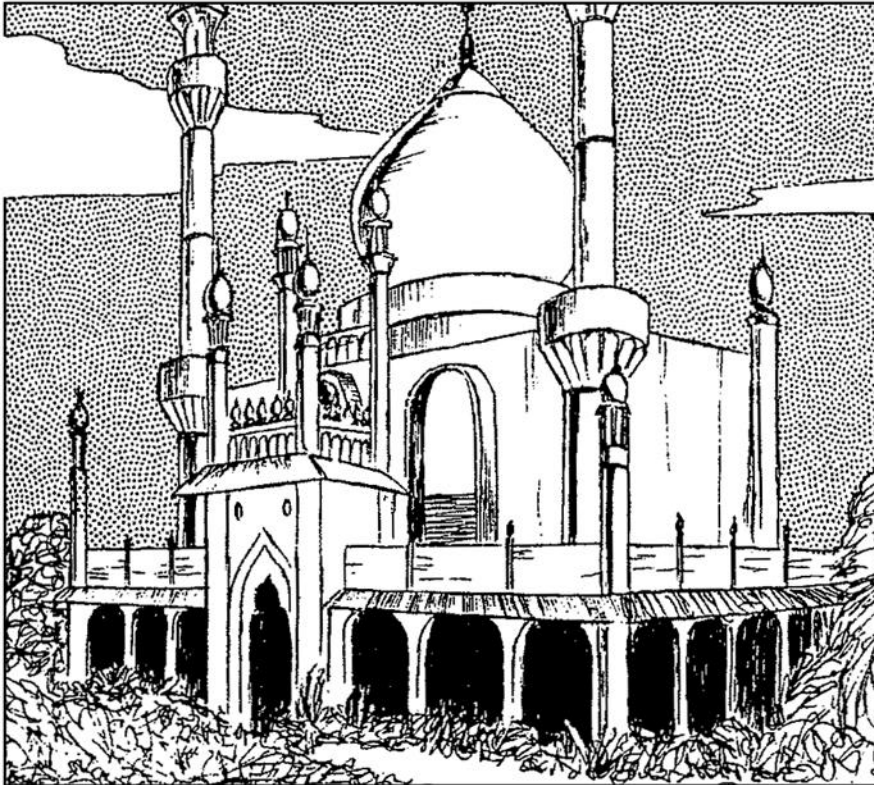
Simonton is the last stop for westbound trade on the River Smoke. Lord Walton makes a tidy profit from his teamsters, who transport trade goods from the river to Blythe, Harkwood, Ferrier, and back. Simonton has fair lands for crop growing, and the town itself is a busy river port.

Simonton boasts southern Caithness' only permanent outdoor market. In addition to the normal agricultural products of Caithness, one can find Dwarven weapons, tools and jewelry, Elven silks and the furs and woodcrafts of the Great Forest, and ivory, ebony, gems, and spices brought by Megalan merchants. The market at Simonton is one of the few places in the Southlands where one would not be surprised to see a Goblin; many of the green folk trade on the River Smoke.

# Al-Haz

Al-Haz is the greatest of the Islamic nations, and sees itself as a rival to Megalos for eventual glory. It also views itself as the heart of Islamic orthodoxy. The mullahs of al-Haz teach that someday the Faithful will conquer the world and convert it to Shia Islam... but not yet.

Al-Haz is bordered on the north by the Great Forest and al-Wazif, on the east by Cardiel, and on the south by the ocean. Al-Haz and al-Wazif are allies, but each keeps a nervous watch upon the other. Relations between al-Haz and Cardiel are friendly. The exact location of the western border is a state secret; outsiders are not permitted to travel beyond the mountain range known as the Fence of God. It is known that the holy city of Geb'al-Din is nestled within the mountains, and that Hazi merchants trade with lands across the mountains to the southwest.



## History

Al-Haz has been the center of Islam since the first years of the Banestorm, as it was the region that most of the mullahs and scholars brought to Yrth were deposited. It was here that they built the first great cities of the Faithful on Yrth, Gebel al-Hikmah and al-Ab'ra. Then, in 1160, Allah revealed to His people the holy rock in the Great Valley deep within the mountains; it was there that Geb'al-Din, the holy city and center of Moslems on Yrth, was built.

These cities prospered, but the majority of Moslems did not live in them. They wandered the plains with their herds, ruled by tribal sheikhs. It was not until the Megalan incursion in the first half of the fifteenth century that the tribes united to form a nation.

In 1442, the mullahs of al-Haz summoned the sheikhs to Gebel al-Hikmah. The northern tribesmen were already fighting for their lives against the crusaders, and needed organized support to maintain their strength. The predominantly Shi'ite mullahs of the south spoke in favor of a unified Moslem Nation, a central authority to lead the fight against the invading Christians. They sought a Shi'ite nation, whose Sultan would be the one true ruler of Islam and a defender of the Faith against the Christian invaders.

## Islamic Names

Names in the Islamic nations are — not surprisingly — in Arabic. Such names, especially of nobles, are likely to be rather long.

The first part of a name is the given name. Common given names include Abbas, Bilal, Jafar, Hakim, Hasan, Hayyan, Ismail, Muhammid, Mahmoud, Hammid, Musa, Nizam, Omar, Khalid, Said, Walid, Yaqut. Female names include Ayesha, Fatima, Hafsa, Sagirah, Talibah, Umayman, Zobeida.

Some given names have Biblical equivalents: Ayyub = Job, Maryam = Miriam or Mary; Ibrahim = Abraham, Ishaq = Issac, Yusuf = Joseph.

Arabic names also include epithets; the epithet usually follows the given name. Some common forms for the epithet are:

al- (word). Al- means simply *the*. Thus, al-Mansur means *the victorious*; al-Azrad, *the destroyer*, al-Safa, *the pure*. Such an epithet may be applied by friends (or a ruler) or chosen by the holder. Bards or historians may identify a man only by his epithet, if it is a very honorable or unique one. Common folk will be known by their work — al-Hammad, *the smith*, al-Saari, *the thief*.

al- (place). In this context, al- means *of*. Sayyid al-Kifn is Sayidd from Kim. Abbas al-Haz is Abbas from al-Haz; one would not say Abbas al-al-Haz.

ibn (father's name). Thus, Achmed ibn Haroun is Achmed, the son of Haroun. In great families son is not taken literally, and one who had a famous great-grandfather might use his name after *ibn*.

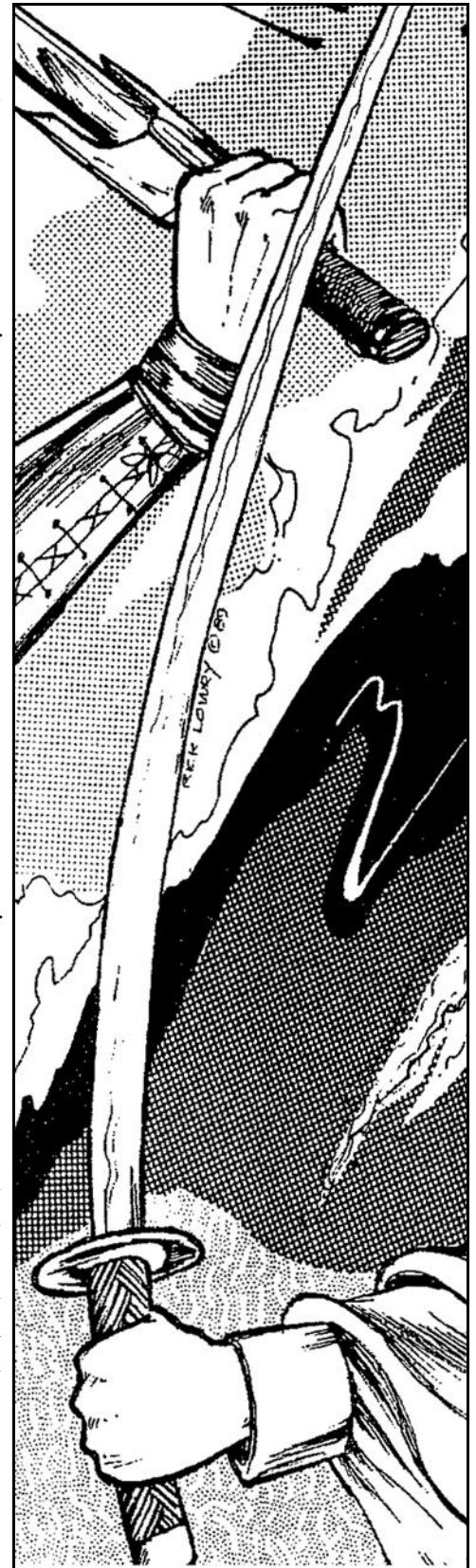
Abu (son's name). A man whose oldest son is Musa might add *Abu Musa* to his name, to indicate his pride in his son. This can also be used figuratively. The captain of an elephant troop, for instance, might style himself *Abu Fiil* — father of the elephant.

*Continued on next page...*

Many of the sheikhs opposed the mullahs' plan. They favored continued independence for the tribes, guerrilla raids on the infidel, and maybe a temporary defensive alliance. But the arguments of the mullahs and the rulers of the cities, often phrased in religious rhetoric, carried more weight. Eventually one tribal leader, known as a faithful son of the Prophet, was named Sultan, Sword of Islam, Leader of the Faithful. The men of al-Haz went bravely to war. Though their own homelands were not yet endangered, they knew that if Megalos prevailed, it would only be a matter of time. They were greatly taken aback when a scant two years later the northern tribes rejected their decision. They chose a leader of their own, a Sunni tribesman, and named him Caliph of the new nation of al-Wazif. A year later al-Kard was formed to the East. Splintered into three separate political units, the Moslems still fought side-by-side against the invaders, even though internal disputes were frequent and tempers often ran hot. Eventually this infighting led to the fall of al-Kard to the Christians. The men of al-Haz felt overlooked, used, and at times even betrayed by their Wazifi counterparts, and grew to distrust them.

As the generations of war dragged on, this attitude hardened. The duty of a warrior of al-Haz was to protect the homeland against invasion and pollution. The old ways were best; outsiders were suspect. Al-Haz was secure, with al-Wazif and Cardiel as buffer states shielding it from the Megalan menace. Thus it is today. And yet all is not peaceful.

The current Sultan is Mamoun al-Mansur — the Victorious. In fact, the Victorious has never seen war, and is known to the lords of al-Haz as something of a weakling. He has produced no children, but has adopted several young nobles; one will eventually succeed him, though probably not without some bloodshed. In the meantime, Mamoun rules from his famed Blue Pavilion, amusing himself with poets and concubines. The land is run by the viziers and the greater pashas, and remains wealthy and strong in the Faith.

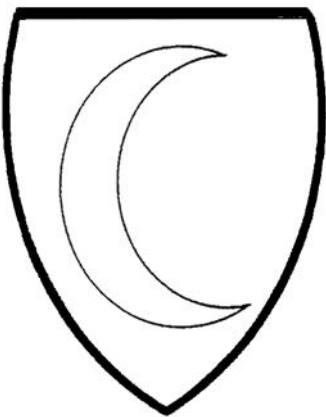


### Islamic Names (Continued)

abd- (word, or name). Abd- means *slave* or *servant*. Abdallah means servant of God. Abd- may be placed before any one of the Ninety-Nine Holy Names to indicate that the bearer is a devout servant of God. Or the liege-man of a noble may style himself with that noble's name; that is, a knight of Farabi might call himself abd Farabi.

So, for example, the full name of the scholarly ruler of al-Wazif is Caliph Hafsa al-Talib ibn Ishaq al-Wazif. Or *Caliph Hafsa the Seeker, son of Ishaq, of al-Wazif*.

In many areas a full name known as a quadronimics is given. It consists of four parts: the given name, the father's name, the grandfather's name, and the surname. So a person might be named Faroukh ibn Faisal ibn Talib al-Hammad. One good way to find character names is to consult a history or encyclopedia article. For epithets, a dictionary of Arabic is perfect — almost any noun can be applied as an epithet.



## Geography, Flora and Fauna

Al-Haz is dominated by plains, dryer than those to the north and east, yet fertile. In the west rises the Fence of God, a huge mountain range stretching from the Great Forest to the sea. The upper slopes of these mountains are covered with forests of pine, spruce, fir, and birch. The foothills are dotted with cedar trees and olive groves. The rest of the country is completely barren of trees. The weather of al-Haz is hot and dry in comparison with most other lands. Even so, the Fence of God stops the sea winds and insures adequate rainfall, while the Alhallahan river waters the central plains. The only true wasteland lies in the northwest, where the hills are so dry and rocky that none live there but outlaws. The Great Valley and the mountains receive snowfall in winter, but even the highest peaks are bare and brown by the end of spring.

Great fields of corn and wheat dominate the central plain, while vast stretches of the northern and eastern plains are as yet untilled. Here roam hardings, antelope, wild cattle, striders, bushwolves, lions and jackals. There are even a few shaggy elephants and bison. These are protected game, and may be killed only by the Sultan or his pashas. They are also favored prey of dragons flying from the southern mountains, a fact which much vexes the Sultan.

Swine, being against Islamic dietary law, are not raised. Other domestic animals are common, especially hardings; cats are greatly beloved.

The wild plains are also home to many wandering tribes. These folk still follow the nomad way, driving their herds from one watering place to the next. The tribesmen's favorite activities are hunting and raiding, and they answer only to their own sheikhs. These sheikhs are vassals of the pashas, but are left alone as long as they confine their raiding to each other.

Al-Haz is a normal-mana area.

## Society

Supreme authority in al-Haz, both political and religious, rests with the Sultan, a hereditary monarch. However, the Sultan is advised — some say controlled — by his viziers. These are powerful nobles, mullahs, or scholars who aid the Sultan in making decisions and handle tasks with which the Sultan does not want to dirty his hands. Thus, if the Sultan is weak (as Mamoun most certainly is), much of the power in al-Haz lies in the viziers' hands.

Technically, the nobles of al-Haz are merely pashas — appointed governors — who hold their positions by virtue of their talent rather than their birth. However, the governorships of many fiefdoms have been granted to certain families in perpetuity, to be passed on from father to son. In other areas, the recognition of an heir as pasha when his father dies is a mere formality, although the Sultan could grant the fiefdom to another if he wished. Lesser pashas are under the command of greater ones, with the rank of a pasha being shown by the number of horsetails carried on his standard.

Status levels are Sultan (Rank 7); Vizier (only three or four exist - Rank 6); Prince (Rank 6); Pasha of Four Horsetails (Rank 5) on down to Pasha of One Horsetail (Rank 2); Mayor (Rank 1); and thence downward as for Christian lands. Islamic knights are Rank 2 like their Christian counterparts, but rarely hold land. The leader of a wandering tribe is a sheikh, Rank 1 or 2 depending on his tribe's size and status.

Otherwise the government works much as it does in Megalos or Caithness, save that it is exclusively male at all levels. Talented young men are promoted to positions of responsibility. At the lower levels at least, birth is less important than ability.

### *Adventuring in Al-Haz*

*Martyrs.* A good Christian knight from Caithness or Megalos, or a holy man, will proudly wear the cross on his shield or robe. This is entirely illegal in al-Haz. And a *female* Caithness knight will be expected to not only give up her arms, but wear a veil and not speak unless spoken to. There are many other ways for an outlander to run afoul of the strict religious laws of al-Haz.

*Bootlegging.* Smuggling alcohol into or out of al-Haz, or manufacturing and selling it within the borders is a sure way to get in trouble. If caught, one can expect a flogging at best. Still, there are many thirsty people in the south, and only a few of them are non-Moslems.

*Jail Delivery.* The logical consequence of one of the above... free your comrades from jail or slavery. Remember that imprisonment lasts only until the next Holy Day, when a fierce punishment will be exacted.

*The Holy City.* Infidels may *never* enter the city of Geb'al-Din; even to *see* it is punishable by blinding. This does not deter everyone, of course. Note that if a non-Islamic PC sees or enters the Holy City, and boasts of it later, he or she may be the target of assassins!

*The Beggar Prince.* A ragged mendicant in the marketplace claims to be a noble. Possibly he is fleeing from foes; possibly they have already dealt with him and left him (blind or crippled?) to beg. He appeals to the PCs for help.



Wealth is respected as a sign of Allah's favor. The rich lead comfortable, even sybaritic lives, in walled houses whose courtyards hold beautiful gardens. Nothing in the Koran requires that the faithful be uncomfortable!

There is prejudice at all levels (a general -1 on reaction) against anyone not of the Islamic faith, regardless of race, color, or nationality.

Al-Haz has a number of small Christian and Jewish communities, mostly in the larger cities. These groups are tolerated out of respect for their common traditions. They exist at the sufferance and under the protection of the local pasha, who benefits from the additional tax revenue. A conclave of infidels which loses its protected status is in deep trouble. Two hundred years ago there were more of these communities in al-Haz than there are today; the promise of religious freedom in Cardiel has lured many eastward.

### ***Beyond God's Fence***

The entire southwestern part of the continent is cut off by a chain of natural barriers, starting with the Maelstrom off the coast of al-Haz, then continuing to the mountain range called the Fence of God, the Great Desert, the icy reaches of Zarak and the parched, bitter Orcland. None is hospitable terrain; all are inhabited by folk notable for their hostility to travelers! Naturally, some adventurers will take this as a challenge.

The actual location of the southwestern border of al-Haz is a state secret, as is what lies beyond. Some merchants know there is valuable trade to the southwest. Occasional caravans from Caithness, or ships from Cardiel, have gotten past these barriers to meet with independent Islamic tribesmen. These "sons of the plain" are ruled only by their own sheikhs, not by the pashas of al-Haz. They will trade ivory, jewels, fine glassware, and great chunks of raw copper — but they will not permit the traders to go deeper into their lands. They tell of the *Djinns* who rule the interior. Most folk who know that much will believe that the *Djinns* are actual demons!

The most knowledgeable merchants or mages would know that a few travelers have evaded the tribesmen and entered the land of the *Djinns* (fewer yet have returned). They say the *Djinns* are actually powerful human mages, each with his own castle in a small high-mana area. The *Djinns* follow Islam, and war among themselves constantly. The tribesmen serve as buffers, and occasionally as mercenaries. Little else is known; the source of the copper, in particular, is a mystery.

### ***Nonhumans***

Central al-Haz has almost no nonhuman inhabitants. In particular there are no Dwarves living in the mountains called God's Fence, and there are no Elves anywhere in al-Haz.

However, the great coastal cities are home to many merchant Halflings and some metal-working Dwarf families. There is no prejudice whatsoever against nonhumans who accept Islam.

And in the eastern plains is a tribe of civilized Reptile Men descended from escaped Megalan slaves. They are even more insular and xenophobic than the other wanderers of the area, having no use for anyone not in their tribe. They tolerate their Moslem neighbors no better than the other nomad tribes tolerate outsiders.

### ***Magic***

The magical arts are suppressed rather than encouraged in al-Haz, and magic is almost totally unknown in many rural areas. It is considered evil and not tolerated by fundamentalist teachers and mullahs. In other areas, more moderate mullahs allow its use only with their permission, and then only for healing or in defense of the Faith — and usually under close supervision.

The Sultan has resisted pressure to ban magic outright, recognizing the advantage that would give al-Haz's northern rivals. As a result, several fanatic groups, the Balikites foremost among them, have taken matters into their own hands.

### ***Warfare***

For the most part, al-Haz is at peace — at least on the surface. In reality there is fierce rivalry with the Sunnis to the north, mistrust of the Christians to the east, bandits and Balikite fanatics living in the northwestern wastes, and members of the Assassins' cult (see sidebar, p. 31) in all the major cities. Certain offshore islands are pirate lairs, but the pirates are few and cautious, and more often will base themselves in al-Haz for raids elsewhere than vice versa. Thus despite the long years of peace, al-Haz maintains a strong fighting force which has seen its share of battle.

True to their nomadic origins, the fighting men of al-Haz are virtually all mounted. Each pasha maintains a troop of men — mostly mounted infantry, with a contingent of true cavalry — to keep the peace. Any or all of this troop is available to the Sultan on command. All adult men of the wandering tribes are trained in the warrior's skills, and are practically born in the saddle. Still, its fighting force is nowhere near the size or strength of those of the crusading years. Were it involved in a true war, al-Haz would require the services of mercenaries to fill out its ranks.



## *The Law*

In al-Haz, the Sharia code is observed meticulously; its laws are the most strict and its punishments the most severe of any of the civilized nations. All cases are dealt with in the religious courts, presided over by a *qadi* or mullah. The Court of the Sultan is the highest authority, which has jurisdiction over any case the Sultan takes an interest in.

The *qadis*, full-time judges, are highly respected in al-Haz (Status Rank 4), and virtually incorruptible. So even though the laws are harsh, they are interpreted fairly.

Punishments often consist of maiming or flogging, with death by torture in extreme cases and for repeat offenders. Torture is considered a means to let the offender expiate his sins, as well as a deterrent to others. Therefore, it is conducted in public, in a very businesslike fashion, on a Friday or Holy Day. Holy Days occur, on the average, once a month.

Activities specifically outlawed in al-Haz include:

*Alcohol.* Possession or use is a flogging offense; sale is a maiming offense. Public drunkenness is almost unknown.

*Non-Islamic worship.* Anyone may belong to another faith, but may not preach publicly, display its symbols, or gather for worship in public places or groups of over ten. (Some pashas will relax the latter restriction for law-abiding Christian or Jewish communities.) Punishment is usually by confiscation of property; repeat offenses bring enslavement or death.

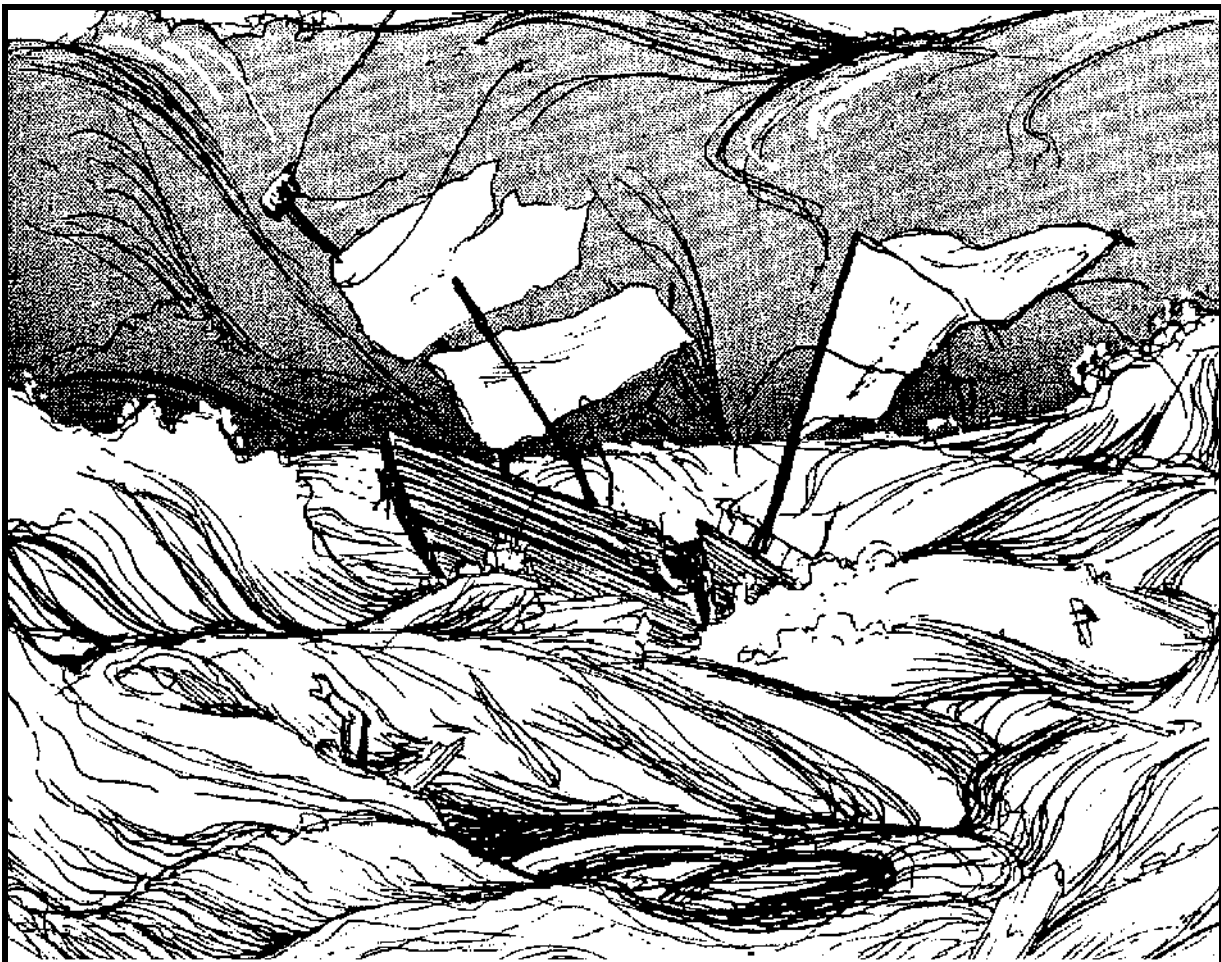
*Lewd display.* This is any behavior by a female that offends a conservative mullah. Failure to wear a veil in public; displaying bare arms or legs; public displays of affection; criticism of a male official — all are very risky. And foreign or non-Islamic women are *not* exempt. The customary punishment is flogging — behind curtains, so as not to offend modesty.

## *The Maelstrom*

The Maelstrom is a huge, permanent storm/whirlpool off the coast of al-Haz. Its location is not fixed; it grows and shrinks, and sometimes actually buffets the coast of al-Haz to the west or the Ring Islands to the east.

The Maelstrom makes sea travel around God's Fence practically impossible. It takes four days to go through the Maelstrom; one Seamanship roll, at -6, is required each day. Successful prediction of the Maelstrom's location, either through magic, Meteorology (again at -6), or Weather Sense, will let a captain make it in three days.

A failed roll means a ship takes damage; two failed rolls, or a critical failure, sinks the ship. A ship which takes damage on the second or third day must decide whether to turn back, or to go on and hope repairs can be made at destination. Of course, a ship that turns back must make one or more extra rolls on the way home. And the galleys of al-Haz, as well as pirates of the Ring Islands, are always on the lookout for storm-damaged ships...



**Balik Abdallah al-Firuz,  
Shi'ite Mullah**

Age 48; silvery-gray hair, piercing black eyes, long thin beard; 5'11", 130 lbs.

ST 10, DX 11, IQ 13, HT 11.

Advantages: Charisma 3; Voice; Clerical Investment; Eidetic Memory (Level 1).

Disadvantages: Fanaticism (Shi'ite Moslem); Delusion (major, all mages are evil); Religious Intolerance; Overconfidence; Megalomania.

Skills: Bard-16; Leadership-12; Theology-14; History-10; Administration-13.

Balik is the founder of the Balikites, a revolutionary order of Shi'ite fanatics who preach that magic is an abomination and forbidden by God. Balik truly believes this. It is this true belief, combined with his extraordinary charisma and speaking ability, that has caused others to flock to his call.

He has organized his followers into an efficient vehicle to carry out his desire — the cleansing of Islam.



**Rhajid al-Garyhan**

Age 32; black hair, brown eyes, wiry athletic build; 5'8", 120lbs.

ST 11, DX 14, IQ 10, HT 12

Advantages: Combat Reflexes; High Pain Threshold, Intuition.

Disadvantages; Fanaticism (Balikite); Religious Intolerance,

Skills: Riding-12; Acrobatics-12; Knife-16; Fast Draw Knife-15; Tactics-11; Poisons-10; Shadowing-14; Stealth-15; Teaching-12; Holdout-12; Camouflage-13.

Al-Garyhan is the combat leader of the Balikites. His is truly the hand that makes the Balikites a dangerous force. He is completely and totally devoted to Balik, and would sacrifice his life for the holy man without a second's thought. Al-Garyhan oversees the planning behind each attack, and has personally designed the defenses which guard the Balikite fortress in Firuz. He rarely leaves the area.

Slavery is common in al-Haz. According to the Sharia, however, enslavement of Moslems is strictly forbidden; a slave whose conversion to the Faith is accepted as genuine by the mullahs must be freed within a month. It is perfectly permissible to keep Christians, pagans or other infidels as slaves.

## The Coast

The southern shores of al-Haz consist of sandy beaches under the hot sun, picturesque fishing villages, and tall city spires overlooking bustling harbors. The weather is at least warm year round, and hot in the summertime. In the shallows offshore, young boys dive for pearls. Fishing boats follow the dolphins to schools of tuna and shrimp. Merchant ships from northern lands sail close to shore, keeping a sharp lookout for pirates.

### Al-Ab'ra

Al-Ab'ra is the largest city of al-Haz, and its busiest port. It is located at the mouth of the Alhallahan River, on which countless barges carry the goods of the rich central plain to the sea. Merchants from many lands come here to trade for the fine tile, glassware, pottery and textiles made by Hazi craftsmen.

The most sought after and expensive trade item, however, is not bartered in public — hashish. Also known as hemp, the drug is strictly illegal in al-Haz; the punishments for cultivating, selling, or using hashish are as severe as those for alcohol. But since the plant does not grow well in northern climes, there is a lucrative black market trade in al-Ab'ra. Because punishments for its sale are so harsh, the drug is smuggled out of the country by the local gangs and then sold abroad. This is usually done with a foreign merchant ship; these are less likely to be searched or seized by the authorities.

Recently, competition between the two major hashish gangs has turned violent. Hacked or mutilated corpses have been turning up with increased frequency. And only a few days ago, a qadi who had sentenced a hashish smuggler to death by torture on the last Holy Day was slain by an arrow through the throat as he left the mosque after Friday prayers. Pasha of Four Horsetails Abdul-Aziz ibn Ahmad has vowed to put a stop to the violence and bring the culprits to justice. The peasants in the street, however, are skeptical.

### Al-Abyad

The city of al-Abyad lies on a bay near the foothills of the Fence of God. Small in size, the people of al-Abyad and the surrounding countryside survive by growing wheat and raising harding and cattle for trade with the lands to the southwest. Just west of the city is the Gate of Allah, the pass through the God's Fence to the territory bordering the land of the Djinnns. The great castle of Pasha of Three Horsetails Madawi al-Hassoun stands at the Gate's entrance, and his guard allows only a few favored merchants to pass.

Shipbuilding and repair are also an important industry in al-Abyad; timber can be cut in the nearby hills. Ships damaged by the Maelstrom often must stop here for repairs, and the shipwrights charge appropriately outrageous rates. Many ships are also wrecked on the rocky promontory southwest of the city. Scavenging along the shores provides an income for many poor families.

PCs visiting al-Abyad may meet Crazy Ghalib. About forty years ago, Ghalib, then a middle-aged man, was found half-dead on the shore. Delirious and gibbering, Ghalib managed to tell his rescuers that he had been aboard a ship that had been wrecked in the Maelstrom. The villagers who found him had guessed as much already — such things were not uncommon. Ghalib went on, however, to say that his ship had been *returning* from the land of the Djinnns, where its crew had been living for the last twenty years. Ghalib was assumed to

be maddened by thirst and the terror of his ordeal, and his tale discounted. Unfortunately, he never recovered his wits. Today, well over 70 years of age, he still sits in the marketplace, begging for alms and talking to himself. The madman will regale any willing to listen with his tales of the Djinns, and the keys to recovering fabulous treasure that rest with his ship at the bottom of the sea.

## The Mountains

The mountain range called the Fence of God stretches the length of al-Haz, from the Great Forest and the badlands in the north to the ocean and the Maelstrom in the south. Nestled among its slopes and valleys are al-Haz' greatest cities, Gebel al-Hikmah and Geb'al-Din, as well as the fortress eyrie of the Assassins' cult and the heartland of the Balikite movement. The simple folk of this region survive by herding sheep and goats, hunting, and planting crops in the rocky soil of the foothills.

### Gebel al-Hikmah

Gebel al-Hikmah is the capital of al-Haz. It is here that Sultan Mamoun al-Mansur resides in the palace known as the Blue Pavilion, attended by his viziers and concubines. The city is also a way station for pilgrims heading to Geb'al-Din. Guards question anyone wishing to enter the city, and non-believers are turned back. The Sultan's guards, and the Knights of the Crescent Moon, watch visitors *very* carefully.

As the Sultan's permanent residence, Gebel al-Hikmah is frequently the site of lavish entertainments and spectacles not seen elsewhere in al-Haz. Among them are great polo matches sponsored by the Sultan and members of his court. A large field is specially maintained for this purpose, complete with raised seating, where spectators can relax on silken cushions in the shade of brightly colored awnings. The teams are made up of hired professionals, paid for by the various pashas, merchants, mullahs and viziers in attendance upon the Sultan. Mamoun is so infatuated with the game that sponsoring a team is a tried and true method of gaining his favor.

Because of the political advantage to be gained, the behind-the-scenes competition at the Sultan's polo tournaments is fierce. Bribes are common, as is the practice of hiring away the star player of an opposing team. If the player can't be bought, he can always be incapacitated, or even killed. Horses may be stolen, drugged or crippled prior to an important match. Games may be thrown in exchange for political favors. Threats, diplomacy, and treachery are the order of the day; a large tournament is a place where treaties and trade agreements are made, marriages arranged and old scores settled.

### Geb'al-Din

Hidden in the Great Valley deep within the Fence of God, the Holy City of Geb'al-Din is the center of Islam on Yrth. It is the destination of every Moslem's mandatory, once-in-a-lifetime pilgrimage, and the *qibla* to which the daily prayers are directed. It has been called the "city of a hundred temples," and indeed it has more, but the most important is the Shrine of the Rock. This building houses the great black boulder on which are carved thousands of passages from the Koran.

Only Moslems are allowed to travel through the gates of the city. Any non-believer caught within the walls is immediately executed.

Because of its role as the goal of the Hajj, Geb'al-Din has a large but transient population. Only the mullahs, a few qadis, temple guards, inn staffs, and the peasants and servants which support them live here year-round. Even the merchants will sell their wares to the pilgrims come and go as their stocks run

### Sultan Mamoun. al-Mansur

Age 30; thick black hair and brown eyes; 5'6", 180 lbs.

ST 10, DX 9, IQ 11, HT 9.

Advantages: Status 7; Wealth (Filthy Rich); Literacy; Legal Enforcement Powers (15 points).

Disadvantages: Duty (-5 points); Overweight; Laziness; Gluttony; Lecherousness.

Skills: Riding-11; Administration-10; Bard-12; Artist-13; Poet-12; Sex Appeal-11; Shortsword-9.

Mamoun is an excellent example of a spoiled rich kid who grew into a spoiled rich man. He takes only a casual interest in the day-to-day affairs of al-Haz, allowing his Viziers to run the country for him. His greatest interest is who will win the next polo match, the best verse for his newest epic poem, or what the new harem girl looks like.

Unfortunately, Mamoun is also infertile, though he certainly never stops trying. He's considered having mages in to see if they could help him, but the current anti-magic hysteria has convinced him otherwise. He has developed a hatred for the Balikites, who slew one his favorite advisors on the (true) rumor that the man practiced magic. Mamoun wants Balik dead — *now* — and has offered a substantial reward to anyone willing to do the job.





out. The transient nature of Geb'al-Din's population is a large part of the city's current crisis.

Because, tragically, Geb'al-Din is afflicted with the plague. Every day in the last month dozens have died, too weak to return to their homes far away. Troops of the Sultan have tried to warn away pilgrims approaching the city, but few heed the warnings. It is just as hopeless trying to make them stay, and there is barely enough food as it is. In other places, wizards skilled in healing magic would be called in to battle the disease, but the conservative Shi'ite mullahs of the city forbid it. This, they claim, is Allah's punishment for ignoring His proscription of magic. Prayer and the efforts of mundane healers — many of whom have also died — have been ineffective. The Sultan's viziers have appealed to the mullahs to allow mage-healers to enter the city, rightly pointing out that pilgrims might spread the plague throughout all the Islamic world. So far, their pleas have fallen on deaf ears.

### **The Viziers**

The Sultan's closest and most trusted advisors, the viziers are the true rulers of al-Haz, especially since Mamoun takes such little interest in the administration of his country.

There are four viziers:

*Ahmed ibn Nabil al-Safa* is a great scholar. He spends hours researching small points of history and theology in the great archives of Gebel al-Hikmah and is considered the scholar of Hazi history. The other Viziers often look to him for advice on technical matters. All this researching leaves al-Safa with little time for other distractions, which suits him perfectly.

*Omar al-Acayib* is the other scholar of the four, though his studies follow stranger paths. He is actually a practicing mage, though he keeps an extremely low profile nowadays. Because of his personal interest, it is Omar who is overseeing the Balikite matter, and he constantly presses for more decisive action from his fellow advisors. They, on the other hand, wonder at his zeal in this matter.

*Salim ibn Marid at-Sofian* is a conservative man who believes that the best way to handle any situation is the old way, whatever that may be. Despite his lack of innovation, Salim is an excellent administrator and general, and oversees the Sultan's armies in an efficient fashion. He sees the Balikite matter as something that will blow over with time, and refuses to take any aggressive action on the matter.

*Sharif ibn Ali al-Abyad* is an excellent administrator and merchant, known for being completely unbribable. He oversees trade throughout al-Haz, as well as the bookkeeping for the palace. Though he is from the port city of Abyad, he has never favored it above any other, a fact that annoys his relatives no end.



### **Firuz**

Firuz is the local name for the badlands located in the northwestern corner of al-Haz, running up to the foothills in the west and the Great Forest to the north. It is a treacherous and dangerous land of broken hills, dead-end canyons, and sudden cliffs. Very little vegetation grows here, as the land suffers from an almost constant drought. The native hardings and woolens are the only domestic animals capable of surviving unaided, and they provide much of the livelihood for the residents.

The people who settled here were almost all originally outlaws from one place or another, driven to these broken lands to eke out what living they could. The lands have never had much organized government. Those who come here survive as best they can — often by stealing from their neighbors.

Recently, however, this has changed. Balik Abdallah al-Firuz has sparked a fire among the tired and poor inhabitants, preaching that magic is an abomination, that its use is the root of evil, and the source of their problems. He has developed an amazing following over the last decade, organizing the scattered people of Firuz into strike groups of assassins, sent out to perform Allah's work — slaughtering magicians. The Sultan has placed a price on Balik's head, but the mullah has hidden himself deep in the badlands, and hasn't been seen by any but his most faithful for many years. Yet his following still grows.

Unsuspecting travelers, or those hoping to reap the riches of the Sultan's bounty, will find Firuz quite well-guarded against incursions from outsiders. Most of Firuz is a low-mana area.

### **The Plains**

The plains comprise most of the land area of al-Haz. These are rich, fertile lands set in soft, rolling hills. The central plains are dotted with small communities of Moslems who farm the land for wheat and corn. To the north and east are vast prairies, dominated by wild herds of antelope, zebra, bison, and cattle, as well as flocks of striders and the few lonely paladins who trace traditional paths across the land. Some of these animals are protected by and for the Sultan, with strict penalties for those caught harming them.



## **Nomad Tribes**

These fierce, proud people follow the herds from area to area; each tribe has its own grounds, though rivalries and friendly raids between tribes are commonplace. The most prized possession of any tribe are its horses — bred for stamina as well as speed and beauty, the horses of al-Haz are rivaled only by those of the Nomad Lands far to the north. Yearly meets are held between tribes, racing prized horses over long, treacherous courses, with the winner taking his pick of the competition's bloodlines to strengthen his own.

These tribesman also serve as the first line of defense against invaders into al-Haz. They are extremely suspicious of anything out of the ordinary, and will often attack first and ask questions later. Strangers, especially non-Moslems, are always suspect, and usually detained for questioning. Border incursion against the Sunni tribesman in al-Wazif are not unheard of, even common for some tribes. Although this is officially frowned upon, it is how the Sultan gets much of his intelligence on Wazifi doings.

## **Alhallabad**

Alhallabad is situated on the main fork of the river Alhallahan in the rich central plain region of al-Haz. The surrounding farmlands are prosperous enough to support the city's population, but the bulk of the wealth is derived from trade with the nomadic tribes. The only real city in central al-Haz, Alhallabad is a yearly stop for the bands who wander the plains, and is famed for its fabulous horse markets. It is also a magnet for scholars, doctors, artists, poets and mullahs, and houses the largest college and library in al-Haz. Governed by a Pasha of Three Horsetails, Alhallabad is a very wealthy holding.

But all is not well. The current Pasha, Alihaba al-Khalil, is very old and very sick. He has three sons, each of which covets the power and riches of the city. In his delirium, the Pasha has decided to split the city equally between them, hoping to force them to work together for the peace of the whole. Constant rivals throughout their lives, the sons are more likely to destroy each other and the city. In addition, Alihaba's favored adviser was recently murdered by Balikite fanatics, who claimed he practiced the magical arts. He reacted by purging all cultists from the city, unfortunately causing the imprisonment and death of several non-Balikites. Now the nomad tribes are up in arms, already agitated over rumors of war from the north. Open combat between the Pasha's forces and one uncooperative northern tribe on the streets of Alhallabad have increased the tension and bad feeling. It is only a matter of time before more blood spills.

## **West Tredroy**

West Tredroy is the largest city in al-Haz, though it is the smallest section of the tripart metropolis. Set on the junction of the Blueshoal and Lorian Rivers, West Tredroy is a grand seaport and the center of trade for goods from the north coming into al-Haz. Goods move from there down the Lorian to Cardiel's Ten-Tiri and then west across the coast, or are picked up by the nomadic bands to be traded at Alhallabad and Gebel al-Hikmah.

West Tredroy is ruled by Khalid Abdallah ibn Ali al-Pradin, a Pasha of Three Horsetails. The young ruler is only 26 now, but has an intense desire to do right by his position, and is quite involved in the general welfare of his city.

West Tredroy is much more tolerant than other areas of al-Haz; scandalously so, some say. However, it is by far the strictest section of that generally tolerant city. Non-Moslems must wear distinctive dress, or risk arrest and punishment for impersonating a Moslem. Anyone not so marked is expected to strictly obey the Sharia codes.

For more information, see p. 32, and the *GURPS Fantasy* supplement, *Tredroy*.

## **The Three Sons of Alhallabad**

Alihaba al-Khalil, Pasha of Three Horsetails and hereditary ruler of the city Alhallabad and its surrounding lands, is dying. His greatest wish is to see his three sons working in harmony, and rather than chose one of them as a successor, he has decided to give each of them one of the three quarters of the city. The sons are no happier about this than the townsfolk, who believe the resulting warfare will destroy their peaceful lives.

### **Badem ibn Alihaba al-Asadel**

Age: 30; Thinning black hair, brown eyes; 5'9", 170 lbs.

ST 9, DX 11, IQ 10, HT 10.

Advantages: Status 4, Wealth (Very Wealthy); Legal Enforcement Powers (15 points).

Disadvantages: Weak Will -2, Near-sighted; Gullibility.

Skills: Riding-12; Bard-10; Broadsword-12; Shield-12; Administration-10; Diplomacy-11.

Badem is the oldest son, and the weakest of the three. He is infuriated that his father has not given him his rightful due, but remains constantly by the old man's side lest he be cut out completely. Perhaps his greatest asset is his wife, a sharp diplomat with a great deal of common sense.

### **Fadil ibn Alihaba al-Azim**

Age: 28; Black hair, brown eyes; 5'7", 175 lbs.

ST 13, DX 13, IQ 9, HT 10.

Advantages: Status 4; Wealth (Very Wealthy); Combat Reflexes; Strong Will +1; Legal Enforcement Powers (15 pts.).

Disadvantages: Bad Temper; Greed.

Skills: Riding-14; Broadsword-15; Shield-14; Leadership-12; Strategy-11.

Fadil is a strong warrior with little intellect. He plans to oust his older brother and then take his lands by force. Many of the family troops are loyal to him, but the townfolk fear him.

### **Denyz ibn Alihaba al-Hassan**

Age: 24; Thick black hair, brown eyes; 5'8", 160 lbs.

ST 11, DX 13, IQ 13, HT 10.

Advantages: Status 4; Wealth (Very Wealthy); Charisma 2; Legal Enforcement Powers (15 points).

Disadvantages: Honesty; Impulsive; Sense of Duty (Alhallabad)

Skills: Riding-13; Broadsword-13; Shield-12; Leadership-12; Diplomacy-11; Bard-12.

Denyz is the wisest of the three sons. He thinks his father is completely mad. Were it not for his sense of duty to the city, he'd leave his two brothers alone to destroy the town. As it is, he's desperately looking for a way to bring peace.

## Al-Wazif

Al-Wazif is bordered on the east by the sea, the south by al-Haz and Cardiel, the west by the hilly Caithness badlands, and on the north by its hereditary enemy Megalos. It is the bulwark against which Megalan crusaders have thrown themselves for centuries. But its central position enriches it with trade by land and sea. And hundreds of years of hostility have hardened the borderlands; al-Wazif is well able to defend itself.

### *Sunni versus Shi'ite*

Though the origin of this schism between the followers of Islam is a political one dealing directly with the choice of leadership for the community, it has since grown to encompass theological differences as well. Shi'ites ("legitimists") have always held that the right to rule is a divine right held only by the holy family in direct descent from the Prophet. To support their arguments, they developed the theology that the political ruler is a manifestation of Allah who by his very presence bestows true knowledge on man. This leader alone is infallible. The Sunnis ("traditionalists") have chosen the more conservative path of selecting the leader deemed fittest by the majority of the community. Indeed their whole theology is based on the concept of the *consolidated majority* which defines a well-trodden path against the peripheral or wayward positions of the minority. Thus the Moslem community becomes a privileged entity, guided by the hand of Allah, and endowed with infallibility.

Interestingly, while stressing the viewpoint of the majority and branding dissent as heretical, Sunnism simultaneously developed the opposite principle of accommodation and tolerance. "Differences of opinion among my community are a blessing," said the Prophet, and it was taken to heart by the Sunnis. This principle allows diverse sects and schools of thought to coexist within al-Wazif, as no group may be excluded from the community unless it itself formally renounced Islam. Shi'ites, on the other hand, are remarkable for their intolerance of those who do not accept their theory of divine right. For truth comes only from the divine ruler, and the opinions of all fallible humans are useless.

The final fundamental difference between the two Moslem peoples on Yrth is the concept of free will. Sunnis hold that all actions are predetermined by Allah, and indeed that man has not the power to act before he actually does, that Allah created this power in him at the time of the action. In addition, man is by definition a fallible being, incapable of discovering good and evil through his own reason. Only Allah's Will makes acts good or bad, and thus divine law must simply be accepted. Conversely, Shi'ites adopted the doctrine of free human will, and the capacity of human reason to discern good from evil.

### History

The Sunni Moslem tribesmen that roamed the hills and plains of central Ytarria first united to resist the conquering legions of Megalos.

In 1444, two years after the Shi'ite Moslems to the south had formed the Islamic nation of al-Haz, the northern tribes met for a fortnight of games, during which their best men competed in skill, strength, daring and cunning. The winner was named Caliph, Chosen of Allah; the losers swore to follow him to the death. Thus the nation of al-Wazif was born.

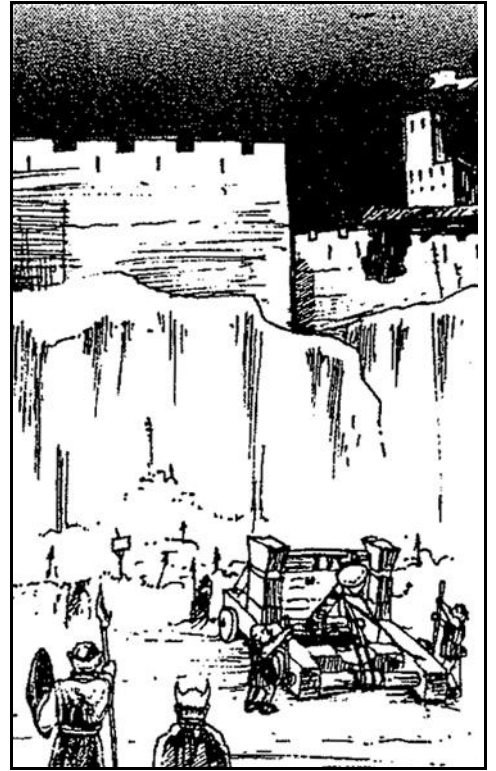
The new nation bore the brunt of Megalan aggression for many years. Legions razed its towns and villages, and navies sacked its coasts. But the Wazifis stubbornly fought on, drawing on their southern brethren in al-Haz for reserves and supplies. And when neighboring al-Kard was lost to the invaders, the Caliph took advantage of the short respite. By the time the Dragon once more turned its head west, al-Wazif was more than ready. Great defensive siege engines, corps of wizards and fortified borders made the new invasion a slow one. The war dragged on for a hundred years before Cardiel broke away and brought peace.

For the next two centuries, the Wazifis endured periodic invasions and border raids by Megalos. But with each successive attempt, Megalan victories were fewer. The rebellion of Caithness, defeats in the north, and the growth of the Blackwoods have all contributed to Wazifi security. Today, al-Wazif is a prosperous land.

A few months ago, Caliph Ishaq al-Sharif, a wise and tolerant monarch, died after an extended illness. His middle-aged son, Hafsa al-Talib ibn Ishaq, succeeded him. The new Caliph is scholarly and easy-going, and takes little interest in affairs of state. He prefers to leave such matters to capable advisors. Recently, those advisors have been telling him to take advantage of apparent dissension within Megalos. They recommend that he invade the Empire and win glory for himself and followers for Islam. The Caliph has firmly vetoed these suggestions, unaware that his generals have already set the wheels of war in motion.

### Geography, Flora and Fauna

Most of al-Wazif is rolling grassland, hilly in the north and flattening out as one travels south and east. The northeastern seacoast is rocky and barren, providing few good harbors, but dozens of little outposts make a living for fisher-



men who go out in tiny boats into the sea. Because of the difficulty of building roads to these villages, most are self-sufficient. Thus, the rest of al-Wazif sees little seafood, though some small trading ships buy rare delicacies from these fisherman and resell them elsewhere at luxury prices.

There is very little forest in al-Wazif; what trees there are — mostly poplars and willows — grow in small stands along rivers and streams. The waist-high grass harbors wildlife aplenty, however. Antelope, wild horses, striders and bison are common. The herds are followed by lions, wolves, bushwolves and jackals. Quail, grouse, hawks and a host of small mammals prosper here as well.

Wazifi herdsman raise all manner of livestock. The soil and climate is suitable for virtually any crop, but most especially grains. Timber must be imported by sea from Megalos or from the edges of the Great Forest in the west. Al-Wazif is a normal-mana area, dropping off to low in the western hills and badlands.

## Society

The ruler of al-Wazif is the Caliph (Rank 7), a hereditary monarch. His kingdom is divided into fiefdoms, governed by the descendants of the original tribal leaders. For the most part, the system works just as it does in Christian nations, save that the titles are different. Titles are a mishmash of Arabic and Turkish titles from old Earth: Bey (6); Emir (5); Atabeg (4); Khedive (3); Landed Knight (3); Mayor or unlanded knight (2); and so on.

As in Caithness, almost any advance is possible to the talented or fortunate. Prowess with arms, in particular, is highly regarded; combined with skill in government and leadership, it will always win notice.

Peasants in the northern and eastern parts of al-Wazif are primarily farmers. However, some Wazifi peasants, especially in the southwestern part of the country, still lead a nomadic lifestyle. They roam their lord's lands with their herds, and pay him an annual tax in cattle, hardings, or horses.

Al-Wazif has adopted much of the chivalric traditions of its Megalan enemies and Cardien friends. The Islamic orders of chivalry (see sidebar, p. 32) are particularly strong here. Some of the greatest heroes of chivalry have come from al-Wazif; even haughty Megalos accepts the Islamic knights on an equal basis.

Few nonhumans are native to al-Wazif, although those that do live there are well treated. There are few Elves, and almost no Dwarves. Halfling farm villages are seen occasionally, and many Goblin merchants live in the cities. Almost all of these folk have accepted Islam, and some even become mullahs!

## Magic

The Caliph requires all mages in al-Wazif to spend two years in his service. Because the pay is generous (20% more than normal) many choose to stay longer. Most of these mages serve with the army, guarding the Megalan border or defending against mountain bandits.

Battle magic is particularly valued in al-Wazif, as are magic items. One of the Caliph's wizards' primary duties is the collection and manufacture of magical items. These objects are stored in secret locations around the country, and are distributed to the army in the event of invasion. (An adventure involving the legendary Umgazur, perhaps the greatest of these caches, is included in the supplement *Tredroy*.)

## Warfare

The Caliph maintains a standing army, garrisoned along the northern border, to repel invasions from Megalos. Each lord also maintains his own troops — with the border lords requiring much larger forces.

## The Plague

The Moslem holy city of Geb'al-Din (see p. 79) is infected by the bubonic plague. Incubated amid the rodent population of the city, it has spread to the human occupants with great speed.

Early symptoms are shivering, vomiting, headache, giddiness, and intolerance to light. Left untreated, the pain spreads to the back and limbs and the victim becomes sleepless, apathetic, or delirious. Body temperature rises drastically. The most characteristic sign is the appearance of buboes, large purple welts on the arms and back. If a visitor is not aware that plague is in the city, a successful Diagnosis+2 roll will reveal what is happening on first sight of a buboed victim. The plague is rare on Yrth, but all doctors learn about it.

Roll against HT+2 each day a person is in the city (see p. B133 for modifiers to this roll). A successful roll means the character avoided contracting the disease; a critical success means the character is immune and no longer needs to make daily health checks. A failure means the character has contracted the plague; a critical failure indicates a very severe case, with doubled effects.

An infected victim will fall sick within 24 hours. For each day of the disease, roll against HT:

A critical success indicates recovery. Success means the victim remains stable. Two consecutive successes allow regaining of a point of HT. Three consecutive successes mean the victim is over the disease and may regain HT normally.

Failure means the victim loses 1d of HT, DX, ST, and IQ, rolling separately. ST, DX and IQ will not be reduced below 3 and will be regained at the same rate that HT is regained, should the victim recover.

A critical failure indicates a loss of 2d HT and separate rolls for each stat as per failure.

A loss of half the victim's starting IQ means they've become delirious.

The city is full of quacks with false cures and preventatives. A successful Physician roll will reveal any such nostrum to be false, though visitors must be careful who they denounce.

True magical cures work as well against the plague as against any other diseases. Hidden in a few old grimoires is a specialized Plaguebane spell, which can cure many victims at once. There also exists at least one alchemical potion which is a specific against the plague. Unfortunately, neither of these is more than a vague rumor in the lands that need assistance.



### ***Adventuring in Al-Wazif***

*The Great Games.* There is no quicker way for a newcomer to al-Wazif to earn fame and fortune. See (the sidebar on p. 85 for more details.

*Caravan guards.* In this trading nation, a caravan might run anywhere. Trips through the Caithness badlands or to the Great Forest — low-mana areas infested with monsters — might be especially dangerous.

*Battles with slavers.* Slave-takers from Megalos raid al-Wazif when they can — either overland or by the seacoast. This doesn't happen often enough to warrant a general mobilization of troops, but when it does happen, the PCs may be caught in the middle.

*Border intrigue.* Mercenary PCs could be hired by either Megalos or al-Wazif (or both!) to infiltrate the enemy's border defenses.

*Bodyguards.* PCs might take jobs guarding the person of a noble or powerful wizard. With members of the Assassins cult and Balikite fanatics about, their services are likely to be needed!

*Renegade wizards.* The PCs might be mages dodging the draft and trying to leave the country, rather than give the required service to the Caliph. Or they might be in the business of smuggling such fugitives to safety. Or they might be enforcers, in the service of the Caliph or one of his lords, hunting down such recreants.

The southern border is essentially undefended — at least in comparison to the northern one. Ongoing rivalries between the Shi'ite and Sunni tribesmen have caused some minor skirmishes to the south, but as neither the Sultan and the Caliph wish open aggression between their countries, these local battles are ignored.

Occasionally, the nobles of al-Wazif turn their armies on one another, just as the lords of Caithness and Megalos do. The constant threat of Megalan invasion, however, and the truly barbaric punishments the Caliph invents for traitors, help keep bickering to a minimum. Only four times in the last century has a fiefdom changed hands through violence, and one of the new lords kept his head for only a fortnight thereafter.

A good mercenary can always find work in al-Wazif, provided he can find someone at the local guild to vouch for him. Wazifis are particularly wary of hiring a Megalan in disguise. That trick has worked too often...

### ***The Law***

As in al-Haz, Wazifi law is embodied in the Sharia. Unlike al-Haz, however, the decrees of the Caliph as leader of the Faith carry almost as much weight as the opinions of the mullahs. Since few Caliphs have been theologians, a secular legal tradition has grown up alongside the Sharia. Usually,

the royal decrees address issues about which the traditions are vague. Only on matters in which the Caliph has a vital interest will he directly contradict the Sharia — the legal status of magic is such a case.

Some of the greater nobles reserve the right to intercede in trials in their fiefdoms. They may decide to pardon a person convicted by the qadis, or impose a harsher penalty, as they see fit. Prevailing upon a local lord for mercy is a risk, but one often worth taking.

As a result, the Sharia laws tend to be observed less strictly in al-Wazif than in al-Haz. Alcohol is grudgingly permitted among the Christian and Jewish minorities, though drunkenness is not, and foreign women may go unveiled without fear of arrest or stoning. Of course, anyone who proclaims that the law doesn't apply to him may be in for a rude surprise!

### **Al-Siyassi**

Al-Siyassi, on the shores of lake Bir Maj'in, is one of the oldest human cities on Yrth. Founded in 1074, al-Siyassi was for centuries the sole metropolis for hundreds of miles in any direction. It served as the cultural, religious and economic center for what was to become al-Wazif. The northern Moslem tribes met there for the first Great Games in 1435, and al-Siyassi became the capital of the new nation.

Today, the Wazifi capital is more prosperous than ever. Unlike the surrounding plains, its fields of wheat and corn are well irrigated. Orchards of olive, peach, fig, and almond trees adorn the green landscape. Al-Siyassi boasts one of Yrth's greatest universities, several colleges of the wizardry arts, and many artists, poets and philosophers. Under the patronage of the scholarly Caliph Hafsa al-Talib (the Seeker) the arts are flourishing in the capital as never before. Learned men from all over Yrth — Christian, Jew, and Moslem — gather here to study and exchange ideas.

The Caliph's interest in art and history is regarded as a pointless obsession by many of his advisors. Some of these men had served the Caliph's father Ishaq all their lives, and find the son sorely lacking. At least, say his supporters, he listens to counsel. But his opponents are concerned over the need for strong leadership. The old guard is particularly dismayed by the Caliph's total disregard for military matters. This faction is led by the Caliph's older half-brother, Emir Harun abd Ishaq.

Another concern is that the middle-aged Caliph lacks a male heir. Spending most of his time in his study poring over dusty scrolls, the monarch rarely visits his harem, and has not remarried since his first and only wife died many years ago.

## Qazr al-Sawh

Qazr al-Sawh is the largest city in northern al-Wazif, and the strongpoint of the nation's northern defenses. It is nestled among rolling hills overlooking the River Conn. Every acre of land is used — if not for growing wheat or olive trees, then as forage for harding and woolen. This is necessary to support the garrisons of the many castles that dot the landscape.

The folk of Qazr al-Sawh are accustomed to war. The city's walls have withstood countless sieges; its citizens proudly boast that no hostile army has ever passed through its gates. Yet Qazr al-Sawh is also a city of trade. The goods of Caithness and Craine pass down the River Conn, beneath Qazr al-Sawh's ramparts, and on to Bannock and Keyhole Bay; Wazifi exports travel in the opposite direction. The folk of Megalos and al-Wazif have an understanding: whatever the state of affairs between the two rivals, the river that marks their shared border is neutral territory.

## The Great Games

The Great Games of al-Wazif are held each spring, in commemoration of the games that selected the first Caliph.

Competitions include unarmed combat; combat with swords and other weapons (blunted); jousting; hunting and hawking; chess, magic; acrobatics; extemporaneous poetry; musical performance; and many others.

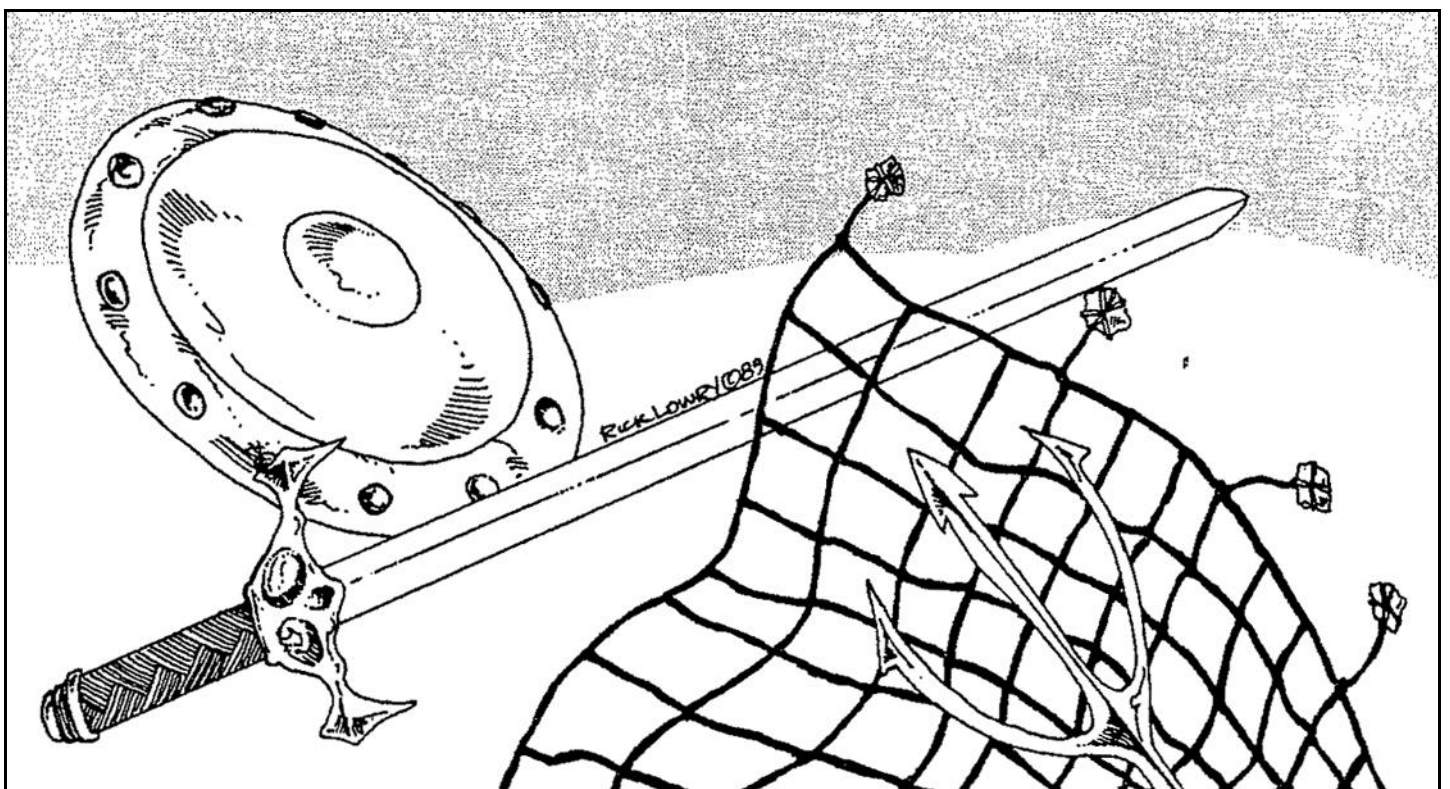
One of the greatest contests is called simply the Dare. It is essentially "follow-the-leader" for brave adults. A competitor is picked by lot. He performs some feat of his own choosing, anything not immoral or illegal. All other competitors must attempt the feat or drop out. Success is not necessary — but an honest attempt is required (use of magic is not allowed.)

Thus, contestants will choose feats like wild bull riding, axe juggling, or bare-handed wolf-slaying. A panel of judges determines when a failed attempt is genuine; a panel of mages and physickers works to save injured competitors. Anyone requiring this sort of emergency aid, of course, is out of the game.

When the first round is over, another contestant is picked, and the Dare continues — until only one is able to go on. GMs and players will have a lot of fun coming up with unusual dares...

Outsiders and foreigners are welcome to compete. Prizes are grand, as is the honor to be won.

It is unusual, but not illegal, for a woman to enter the Games; the more conservative mullahs will object, but a persistent and diplomatic female will be allowed to compete unless the judges' reaction to her is worse than Neutral. A woman who wins will be the subject of controversy, but will receive great honor!



### **Caliph Hafsa al-Talib ibn Ishaq al-Wazif**

Age 36; Thinning black hair and brown eyes; 5'9", 180 lbs.

ST 10, DX 11, IQ 13, HT 9.

Advantages: Status 7; Wealth (Filthy Rich); Literacy; Legal Enforcement Powers (15 points).

Disadvantages: Duty (-5 points); Pacifism; Weak Will (-1); Sense of Duty (to al-Wazif).

Skills: Shortsword-10; Administration-11; Bard-11; Literature-15; History-13; Theology-13; Artist-10; Poetry-11; Writing-11; Cyphering-12.

Hafsa is not happy as Caliph. He would much rather be free of the responsibilities of running a nation so that he could devote all his time to scholarly research. But he is haunted by what his father would think of him were he alive. The Caliph feels obligated to retain the throne and serve his people, which, he is convinced, does not include going to war with Megalos.

One duty Hafsa cannot face is that of begetting an heir. Hafsa has not remarried since his beloved first and only wife died many years ago. He has a large harem of beautiful concubines, but visits them for companionship only, despite his advisors' encouragement.



### **Emir Harun abd Ishaq**

Age 47; Gray hair and brown eyes; 5'10", 170 lbs.

ST 13, DX 11, IQ 11, HT 11.

Advantages: Status 5; Wealth (Very Wealthy); Toughness (DR 1); Legal Enforcement Powers (15 points).

Disadvantages: Duty (-5 points); Reputation (great general); Sense of Duty (to al-Wazif).

Skills: Broadsword-13; Shield-15; Riding-13; Leadership-15; Tactics-13; Strategy-12; Bard-10.

Harun is completely dedicated to al-Wazif, if not to his half-brother the Caliph. It's not that the Emir doesn't respect the office; in fact, he likes the relatively young Hafsa, and was his protector when both were much younger. He is simply convinced that the scholarly Caliph will lead the kingdom to ruin. Harun feels it is imperative that al-Wazif attacks Megalos before the Megalans can finish bunding up their forces. The Emir is preparing to launch that attack, even if he fails to win the Caliph's approval.

Emir Harun abd Ishaq is lord of Qazr al-Sawh and older half-brother to the Caliph. He is a soldier of great renown and has commanded al-Wazifs border forces for fifteen years. It is known that Harun disagrees with his brother about Wazifs military strategy, and that he thinks little of the Caliph as a military leader. But the Emir is wise enough not to criticize him too openly. Instead, Harun has been quietly gathering his forces in anticipation of trouble with Megalos, despite the Caliph's insistence on peace. Kharijite knights have been particularly in evidence on the city's streets.

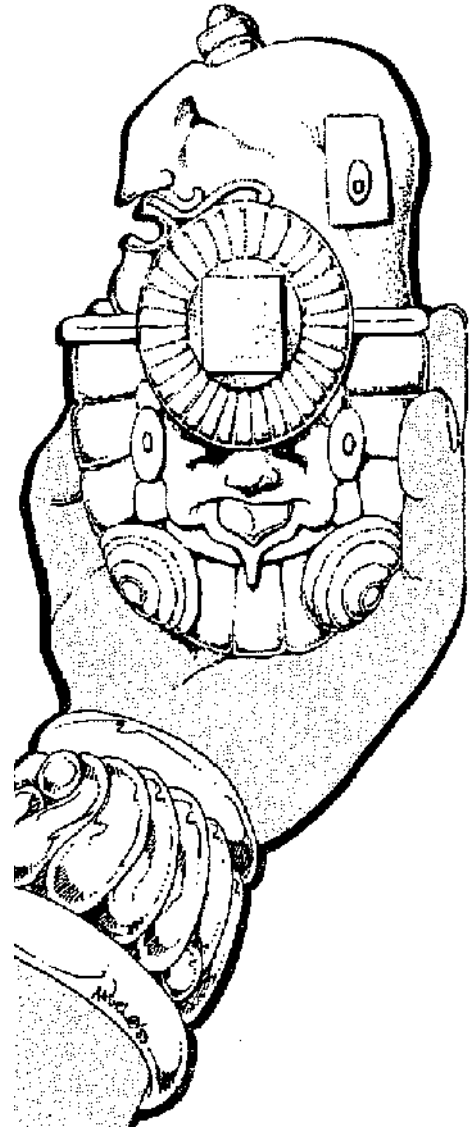
Rumors say that one of the Caliph's principal caches of magical items is located in the hills southwest of the city. A thief or group of thieves who successfully looted the storehouse would have wealth beyond their wildest dreams. Even the exact location of the cache would fetch a tidy sum from Megalan spies. But if it exists, the cache is bound to be guarded by arcane magics more formidable than a dozen armored knights...

### **Shaniyabad**

Shaniyabad is the busiest port in al-Wazif, and the richest. Any trade goods which come into or leave al-Siyassi by sea pass through Shaniyabad. River barges link the city with al-Siyassi and the interior. Al-Wazif does not have a large navy, so the port is protected by strong magical safeguards and large numbers of mercenaries. The lands around Shaniyabad are fertile and well watered — most of it is used for agriculture rather than livestock (most meat is imported). In addition, the hills northwest of the city contain al-Wazifs only mines, where silver, iron, and tin are removed in large quantities.

Shaniyabad's ruler is Bey Hisham al-Sharib, a fast-rising star in the Caliph's court. He is known both for his eloquence and his courage — Hisham won the Great Games three years ago. The Bey is greatly loved by his subjects, and many feel he is more worthy of the title Caliph than Hafsa al-Talib.

Because the Megalan border is heavily fortified, southeastern Caithness is low-mana badlands, and al-Haz is hostile to mages in general, Shaniyabad is the major point of exit for wizards dodging mandatory service to the Caliph. Smuggling fugitive mages, not to mention other contraband, is big business here. But this flies in the face of the Caliph's recruiters, whose job it is to apprehend those who shirk their patriotic duty. Any who dare oppose these skilled wizard-hunters — most of whom are powerful mages themselves — must be extremely careful.



## North Tredroy

In keeping with the unique character of the city of the three laws, North Tredroy is quite different from the rest of al-Wazif. Its people and its 120-year-old Emir — a powerful mage — show little interest in events outside their own city. But there is excitement enough in Tredroy for almost anyone.

Law in North Tredroy is substantially different from that in the rest of al-Wazif. Emir Jannar abu Talha al-Pradin, in his many decades of leadership, has created an almost secular legal system. The Emir's courts supersede the Sharia court, and are run by handpicked judges, many of whom are not even Moslems! In addition, most Tredroyan nobles are empowered to mete out low justice on the spot. By Sharia standards, North Tredroy is a hotbed of sin. The city is home to many inns, taverns, brothels, gambling houses and usurers.

North Tredroy is also home to the largest Christian and Jewish communities in al-Wazif.

For more information, see the supplement *Tredroy*.

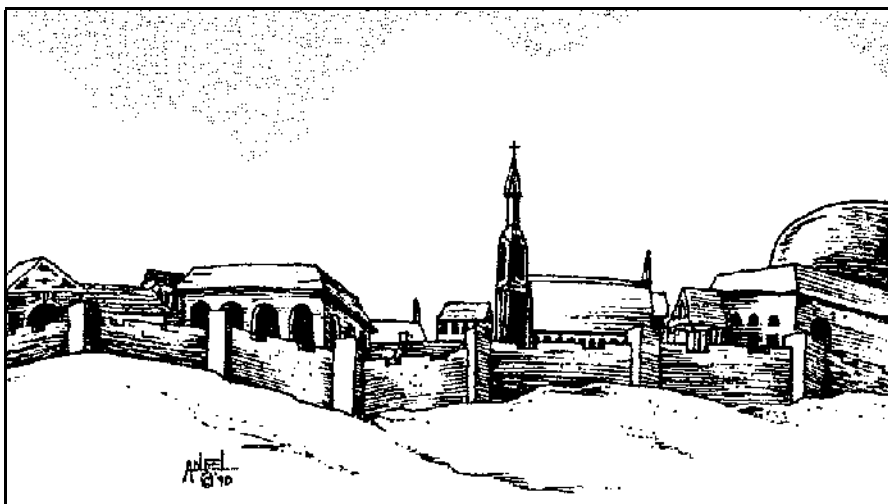
## Sa'Azraq

The Emirate of Sa'Azraq is al-Wazif's easternmost fiefdom. The port city of Azraq is located on a peninsula, midway between Hadaton to the south and Yiby-orak to the north, and is Wazif's only decent harbor east of Shaniyabad. Many ships stop there, but few stay long. Sa'Azraq is populated by farmers and fisherman, and has little to offer in the way of native trade goods.

Because of Azraq's remoteness and its proximity to Megalos, the people of its villages often fall prey to Christian slavers. Many a Moslem mother has seen daughters carried off while her husband was out fishing. But the Emir Ayyub ibn Qasim al-Azraq has a plan to get his subjects' loved ones back. During a recent Megalan raid, his knights captured the eldest son of Earl Gavin of Dekamera. The Emir has demanded a large ransom in gold. In the meantime, he has dispatched agents to the slave markets of Megalos to find kidnapped Azraqis; once the ransom has been paid he will buy freedom for those that can be found. And if the ransom is not paid, the young Megalan noble will still be valuable as a hostage — insurance that the Earl won't sponsor further attacks on the emirate. (See sidebar, p. 51, for more about Earl Gavin.)

## Gebel Thamad

The city of Gebel Thamad began as a way station on the Pilgrims' Road to the holy city Geb'al-Din. The lands around it were parched; its springs drew nomadic herdsman and weary travelers alike. Later, it became a major trading center, situated as it was at the intersection of the north-south caravan route and the timber trail linking the Great Forest and al-Siyassi. Today, under the leader-



### *Bey Hisham al-Sharib*

Age 25; Red hair and green eyes; 6'1", 185 lbs.

ST 12, DX 13, IQ 12, HT 11.

Advantages: Status 6; Wealth (Filthy Rich); Charisma +2; Luck; Legal Enforcement Powers (15 points).

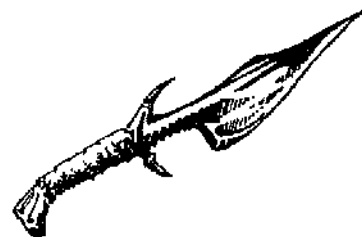
Disadvantages: Duty (-5 points); Overconfidence.

Skills: Broadsword-15; Shield-15; Riding-15; Bow-11; Bard-12; Fast-Talk-12; Leadership-13; Politics-10; Savoir-Faire-12; Tactics-12; Strategy-10.

Many of Hisham's subjects feel that their lord is better qualified to be Caliph than Hafsa ibn Ishaq. Hisham agrees with them, and intends to do something about it.

Hisham's agents are deliberately spreading rumors in Megalos that al-Wazif is preparing for war. The Duke of Craine's defensive measures have triggered a buildup of Wazif forces — courtesy of Emir Harun's paranoia — fueling the tensions.

Meanwhile, Hisham is preparing to save the day when the Megalans eventually do attack, at which time his agent in the Caliph's court will assassinate the childless monarch. If all goes according to plan, the grateful nobles will unanimously proclaim Hisham the next Caliph.



### *Emir Ayyub ibn Qasim al-Azraq*

Age 40; Dark brown hair and brown eyes; 5'7", 145 lbs.

ST 10, DX 11, IQ 12, HT 12.

Advantages: Status 5; Wealth (Wealthy); Literacy; Legal Enforcement Powers (15 points).

Disadvantages: Duty (-5 points); Sense of Duty (to subjects).

Skills: Shortsword-12; Shield-14; Administration-12; Diplomacy-12; Leadership-12; Seamanship-14; Strategy-12; Tactics-10.

Ayyub is a model lord whose primary concern is for his people. His tireless devotion to his feudal duties has won him the loyalty of the folk of Sa'Azraq. Ayyub has struggled to defend the fiefdom from Megalan depredations for years, and the capture of Earl Gavin's son was his first major success. It has not occurred to Ayyub that the headstrong Megalan earl would rather lose his son than suffer humiliation at the hands of a minor Moslem lord.



ship of the governor, Khedive Amin al-Burum, the city at the crossroads is one of al-Wazif's most prosperous.

Trade is Gebel Thamad's lifeblood; anything that threatens the caravan routes threatens the city's very existence. The local lords take banditry *very* seriously. Mercenaries can always find work here, either with the forces of the Khedive or as caravan guards. Bounty hunters are also in demand, and will find that both the aristocracy and the merchants pay handsomely.

Last month, a timber expedition discovered an old ruin in the forest where they were felling trees. The curious woodcutters laid down their axes to explore further. What they had found was the ruins of a fortress-town dating back at least to the time of the Banestorm. The explorers found no gold, but discovered one large stone block bearing inscriptions not only in Arabic, but in Latin and Norman French as well! They returned to Gebel Thamad with their lumber and this curiosity only a few days ago. Already a half dozen expeditions are being organized to search the ruins, while local scholars pore over the archaic grammar and spelling of the stone's inscription.

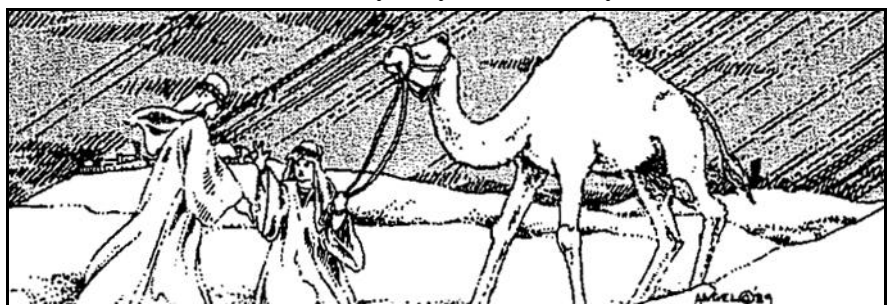
One of the exploring parties is funded by Emir Hafiz al-Thamad, a scholarly eccentric. Another is backed by the reclusive wizard Jamal. The others are independent groups of adventurers, hoping to get rich quick. It will be a race to claim the prize, if such exists — a race in which good sportsmanship stands to be a liability.

## The Pillars of Heaven

On the western border of al-Wazif, at the very edge of the badlands technically belonging to Caithness, stand the Pillars of Heaven. Hundreds of wind-sculpted columns of rock tower over the plain below. The greatest of the pillars are several hundred feet tall, and at their summits generations of Islamic holy men have made their homes. The Pillars of Heaven are held in reverence second only to Geb'al-Din itself.

The communities on the Pillars are not monasteries or abbeys such as are seen in Christian lands; the Sufi mystics carve their hovels out of the rock itself. They are not feudal lords, owning no land. They live in abject poverty and total isolation. What food and water they require is hauled up from the valley below with ropes and buckets. And for that they are wholly dependent upon the pilgrims who come seeking enlightenment. Should war, famine, pestilence or bad weather prevent the pilgrims from coming for a time, the hermits must do without, fasting until the pilgrims return, or bring themselves to come down from the Pillars and see to their own needs.

The most revered of the holy men at the Pillars is Rhazi al-Safa, a Sufi wise man of tremendous age. It is said that he was once a great nobleman, a Bey of al-Wazif, and a victor in the Great Games. Only a very few folk know for sure — Rhazi has dwelled at the Pillars for over 70 years. Most reckon him to be at least 100 years of age. Forty years ago, disciples of Rhazi recorded his sayings and gathered them into a single book. In his youth the current Caliph was rarely seen without a copy in his hand, and made several pilgrimages to speak with the old man. Indeed, some blame Hafsa's unmanly ways on the holy man's undue influence.



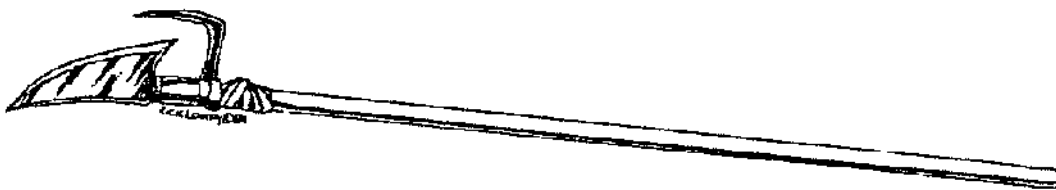
# Cardiel

Bounded on the north and west by the Islamic kingdoms and on the south and east by the ocean, Cardiel is a product of the Megalan crusades. First a country of Islamic tribesmen, then an Imperial province, and now an independent nation, Cardiel is a cultural hybrid. Though nominally Christian, Cardiel is the most tolerant of the kingdoms of Ytarria; it is home to Christians, Moslems, Jews, and pagans alike. The Cardien people are friendly and easy-going.

In addition to their religious tolerance, the folk of Cardiel are known for their political independence. Cardiel has no king. Instead, the Cardien nobles choose a Prince from among their own ranks, reserving the right to depose him should his position go to his head. Despite their fractious nature, however, the nobles will readily join together to preserve Cardiel's sovereignty. Through diligence and friendly relations with their Islamic neighbors, Cardiel has enjoyed many years of peace.

## History

A thousand years ago, the southeastern portion of Ytarria was uninhabited save for isolated Elven communities and Gnomish villages. Even after the Banestorm, this area of rolling hills and fertile grasslands remained empty. It was not until around 1300 that Moslem tribesmen began to move into the region, seeking new pastures for their herds and flocks. More and more humans moved east from the arid plains of what was to become al-Haz over the next hundred years, gradually filling up the new territory. Many of these were Sunni Moslems, fleeing persecution in the west, a Shi'ite stronghold (see sidebar, p. 82). Even so, the lands which would become Cardiel were sparsely populated compared to the regions west and north.



In the year 1445, in response to the same Megalan invasions which had earlier unified the tribes of al-Haz and al-Wazif, the nation of al-Kard was born. The men of al-Kard were never as unified as those of the other Islamic countries. Their self-proclaimed Sultan, Said ibn Mahmud, had to work hard to convince the rival sheikhs of the danger facing them. Through skilled diplomacy and scarcely veiled threats he prevailed, winning the allegiance of the major tribes.

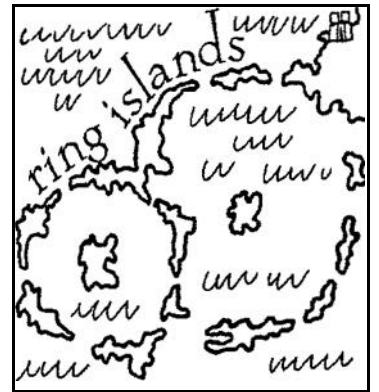
However, al-Kard did not feel the brunt of the Megalan crusade until almost twenty years later. By that time Said had died, and half a dozen sheiks, including Said's son, were embroiled in a war of succession. The Megalan fleets landed at the mouth of the Blueshoal River, and the crusaders began their invasion of the divided country. Within ten years much of al-Kard was conquered. After twenty the entire nation was under Megalan rule. The region was renamed the province of Cardiel, and a viceroy was appointed.

Megalos promptly opened the newly won lands to colonization. Second sons and power-hungry nobles brought their followers and subjects to the new province. Entire villages were transplanted. Many of the legionnaires who had fought in the crusades were rewarded with grants of land in the new territory. By 1500, Cardiel was heavily populated and intensely farmed. The remaining Moslem tribesmen, whose lifestyle depended on having miles and miles of open plains to roam, were completely dispossessed.

## Names in Cardiel

Cardiel is a cultural mish-mash, combining most of the best — and a bit of the worst — of the nations around it. Thus, any name that would be appropriate in the surrounding nations would be appropriate for a Cardien of equivalent background.

Sometimes elements from different cultures are combined, e.g. Baron Amalric ibn John al-Ten-Tiri.



## Adventuring in Cardiel

*Privateering.* For a seafaring adventure, the PCs can take service on a Cardien ship and sail north to raid the Megalan merchant-ships. Since gunpowder is unknown and catapults are too unwieldy and inaccurate, most naval battles are boarding or ramming actions, enlivened with magic.

*Dockside adventure.* The PCs may be hired to track down and capture smugglers. What are they smuggling? It could be anything — untaxed slaves; illegal magic; silks; spices; or even drugs like hemp (see p. 78).

*The Ring Islands.* These islands are known for their volcanoes, bizarre and dangerous creatures, pirate lairs, and high-mana. See the sidebars on pp. 58-59 for more details.

*Political intrigue.* PCs might become involved in the current jockeying for influence in the election of Prince Vincent's successor. They could be paid to use strong-arm tactics to gain a noble's support for their candidate, or defend a noble from such hooligans. Some particularly ruthless nobles might even resort to murder or kidnapping to farther their chances.

*Sea Elf Surprise.* The PCs have gotten hold of a map that *allegedly* describes the location of a Sea Elf treasure horde. There are only a few catches — like the pirates that know the PCs have the map (and want it for themselves), and the Sea Elves (who don't want to be looted), and the fact that the horde is *underwater*, and the sea serpent which is guarding the stash...

In 1499 the city of Calder, still predominately Moslem, was forced by its new ruler to convert to Christianity — overnight. All who refused were executed. The effects of this heavy-handed decree were felt all the way back in Megalos, and future rulers learned a lesson in tolerance.

Initially the invaders did their best to recreate Megalos in the new land. But things soon changed. The cowards stayed home; the weak died in battle. The rigid and uncompromising failed to flourish. But some nobles were wise enough to treat their Islamic subjects well and honor their customs. They found the tribesmen to be honest and trustworthy, brave in battle and skilled in husbandry. Moslem craftsmen and scholars had preserved earthly knowledge long forgotten in northern lands. The houses of these wise and tolerant nobles prospered; they inherited Cardiel.

### ***Sailing Ships***

Cardiel is a maritime power. Next to Araterre, it builds the best, biggest, and fastest seagoing vessels in all of Yrth.

The function of a ship is a major factor in its size, shape, and speed. A merchant may be a local waremonger, plying an established route along a shoreline, or a long-distance trader, heading into unknown areas. A ship that sails up and down a coast, never too far from land, is usually much smaller than a ship that crosses open ocean with regularity. Cargo ships sacrifice speed for carrying capacity, while pirates favor quick, fast and maneuverable boats with smaller holds.

Ships are categorized by the number of masts they have. One-masters are called sloops, cutters, smacks and a hundred other names. Two-masters include brigs (square riggers), schooners (fore and aft rigged), and brigantines (a combination). Three-masters are usually just called ships, but also include barques, galleons and frigates.

*Sloops* are small, with only one mast and a triangular sail. They rarely sail more than two weeks away from land. Larger sloops (over 20 feet) are popular pirate craft. They are fast, maneuverable, can carry enough cargo for pirate's purposes, and have a shallow draft to slip past reefs where the larger ships can't follow.

*Brigs* are larger, broader, and slower — most of them. Some are very fast, famous as pirate chasers. If a brig can carry enough provisions, it can cross an ocean.

*Ships* range considerably in size, from just larger than sloops to the largest vessels afloat. They serve many purposes, from cargo to passenger to warship. Merchant ships have the worst lines and speed; warships have slightly better lines, but aren't much faster due to bracing and have higher crenelated "castles" fore and aft, where archers or mages may be stationed.

For more about sailing ships and maritime battles, see *GURPS Washbucklers*.

Over the next two centuries, the nobility of Cardiel grew to be a part of their new land; some lords married the daughters of Islamic families. War continued against al-Haz and al-Wazif, but ever more slowly. Occasional Islamic efforts to liberate al-Kard found less and less support within Cardiel. The Cardien people developed a relaxed and tolerant society; conflicts with their neighbors became more and more infrequent.

Eventually, beginning in the western fiefdoms, the Cardien nobles realized they had more in common with the enemy than they did with the motherland. In 1788, they declared independence, chose a Prince as leader, and made peace with the Islamic countries. After a brief but bloody conflict, Megalos was forced to accept this loss of territory. The navy that had taken al-Kard was now loyal to Cardiel, and the new nation had the full support of al-Haz and al-Wazif. Only the Duchy of Hadaton remained in Megalan hands, until twenty years later when Cardiel took the duchy by force, with the Caliph's help. Afterwards, the south-eastern nations settled into their now-familiar borders.

The current Prince of Cardiel is Vincent of Calder. Vincent is short, chubby and balding; he was elected Prince because the other lords thought he'd be inoffensive and easy to manipulate. They were wrong. He has been a strong and clever Prince, gaining cooperation through persuasion or threat, yet avoiding war. Vincent is now fifty, and though he is still hale and hearty, he has announced his attention to step down as of the New Year. Ambitious nobles are already jockeying for influence.

### **Geography, Flora and Fauna**

The northern parts of Cardiel's coast are rugged; there are few good harbors among the rocks and cliffs save for Hadaton at the mouth of the Blueshoal. Cardiel's other shores are quite hospitable. Cardiel boasts a fine navy and large merchant and fishing fleets. The land is fertile, flat inland and gently rolling near the coasts.

All the largest cities are on the seacoasts, except for Tredroy, the trading center at the fork of the River Blueshoal. The rest of the countryside is well-farmed, less populous than Megalos but more so than most other lands. The roads are second only to those of Megalos.

The climate in Cardiel is mild. Its southerly latitude insures warm weather and mild winters, and the coastal hills dampen the strength of the sea storms. Rainfall is most plentiful in the east and south, but the inland plains are by no means parched (unlike some parts of northern and western al-Haz). Most crops can be grown here, and Cardiel is the world's only source of citrus fruits. Peaches and apples do not thrive here, as they require colder weather to set fruit. The vineyards of southeastern Cardiel are renowned for producing Yrth's finest wines.

There are no great forests in Cardiel, and few woods; all the land is pasture or is under cultivation. Wild beasts are rare. As in eastern Megalos, hunting is not a popular sport, but hawking is.

The western and central plains are famous for their fine cattle and large herds of woolen. Some of the best wool comes from Cardiel, and the best leather-workers are found in its cities.

Cardiel is a normal-mana region.

## Society

Cardiel is ruled by a loose federation of lords led by the Prince. The title of Prince is not hereditary. The greatest nobles of Cardiel elect one of their own number to fill that post for life. The Prince is given the power to tax the nobles (very lightly), and to judge disputes between them. He also commands Cardiel's two Legions. In theory he is their liege-lord; in practice he is merely first among a band of proud and well-armed equals. The Prince is considered to be Social Rank 6, but would be treated as an equal by the rulers of any friendly country — Megalos is not among these. All other ranks are as for Megalos.

Social advancement in Cardiel is almost as limited as in Megalos. This is due to the lack of a wilderness frontier and the two centuries of peace which Cardiel has enjoyed. Titled nobles live long, uneventful lives; escaped serfs, freemen, and noble younger sons have nowhere to go where they can start a new life. And the Megalan practice of buying social rank is looked upon as the epitome of bad taste. Still, Cardien nobles are not as haughty as their Megalan counterparts, and bravery, skill, or extreme loyalty on the part of a subject is usually rewarded.

Cardiel is a cultural melting pot. The majority of the people and almost all of the nobility are Christian, but there are significant Moslem and pagan minorities. Some of the richest merchants and craftsmen are followers of Islam. Many of Cardiel's nobles reside in villas adorned with many arches, tiles and murals in the Islamic geometric art styles, rather than in the cold stone castles dating from more violent times. Arabic, not Latin, is the language of scholars, and aristocrats are as likely to know it as they are the tongue of the Church. As a result of Cardiel's tolerance for various traditions, a variety of local dialects have arisen, and in some regions derivatives of German, Italian, Spanish, Irish, or Ukrainian are spoken alongside English.

## Nonhumans

Before the coming of humans, the region was home to few intelligent beings. There were, and still are, several small Elven communities along the southern coasts and offshore islands. Gnomes once lived in the western hills, but have long since moved to more remote, quieter parts. The cities of Cardiel, however, are as cosmopolitan as those of Megalos. Dwarven smiths ply their trade, Goblin merchants sell their wares, and Kobold thieves work the crowds. Even an occasional Orc or Reptile Man can be seen.

### *Prince Vincent of Calder*

Age: 50; balding gray-brown hair and blue eyes; 5'3", 150 lbs.

ST 9, DX 10, IQ 13, HT 11

Advantages: Status 6; Wealth (Very Wealthy); Lightning Calculator; Eidetic Memory; Legal Enforcement Powers (15 points).

Disadvantages: Duty (-5 points); Overweight; Pacifism (self-defense); Sense of Duty (Calder)

Bard-11; Writing-12; History-14; Law-15; Administration-16; Diplomacy-14; Savoir-Faire-13.

Prince Vincent has surprised his fellow nobles with his strength. A compromise candidate in the last Princely elections, he has done a good job for the nation and a very good job for his home barony of Calder. He has managed to arrange Cardiel's affairs in such a way that his home was enriched... without any great injustice to anyone else. Now he is ready to retire, opening the gates for a vicious power struggle in Cardiel.

Vincent is well aware of these struggles, and is pushing for his old friend Allan Micardene, whom Vincent himself appointed as Baron Bowvrey, to run. Micardene is competent and fair-minded. Furthermore, he knows that even if Micardene favors Tredroy, his own beloved Calder will not suffer greatly.



## Warfare

Cardiel is a maritime power, renowned for its sea-traders and fishermen. Its navy, composed mainly of small, fast ships with a few huge war-galleys, is second only to that of Megalos — far inferior in numbers, but superior in skill and daring. Megalan raiders occasionally visit the Cardiel coast, but have learned to their sorrow that such ventures aren't worth the cost. Cardien privateers return the favor, preying upon Megalan traders.

Other than the occasional raids and privateering, Cardiel sees little warfare. The last war with al-Wazif — really a local dispute between two nobles who happened to be on opposite sides of the border — was over 150 years ago. Cardiel's internal politics are also peaceful — which is not to say that Cardien nobles don't use the threat of violence to achieve political ends. Nobles do keep guard-forces, and can raise armies through levies and calling upon their vassal knights. The Prince has two Legions, but these are rusty and would be considered shoddy in Megalos.

## The Law

The Cardien legal system can be a jurisdictional nightmare. The Sharia code, Church canon law, the Jewish Talmud and feudal common law all exist side by side. Not infrequently, minor crimes go unpunished if there is a risk of offending one group or another. In general, each religious group polices its own members. The problems arise when a Moslem is accused of a crime against a Christian, for example, or a Christian commits a crime against a Jew or pagan. The cleverest of criminals play this system like a fine instrument, especially in Tredroy, where international borders farther cloud matters.

The final legal authority in Cardiel rests with the Prince and the other powerful nobles. But they are careful not to anger their subjects by overturning decisions made by another court.

For the most part, the various legal codes of Cardiel are no different than those of other kingdoms. There are two unique customs, however. The first is that religious freedom is assured. No form of religion is outlawed in Cardiel; mosques and churches are built side by side. Even pagans may meet openly, though they must be careful about their manner of public worship! Any display of religious intolerance may lead to a charge of disturbing the peace. No one is immune. This led to the secularization of the Order of Michael immediately after the rebellion, and the expulsion of the Hospitaller order from Cardiel 60 years later.

## The Council of Lords

The Council is a loose federation of the greatest nobles of Cardiel. Led by the Prince, who is elected from among their number, they govern their multicultural nation in a style more noted for individuality than overall harmony. Now that Vincent has decided to step down as Prince, it will be up to the Council to choose a successor. Battle lines are already being drawn. There are three main candidates: Count Faramon of Aliar, Baron Howarth of Alimar, and — if will agree to run — Baron Bowvrey of East Tredroy. Current voting would break down as follows:

*Barony of Calder:* Vincent will continue to serve as the Baron of Calder, and thus has a vote in the upcoming election. He favors Bowvrey, for his competence and loyalty. Faramon, he fears, will pull trade away from beloved Calder, or worse, launch Cardiel into a fruitless maritime war with pirates. And Howarth is simply incompetent.

*East Tredroy:* Allan Micardene, the Baron Bowvrey, is the current governor of the Cardiel section of Tredroy. A successful merchant elevated to nobility by Prince Vincent, many of Cardiel's nobility find his presence a slap in their aristocratic faces, especially the Viscount of Lurnan and Baron of Dorilis whose fiefdoms lie under him. Vincent and Anthemius are trying to convince Bowvrey to run, but so far he's resisted the idea. He favors Faramon, who he feels is certain to win, regardless. He doesn't want to antagonize the man he is sure will be the next Prince, and he doesn't really want the job anyway.

*Continued on next page...*



There is also no death by torture in Cardiel. Instead, the worst criminals are sold to the Mages' Guild for magical experimentation. Megalans consider this a tragic waste of good entertainment — few wizards allow spectators — but most folk in Cardiel think of the practice as humane. After all, one or two out of every hundred actually survives!

## Calder

Calder has been the capital of Cardiel ever since its lord, Vincent, was elected Prince fifteen years ago. Small by Megalan standards, but huge as inland Cardien cities go, Calder Town has prospered greatly during Vincent's reign. Located in the very heart of the northwestern plains, it has always been overshadowed by Tredroy to the north. The main industry of the region is cattle ranching, and Calder is the center where local lords go to sell their cattle and trade for the supplies and luxury items they need. In the past, Calder had been considered a backwater, and could be reached only by the poorest of the nation's roads.

Vincent changed all that. Using his tax revenues wisely, he improved the roads leading to the city, and constructed a new one to Tredroy. He built a brewery in the town, and then had one of the Legions permanently stationed there to provide a ready market. He subsidized trading ventures intended to bring new sources of income to the region. These missions brought back rare spice plants, citrus tree saplings, and fine breeding horses of northern stock. Now the merchants of Calder compete directly with the foreign suppliers of these goods. Over the last decade and a half, the Barony of Calder has been transformed from a dusty pasture lands to a thriving center of trade.

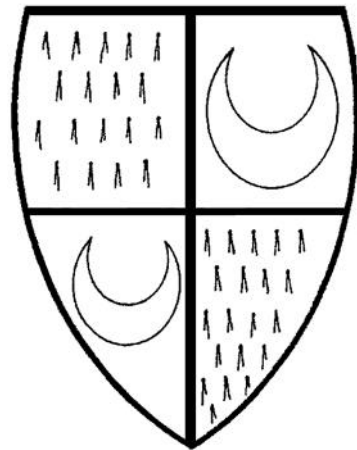
Having enriched both himself and his subjects, Vincent of Calder recently announced his plans to relinquish the title of Prince. He has created more than a few enemies during his reign, however. Less fortunate lords envy and resent Calder's new prosperity. And many lords are disgruntled that the Prince, whom they had elected for his pliability, has proven himself a competent leader who does not automatically heed their "counsel." But most, having been shown the potential for profit in the office, are now scrambling to gain the upper hand before the lords choose Vincent's successor.

## East Tredroy

Tredroy is a thriving port, since the Blueshoal is navigable for almost its entire length. It serves large portions of southern al-Wazif, northeastern al-Haz and northwestern Cardiel, including Calder. The good times brought to Calder by Prince Vincent have helped East Tredroy as well. The city's governor, Baron Bowvrey, supports Vincent because of this — and because the Prince handpicked him for the job of governor, making him a noble in the process.

With Vincent's imminent abdication, East Tredroy's internal politics have heated up. The Viscount of Lurnan and the Baron of Dorilis, whose fiefdoms lie within the territory of Tredroy, have long resented the Baron Bowvrey, their liege-lord, because of his common birth. Born Allan Micardene, he was a wealthy merchant descended from aristocratic Megalan stock, but was not a noble until the Prince made him one. Vincent passed over the available nobles in order to have a competent and loyal man in charge of the port which was vital to his plans for Calder. In the process he made enemies of Dorilis and Lurnan. Guillaume of Lurnan, in particular, directed his anger towards Micardene as well.

Now both lords are seeking to influence the election of the next Prince. They also want Allan Micardene stripped of his post and title, and someone more suitable, preferably one of them, put in his place.



### *The Council of Lords (Continued)*

*Hadaton:* Duke Anthemius Crivelli is the current ruler of Hadaton, a young schemer who is quite recent to Cardiel's political scene. He finds Howarth an utter incompetent and Faramon of Aliar too likely to threaten trade in Hadaton. But he appreciates Bowvrey's skills and his Megalan heritage. If Bowvrey can be convinced to run, he will find Crivelli a strong supporter. If not, Anthemius will be forced to support Howarth.

*Aliar:* Aliar is ruled by Count Faramon, thought by many to be Vincent's natural successor. In his early forties and at the height of his powers, this is Faramon's best chance to succeed, and he plans on putting everything he has behind his campaign. He will face opposition from the other port towns who fear he will favor Aliar over their own cities, shifting the balance of trade in Cardiel. His staunchest supporter is Caius of Minder.

*Alimar:* Baron Howarth of Alimar is a self-important righteous prig who feels that no one could possibly be as fit to be Prince as himself. Few of his fellow nobles agree. But as the only declared competition to Faramon, he may end up with more support than his contentiously narrow mind deserves.

*Minder:* A veteran of such elections, Caius of Minder firmly backs Faramon.

*Ten-Tiri:* Ten-Tiri's Moslem governor, the Baron Amalric ibn John al-Ten-Tiri, is much too busy with local problems to worry about the upcoming election. He is currently neutral, but anyone able to promise him help might be able to sway his vote.



### Count Faramon of Aliar

Age: 45; black hair and brown eyes; 5'11", 145 lbs.

ST 11, DX 13, IQ 12, HT 11

Advantages: Alertness; Status 5; Wealthy (Very Wealthy); Strong Will 2; Legal Enforcement Powers (15 points).

Disadvantages: Duty (-5 points); Overconfident; Truthful; Sense of Duty (Aliar)

Quirks: Detests Pirates

Skills: Bard-12; Swimming-13; Broadsword-14; Navigation-11; Seamanship-15; Heraldry-13; Law-15; Administration-12; Leadership-14; Politics-13; Savoir-Faire-14.

Faramon is a straightforward man with a simple and honest manner of speech. He looks (and is) part Arab, though he is a Christian. He makes no attempt to hide his hatred of pirates, or the "sea-faring leeches" as he calls them. He feels that Cardiel should be aggressively hunting these bandits, and should he be made Prince, he will see that it's done.

### Baron Howarth of Alimar

Age: 40; brown hair and pale blue eyes; 5'8", 150 lbs.

ST 9, DX 12, IQ 10, HT 12

Advantages: Status 5; Wealthy (Very Wealthy); Legal Enforcement Powers (15 points).

Disadvantages: Duty (-5 points); Overconfidence; Megalomania.

Skills: Falconry-18; Bard-10; Broadsword-14; Cyphering-11; Seamanship-11; Heraldry-14; History-15; Law-16; Theology-13; Leadership-9; Politics-11; Savoir-Faire-12.

The only one who believes that Baron Howarth was born to rule is Baron Howarth. He is widely recognized as a self-important bag of wind, but he comes from a good family, and he's yet to do anything *too* detrimental to Alimar. He thinks himself an expert of the scholarly disciplines and will go on at length if allowed. He is running enthusiastically for the position of Prince — laughable, until one realizes the scarcity of good choices, and the desperation of those opposing Faramon.

of the city folk and the local lords.

The Duchy has been held by the powerful Crivelli family for over a hundred years. The current Duke, Anthemius Crivelli, is a young schemer who inherited his father's title a few years ago. Only 20, he has already shown himself to be an exceptionally crafty politician, more suited to the court intrigue of Megalos than the rough diplomacy of Cardiel. He is not a supporter of Prince Vincent, whom he considers to be nothing more than a country bumpkin... but for political reasons, he may back. Vincent's chosen successor, Anthemius is too young to be a viable candidate for the throne himself, but he is already a powerbroker, and is looking toward the *next* vacancy, 15 or 20 years down the line.

### Aliar

The port of Aliar, on Cardiel's eastern coast, is only a short distance by sea from islands controlled by Megalos. Thus it is usually the first port-of-call for Megalan merchant ships bound for southern waters, and is an important trading center. It is most famous for the fine wines produced in the hills south of the city, and for the quality of its woolen goods.

The Count of Aliar, Faramon, is a likely successor to Vincent as Prince. In his early forties, he very powerful, and has many lesser lords as vassals. Furthermore, he is closely allied with the Baron of Minder to the south. Hadaton will likely oppose him, however, since the two ports compete for the Megalan trade.

Tredroy is the seat of one of Cardiel's two Archbishops. Archbishop Victor Aillard, though old and almost completely blind, is an extremely competent and revered man.

The city also holds Yrth's largest Chinese community. Chinatown is the source of many unique export items, especially mechanical toys made on the Street of Gadgeteers.

### Hadaton

The Duchy of Hadaton is the most Megalan — and the most Christian — of all the fiefdoms in Cardiel. It was this region Megalos conquered first and held longest. Located at the mouth of the River Blueshoal, with rocky, inhospitable coasts to the north and south, it is the largest seaport for several hundred miles. It is also the portal through which goods from Tredroy must pass in order to reach the open ocean. The surrounding land is green and fertile, though slightly colder than most of Cardiel.

Despite the efforts of the Prince and many of the Cardien lords, Hadaton has remained a bastion of conservatism and, relatively speaking, religious intolerance. Moslems, while not physically harassed, suffer a -1 reaction penalty when dealing with the local Christians. And pagans must be particularly careful not to arouse the superstitious fears

South of Aliar is a range of hills that runs along the coast for many miles. The numerous streams and inlets along this coast are ideal havens for pirates and privateers who prey on Megalan traders exclusively. The pirate problem has gotten so bad that Megalan merchants are turning more and more to the Aralaise for transport. The Aralaise vessels sail out of the open ocean and directly into port, avoiding dangerous shores. And since they find Alimar to the south a more convenient port, Aliar's trade has suffered.

Therefore, Count Faramon is using his private fleet to provide cheap escort ships to Megalan traders. Faramon has urged Vincent to move against the pirates, but the Prince has been slow to act — they're only Megalans, after all! Besides, Calder can only benefit from trouble on the southern coasts; it encourages reliance on the Blueshoal as a trade route.

## Alimar

The city of Alimar was the second Cardien city to be chartered. (Tredroy was the first). It lies on a sheltered bay in the southeastern portion of Cardiel, nestled in the southernmost part of the country's only real hills. The major crops of the region are grapes, oranges, lemons, sugar cane, and the byproducts of the successful milk-fish farms, all of which are in demand as export items.

The peninsula and small islands south of Alimar are home to Cardiel's Elves. The Elder Folk have a half dozen small communities here. Although they are technically vassals of the Prince, they are left alone and keep to themselves. Now and then a young Elf will emigrate to the city, mostly out of curiosity, to sample human life for a while. As a result, Alimar is one of the few places on Yrth where half-breeds are relatively common (Sterling in Caithness is another; see p. 71). In fact, Baron Arannior of Tabir, a rural fiefdom southwest of the city, is himself half-Elven.

Before the opening of Araterre, it was a small port, used mainly by fishing boats and merchantmen bound elsewhere. Its remoteness from foreign coasts relegated Alimar to the role of waystation. But now Alimar is a growing rival to the port of Aliar, whose people resent it deeply... not least because of the similarity of names!

Nowadays, business is booming in Alimar's harbor. Pirate activity to the north has caused more goods to be routed through Araterre, which lies due east across the ocean from Alimar. This new business, gained at Aliar's expense, has not made Governor Rankin eager to send warships into the area. And Baron Howarth seems more interested in politics than anything else. Rumors hint that the northern pirates are actually *paid* by the governor, or perhaps even the baron.

### *Allan Micardene, Baron Bowvrey of East Tredroy*

Age: 58; light brown hair, green eyes; 5'8", 245 lbs.

ST 11, DX 11, IQ 14, HT 9

Advantages: Status 5; Wealth (Very Wealthy); Eidetic Memory; Empathy; Mathematical Ability; Legal Enforcement Powers (15 points).

Disadvantages: Duty (-5 poults); Fat; Honest; Sense of Duty (Subjects).

Quirk: Suspicious Nature.

Writing-14; History-14; Heraldry-15; Law-16; Administration-20; Accounting-18; Economics-19; Diplomacy-20; Leadership-15; Merchant-19; Politics-17; Savoir-Faire-14; Detect Lies-14.

Allan Micardene held a series of official posts in the city government, combining them with a successful merchant career. Around ten years ago the previous Governor of Tredroy was mysteriously assassinated. Both Prince Vincent and the City Officials recommended Allan as the replacement. He reluctantly accepted. Prince Vincent bestowed on him the title of Baron, as the Governor of East Tredroy is traditionally a Cardiel noble. The title, the size of the holdings, and his own wealth have given Bowvrey not only the right to govern East Tredroy, but also to sit on the Council of Lords of Cardiel — annoying certain minor Cardiel nobility to no end. Now Vincent has come to Allan with an offer to make him Prince of Cardiel. So far he's refused, but pressure on him to accept the offer increases daily.





## Minder

The major fiefdom on the Cardiel's southern coast is the Barony of Minder. It is rich farmland, and produces many cash crops as well as plenty of food for the local populace. Orchards of citrus and olive trees are interspersed with fields of cane and wheat. Cattle are also raised in the region, and Minder leather goods fetch a good price as far away as Caithness. Minder is also the site of Cardiel's largest shipyard; the city is not far from one of the country's few wooded areas, known locally as the Shipwright's Wood.

Over the years, the Shipwright's Wood has dwindled. Never large to begin with, decades of felling timber for shipbuilding have taken their toll. However, recent events have stopped logging operations entirely. Several woodsmen have met their doom at the hands of a huge monster. Terrified survivors have given conflicting accounts of the creature's appearance. One witness claims that it is a wingless cold drake with gleaming fangs; another described a gigantic creature like a huge bear. Whatever it is, terrified loggers refuse to enter the wood. Baron Caius thinks it is simply a nightstalker that has until now lived undisturbed in the forest's heart, and has offered a substantial reward to anyone who slays it.

Caius of Minder is an old and very proper Cardien aristocrat. Still in good health at the age of 64, he can remember the last Hazi jihad against Cardiel — really just a minor border squabble — and boasts of his father's role in turning it back. Caius himself, though once a frequent winner at the annual tourney, has never seen a real war. Still, he is a strong leader, and would probably make a good general. Caius is an ally of Count Faramon of Aliar, and will likely support him for the throne after Vincent steps down.

## Ten-Tiri

Ten-Tiri is a small seaport at the extreme southwestern corner of Cardiel. At the mouth of the Wadi al Fayd, the river which is the western border of Cardiel, the port serves all of southeastern al-Haz and southwestern Cardiel. The land around Ten-Tiri is dry, and the weather is hot. Wheat and cotton are major crops; sheep and goats are the most common livestock. Small fishing villages dot the fine sand beaches along the coasts near the city.

On the opposite end of Cardiel from Hadaton, Ten-Tiri is about as far from that city as one can get — politically and geographically. Whereas Hadaton is predominantly Christian, most folk in Ten-Tiri are Moslem. People in Ten-Tiri are tolerant and easy-going, and friendly to outsiders. And the Baron of Ten-Tiri, Amalric ibn John, is a middle-aged man known for his honesty and down-to-earth nature. He is also Cardiel's only Moslem baron.

Amalric's fiefdom is large and underpopulated by Cardien standards, and Ten-Tiri is somewhat isolated from the rest of the country. This suits the baron just fine, as he is much more concerned with his subjects immediate welfare than the political wrangling which preoccupies the majority of his noble brethren. His devotion to his people has earned him their love; the folk of Ten-Tiri are intensely loyal to their lord.

Lately, there has been some trouble in Ten-Tiri with Shi'ite fanatics from al-Haz. Several mullahs crossed the river and began preaching that all Moslems of the city must cast out the Christians in their midst, or suffer damnation. This offended many of the tolerant Sunnis of the city, including the Baron, and frightened Ten-Tiri's non-Moslem population. Amalric had the mullahs jailed for a few days and then deported them to the al-Haz side of the river. But before they were released, the Shi'ites vowed that the wrath of Allah would fall upon Amalric and all who supported him. The PCs could get involved on either side of this dispute, as both are actively recruiting spies and agents.

### Viscount Guillaume of Lurnan

Age 36, 5'7", 168 lbs., brown hair, balding, grey eyes.

ST 8, DX 9, IQ 10, HT 9

*Advantages:* Wealth (Filthy Rich); Legal Enforcement Powers (15 points); Status +5.

*Disadvantages:* Major Delusion (he should control Tredroy); Duty (5 points); Jealousy; Weak Will 2.

*Skills:* Administration-9; Area Knowledge (Tredroy)-11; Broadsword-8; Diplomacy-8; Falconry-11; Heraldry-11; Riding (horse)-11.

Owner of the largest fiefdom in East Tredroy, possessor of one of the oldest and purest bloodlines in all of Cardiel, the Viscount Guillaume has developed a hatred for both Micardene and the Prince that put him there. He fully believes that it is he who should control East Tredroy, and will stop at little to overthrow this "upstart merchant."

Sadly, Guillaume is not the stuff good administrators are made of, and should his plan succeed, he will be no match for the clever politicians and convoluted laws of Tredroy.



### Baron Adrien Dorilis

Age 34,5'9", 145 lbs., red hair, green eyes.

ST 10, DX 11, IQ 11, HT 10.

*Advantages:* Wealth (Very Wealthy); Common Sense; Legal Enforcement Powers (15 points); Literacy; Status +5

*Disadvantages:* Duty (to Viscount); Sense of Duty (to Viscount); Stubbornness.

*Skills:* Administration-11; Area Knowledge-12; Broadsword-12; Diplomacy-11; Falconry-10; Fast Talk-12; First Aid-10; Politics-11; Riding (horse)-11; Shield-12; Swimming-11.

Adrien Dorilis is Guillaume's lifetime ally and confidant. He supports his friend in his various plots, even though he has enough common sense to question their wisdom. He bears Bowvrey no personal dislike, saving his enmity for the wily Prince that put him there. Loyal to the end, he will stand beside Guillaume no matter what his impetuous friend does, though he suspects he will live to regret it. He consoles himself with the knowledge that Cardien politics are expensive, but rarely fatal.

# Sahud

The kingdom of Sahud lies at the very northern edge of Ytarria. Only a few Megalan traders have ventured there; to folk in far southern territories even its name may be unknown. To the PCs, Sahud should be a land of exotic mystery and danger.

The information given about Sahud is deliberately sketchy, so players won't learn too much by reading this book. GMs who want to run a Sahudese adventure should flesh out the culture and geography, providing lots of surprises for the PCs. The GM should keep in mind that Sahudese culture is totally alien to outsiders — the PCs aren't supposed to know what is going on. The more bizarre things seem, the better.

GMs who don't want to bother with Sahud should drop heavy hints to that effect. If the PCs insist on going there anyway, involve them in duels until they get the message.

## History

The Earthlings transplanted to Sahud were different from those who settled the southern lands. They were from Japan and Korea, China, Mongolia, Siberia, Southeast Asia, and pre-Columbian North America. These newcomers were peasants; almost no nobles or craftsmen were brought over by the Banestorm. The Sahudese quickly settled down to a life of farming in peaceful anarchy.

Gradually, the Sahudese developed a culture that blended the beliefs and folk traditions of their ancestors with elements unique to their new environment. They created a society based on ritual-dominated trade and warfare, in which personal, family and clan honor are all-important. Since then clans have risen and fallen, but there has been no change in overall Sahudese life for many centuries.

## Geography, Flora and Fauna

Sahud proper is a peninsula some 600 by 120 miles in area. The Sahudese also control a strip of land 750 miles long, south of the peninsula and north of the Bronze Mountains. Sahudese territory is bounded on the south by Zarak, on the west by a chilly, fertile area ranged by Centaurs and farmed by Giants, and elsewhere by the ocean.

Most parts of Sahud are under cultivation — though, should a clan be destroyed, its territory may lie vacant for many years. Wilder areas quickly go to brambles and are sometimes infested with a nasty form of carnivorous plant. Forests are rare and composed mostly of pine, cedar and redwoods. Fox, deer, hares, cranes, eagles, treetippers and an occasional nightstalker inhabit the few wild regions. Sea-birds are common, and some kinds are considered a great delicacy.

Cultivated areas are neat miniature farms. Domestic animals include cats, dogs, hardings, woolens, and cattle. Horses are considered a great curiosity. Falconry is also quite popular — Sahudese falcons are highly prized among Megalan devotees of the sport. Silk is Sahud's greatest export, however, and most southern farms cultivate silkworms.

Sahud is a normal-mana area.

## Society

The ruler of Sahud is a hereditary noble whose title translates as Heavenking (Rank 7). He remains at the Imperial Palace, attended by powerful mages known as Eyes of Heaven (Rank 6). No foreigner has ever seen the Heavenking, or even been allowed to enter the Palace grounds, leading some to conjecture that the

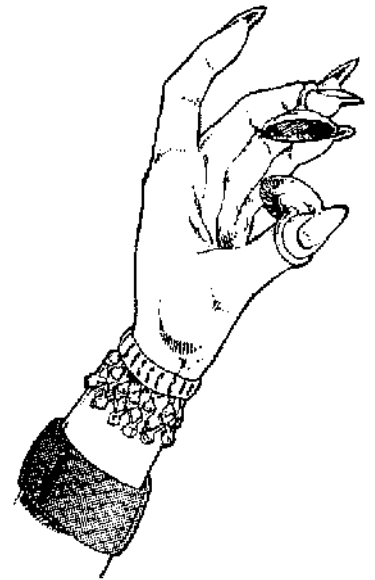
### *Names in Sahud*

Sahudese names are Japanese in character, having several syllables and many vowels. Common folk have just one name. Nobles also have a clan name which serves as a surname. Sahudese names mean much the same things as do English names though only those who speak Sahudese fluently can decipher them.

Common Sahudese names are: Akiro, Ashiriwa, Bunoketa, Futsukiman, Hiyoshiwara, Kaoshuang, Kyushuonai, Matsuko, Nishiji, Ochiriwa, Okishaido, Shizuoka, Soshogazawa, Tanega, Tsukiyama, Yachikura, and Yoshigawa.

In general, Sahudese names are composed of alternating single consonants and vowels. Names usually have three, four or even five syllables, and end in a vowel or the letter n. The few consonant combinations and diphthongs which are common are ch, sh, ts, ky, ng, ao, ai, and uo.

These guidelines apply to place names as well. The literal translation of a place name will usually have a poetic sound, e.g.: Fruit Tree Mountain; The Waterfall That Is An Orchestra Of Bells; Midnight At Noon Forest.



### *Women in Sahud*

Most women in Sahud seem to stay at home, perform domestic chores and obey their husbands' every whim. But there are notable and fierce exceptions! Female warriors are accorded great respect, and some clans are governed by powerful matriarchs. Reasons why some women enjoy higher status than others will not be understood by southerners.

Some travelers believe that the women are the real rulers of Sahud — that the Heavenking is a puppet, and the high wars just a game to keep the men busy.

### *Adventuring in Sahud*

*Trade.* The only good reason to visit Sahud would be to trade for their silks and handicrafts. Unfortunately, the barriers of language and customs make this a risky business, leading to further adventures.

*High War.* PCs talented in combat might be invited to participate in a *high war* as clan champions. There will be no pay — a high war is an affair of honor. Such an invitation would represent either a very sincere compliment, or a very devious political maneuver. To refuse would be to risk a loss of status, and would probably insult the clan making the offer.

*Low War.* PCs with combat or magical skill, or thief/spy abilities, might be recruited for a *low war* — no-holds-barred battle against the foes of the clan. While this might be an affair of honor, it might also be a strict mercenary transaction, possibly with looting privileges. Note that if tile PCs are in any way doing business with a clan which becomes involved in low war, they may find themselves targets, even if they had no wish to take sides.

*Duel.* Any infraction of the complex and mutable Sahudese customs could involve a PC in a ritual duel with very, very strange rules — whatever the GM wants to introduce. For instance, both fighters could be blindfolded (-10 to hit, no active defenses). Or they might simply be required to shout insults at each other at high noon!

monarch is actually a prisoner of Sahud's most powerful clans. The Sahudese won't verify this — in fact, one Megalan trader had his tongue cut out after suggesting it to a native.

Almost everyone in Sahud seems to claim some connection to nobility. Titles are confusing to southerners; where does the Third Twilight Master stand in relation to the Lord of the Western Spray — or, for that matter, to the Second and Fourth Twilight Masters?

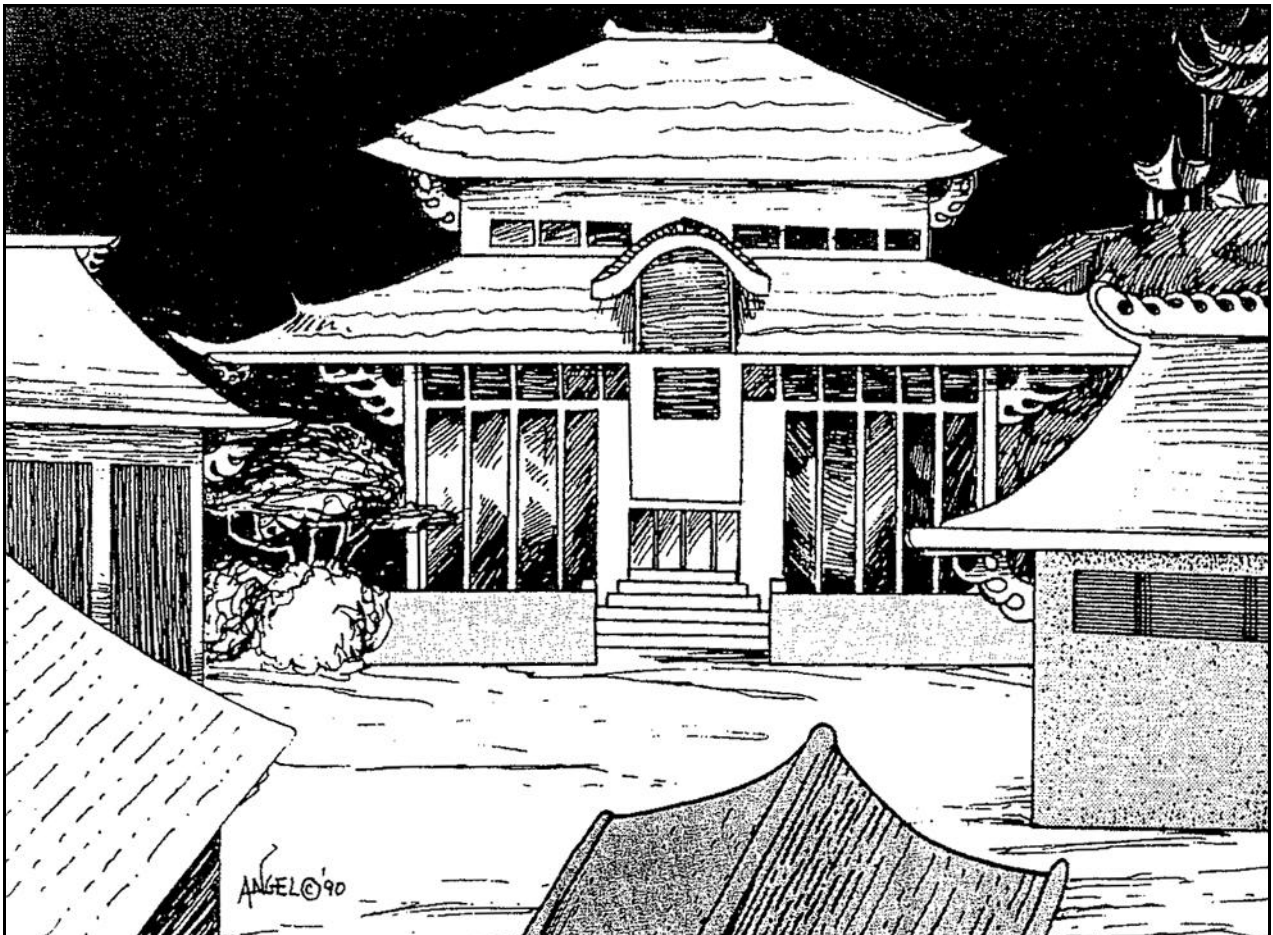
The keynote of Sahudese society is the constant maneuvering, between clans and between families within a clan, for honor and face. Trade is a vital concern, but it is part of the larger game. Indeed, the weight carried by certain nobles seems to fluctuate with their status in the eyes of their fellows. The wise visitor will avoid political involvement whenever possible. The foolish visitor may seek to participate or even control; if he seems to succeed, it is most likely due to the manipulations of those he most seeks to impress. Only rarely will it be due to actual skill or even luck.

There are no slaves in Sahud. Criminals, native and foreign, are punished in other ways.

No nonhumans are native to the Sahudese peninsula; the mountain Dwarves keep strictly to their own side of the ancient boundaries. Visiting nonhumans are treated no better and no worse than any other visitors, except for Reptile Men, who are considered dangerous animals but good to eat.

### *Magic*

Many Sahudese are mages, and some are quite powerful. But it is against custom to use magic for showy effects (it is considered effeminate). Instead, the Sahudese are masters of the trivial spells that make life comfortable. Battle magic is known, but it is used mostly by (or against) thieves or assassins. Most warfare is conducted with bow and steel. Sahudese explanations of this will make no sense to outsiders.



## Warfare

There is no standing army in Sahud. Each clan fights as necessary to defend its land from sea-borne nomad raiders. The Sahudese have no interest in expanding their territory, and no other foes.

However, noble families fight among themselves bitterly and routinely. There are two sorts of wars. A high war is fought entirely with weapons — no magic — between picked fighters. Times and places are rigidly agreed upon. Some high wars may have additional rules. Ranged weapons, or *all* weapons, may be outlawed. Normally, only the flower of Sahudese society takes part in high war, and nothing is at stake except face (which is of great importance).

In low war, on the other hand, anything goes. There are rules, but no outside observer can tell what they are. Poison, assassins, magic, and hordes of screaming mercenaries may all be used. If not stopped, a low war ends with the total destruction of one side. Low wars are most often fought over severe insults or for economic reasons. However, the reasons for beginning and ending either type of war — or changing from one to the other — should not be apparent to the PCs, even if a Sahudese attempts to explain.

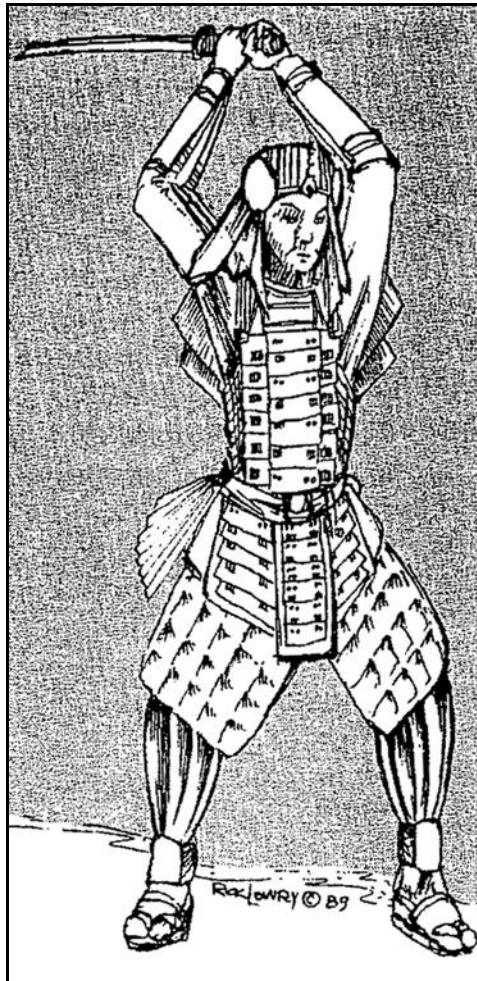
*Judo and Karate:* These skills are unknown on Yrth — at least the known parts of it — *except* in Sahud, though a few secret cults and orders, mostly Islamic, do know similar martial arts which are equivalent in game mechanics. In Sahud the skills are common knowledge, and a traveler could learn them. It would be reasonable for a Sahudese PC, if such are allowed, to have either of these skills.

## The Law

Normal crimes against persons are illegal in Sahud. Except during low war. Usually. Other actions may or may not be crimes...

As far as any PC will be able to tell, Sahudese law is almost totally random. It is usually connected with political maneuverings and face. Courts are places of great pomp. Judgments can be almost instant, or can drag on for weeks. Decisions usually favor the Sahudese rather than strangers, but this seems to be because the Sahudese know the rules rather than actual bias. Foreigners are not accorded any special treatment, and ignorance is no excuse. But the visitors can sometimes win. One trader returned to tell how he'd been hauled into court on a charge of improper haggling. The judge heard the testimony, fined the trader ten copper pieces, and had the prosecuting attorney executed...

Pleas and bribes will sometimes be effective, and sometimes not. And offering a bribe may be construed as an insult. So might *not* offering one. It is up to the GM how to treat those embroiled in Sahudese law, but courtesy and cleverness should be rewarded.



## Sahudese Religion

To folk in southern lands, Sahudese religious beliefs are confusing at best. What little is known about them comes from the few merchants who trade there and have learned the difficult Sahudese language.

The gods of Sahud number in the thousands; virtually every thing, place, trade or phenomenon has a separate god associated with it. Some of these gods or spirits are nature-related, associated with trees, streams, hills, animals, etc. Other deities are patrons of specific trades or crafts. Even doorways, beds and hearths have spirits assigned to them. The deities of the sun, earth, sky and sea are most important, but even seemingly trivial gods are accorded respect.

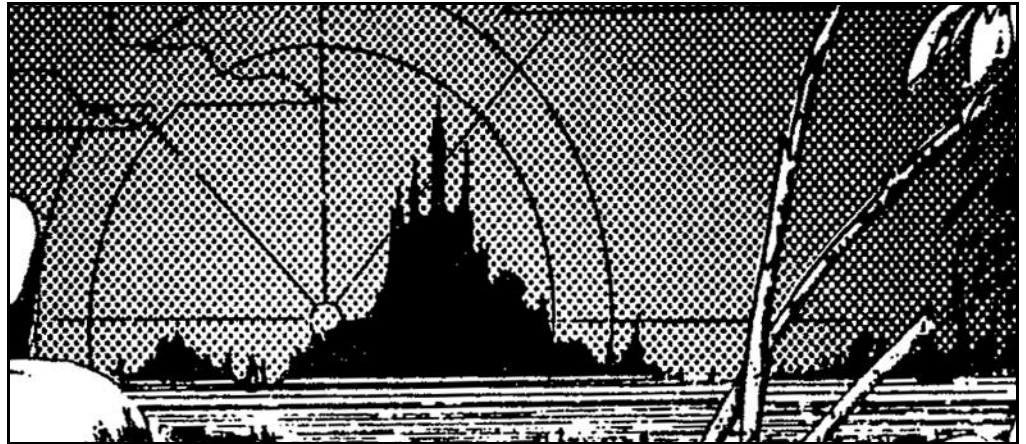
The Sahudese worship their gods through prayer and sacrifice. There is no formal priesthood or liturgy. Although some ceremonies are conducted with great pomp, most worship is done privately. Wealthy persons or clans maintain private shrines where sacrifices may be made; roost peasant villages build shrines for public use. Otherwise, prayers are said in any appropriate location — i.e., over the cooking pot when praying for an end to famine, on a hilltop when praying for rain.

When the Sahudese pray, they expect results. To them, the only reason to call upon a god is to request a favor or insure his good will; the idea of humility in the face of the divine seems foreign to them. Perhaps this is why Christian missionaries have had so little success in Sahud. They are usually laughed at rather than persecuted — unless the locals decide that the missionaries are angering one or more of the gods.

## Kinkaku

This is Sahud's greatest city and capital. It is also its primary trading center. Kinkaku is located at the base of the Sahudese peninsula, on the banks of a sluggish river deep enough to accommodate ocean-going vessels. Kinkaku is a large city even by Megalan standards; its streets teem with rickshaws, and vendors' cries fill the air.

Visiting traders in Kinkaku will find merchants eager to purchase their wares, and luxury goods aplenty to take back home. One must be careful, however, to obey local customs. There is a fair-sized foreign community in the city — the only one in Sahud — where guides and translators can be hired. Few Sahudese bother to learn English; most seem to consider it beneath them.



### *The Heavenking*

The monarch of Sahud is regarded as a god by his subjects, who appear to believe that this world *is* heaven. It is, after all, where the gods live, they say. Thus, their ruler is the king of Heaven (hence Heavenking), and divine. Outsiders argue over whether the Heavenking is thought to command, or have the right to command, the other divine beings which dwell in his domain. It has proven unwise to ask this question of the Sahudese.

The Heavenking is the closest thing to a high priest that there is in Sahud. Whenever a crisis affecting all of Sahud arises, it is the Heavenking's duty to make sacrifices on the behalf of his subjects. Similarly, a clan leader acts on behalf of his clan, a father for his family. Some traders have suggested that this explains why the Sahudese place such importance on honor or *face* — if a man has been dishonored or shamed, the gods are less likely to listen to his prayers.

### *Uulinn*

On a great hill overlooking the city of Kinkaku is Uulinn, the Imperial Palace. Actually, *palace* is an understatement. Uulinn is a city unto itself, covering a seven-acre high-mana tract and housing thousands of guards, servants, concubines and courtiers. The Heavenking never sets foot beyond its walls, and none but nobles of high status and the Heavenking's personal servants may enter.

The walls are said to enclose magnificent gardens, a zoo, natural hot springs and magical laboratories, in addition to the Illustrious One's private quarters. Court magicians tend to the Heavenking's every need, and the Eyes of Heaven enable the monarch to rule his kingdom without leaving his luxurious surroundings.

PCs may find the idea of sneaking into the Imperial Palace too intriguing to pass up. There is no doubt that the compound houses great treasures, both magical and mundane. The penalty for those caught trespassing in Uulinn, however, is death, in a slow and most unpleasant manner.

### *Tsushuo*

Tsushuo was the name of a powerful clan in eastern Sahud. Its territory, known by the same name and located just a few days' sailing from the shores of Megalos, was rich and fertile. Until a few years ago, that is.

The Tsushuo came out on the losing side of a low war that had raged for years between them and their arch-rivals, Clan Nyodo. After their final stronghold had been taken and the looting was about to begin, a large nomad raiding party swept ashore in their dragon-ships. In the ensuing battle, the victorious Nyodo were forced to abandon their spoils and retreat. Finding the town already half burned and no women to carry off, the nomads left as well. The Nyodo quickly became involved in another conflict elsewhere and the ruins of the ancestral home of the Tsushuo were left to the brambles and wild creatures. Until the Nyodo come to claim them, its riches lie there for the taking.

# The Nomad Lands

One Megalan chronicler accurately described this region north of the Whitehood Mountains as a land where huge hairy men and animals devour one another indiscriminately. Its semi-nomadic inhabitants are primitive (Tech Level 2) but tough. They have resisted every Megalan effort to conquer their lands. Indeed, the northmen consider raiding Megalos fine sport!

Coastal nomad tribes build single-masted dragon-ships, in which they hunt whales and raid Megalos or Sahud. They are excellent sailors and their simple ships are solidly built, though not as technically advanced as Araterre vessels.

## History

The men who settled the harsh northern lands were taken by the Banestorm from northern Eurasia. Celts, Scandinavians, and even a few Mongols mixed with folk of the same racial stock as that of Megalos. Generations of outdoor life bred a strong, tough race. No one else survived.

Centuries ago, Megalan legions conquered large portions of the Nomad Lands. The stubborn northmen retreated to the most remote areas. Eventually, however, the nomads united under Ross Gatecracker — now a hero of northern legend — and drove the Megalans south of the mountains. Then they began raiding Megalos proper. The Emperor's Wall was built, 200 years ago, to stop raids to the west — so the nomads raided east instead.

Today the coastal nomads prosper from trade with the south, when they are not actually attacking it. Inland, however, the barbarians fight mostly among themselves, and cast a jealous eye toward their brethren's riches. Their newest target is the Megalan city of Kethalos, which appears to them to have been abandoned by its warlord!

## Geography, Flora and Fauna

The southern part of the Nomad Lands is hilly, sloping downward to the northern plains. Much of the region is covered with pine forests; the rest is grassland, crossed by many rivers and finger-like glacial lakes. The land suffers from a warped mana, varying from low to high without any warning; it is even possible for the mana in a single area to change in the space of a week or two. This has caused many strange effects in the inhabitants, and makes spell-casting a dangerous enterprise. Were-creatures are common here, along with many of the other strange beasts of legend — gryphons, pegasi, hippogriffs and so forth. Even normal animals grow larger and fiercer: beaver, mink, elk, wolves, bears, and even nightstalkers of incredible proportions. The nomads, toughest and fiercest of all, kill these for food and hides; the finest pelts come from this land.

Other than sowing wheat and barley for making bread and brewing beer, the nomads have no real agriculture. They survive by hunting, fishing, and raising a few harding. They breed fine, strong horses; the best warhorses of civilized countries have a strong dash of northern blood.

## Society

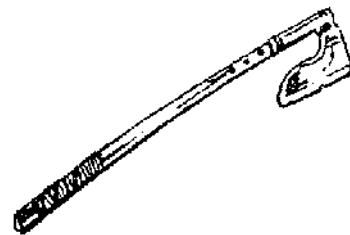
The Megalan term *Nomad Lands* is not entirely accurate — some of the hardy, violent folk of this region are truly nomadic, but others are not. Most tribes and clans build several small villages or hill forts, inhabiting different ones during different parts of the year. Each clan is ruled by a chieftain, khan, or jarl (Rank 4). The only honorable occupations are those of a warrior (Rank 1), druid or shaman (Rank 3), and bard (Rank 2); farming, trading, or practicing a craft are considered part-time jobs only. Some clans afford smiths high status (Rank 2).

## Nomad Names

The northern nomads use single names, usually of Anglo-Saxon, Celtic, or Scandinavian origin, and almost invariably adding an epithet. The epithet will usually commemorate either great deeds or a personal peculiarity. Names that alliterate or rhyme are especially prized.

Examples: Hugh Bearkiller, Smelly Tam, Berd Bloodhand, Deg Burnt-nose, Silly Will, Arn the Goat, Goff Greybeard, Eric the Skinny, Giles Greedyguts.

Sometimes a nomad will prefer his nickname to his given name, and use it alone. Examples: Shieldtaker, Spiderbiter, Gryphon. This privilege is usually reserved for chiefs and heroes.



## Adventuring in the Nomad Lands

The nomads will find high technology interesting — especially if it produces better ships or weapons. They will fear a wizard with good battle magic but their respect and comradeship is reserved for those like themselves — tough, brave, irresponsible fighters.

*Diplomacy.* Dealing with a nomad tribe requires a judicious combination of gifts, threats, flattery, and single combat. Nomads will react at -3 or worse to anyone they deem weak or cowardly, and +2 or better to anyone displaying unusual bravery or honor. Berserkers are respected but not especially feared.

*Beast-Hunting.* The finest furs come from the mountains and forests of the Nomad Lands. However, they belong to large, dangerous animals who violently object to giving them up. And a beast-hunting party must deal with the nomads as well — by alliance, evasion, magic, or force.

*Treasure-Hunting.* The borders of Megalos once extended well past the Whitehood Mountains, until the northerners drove back the invaders. The ruined towns and towers of several Megalan fiefdoms now lie within nomad territory. A band of adventurers might find worthwhile loot, lost or abandoned in the final flight. Who knows... there might even be hastily-drawn maps, two centuries old, to guide such a search.

All nomads love raiding, and will travel great distances to attack and loot another village or Megalan town. When they are not raiding, nomad warriors hunt the northern monsters or fight each other. Often, singly or in small groups, they enter Megalos peacefully, looking for glory or adventure. They can easily find work as guards, mercenaries or arena fighters.

The status of women varies tremendously from tribe to tribe. In some places, women are simply property; in others, they are equals, and courtship rites are elaborate and violent. A few clans are entirely female; male slaves are kept for breeding only and boy-babies are sold or given away as soon as they are weaned.

Some tribes keep slaves. These are most often women captured in raids, although male prisoners of war are occasionally taken as well.

### **Nomad Religion**

Most nomads are pagans of a tolerant nature. They will cheerfully acknowledge God (or Allah) if pressed to do so, while retaining their old beliefs and refusing to see any inconsistency between the religions. "Sure, God real. All gods real. Thor real. Water-spirit real. Why you bothered?"

The paganism practiced by the nomads varies tremendously from tribe to tribe, but the glorification of courage and prowess in battle are universal. Unlike their Christian or Islamic counterparts, nomads look forward to a Heaven of endless battle rather than peace or luxury.

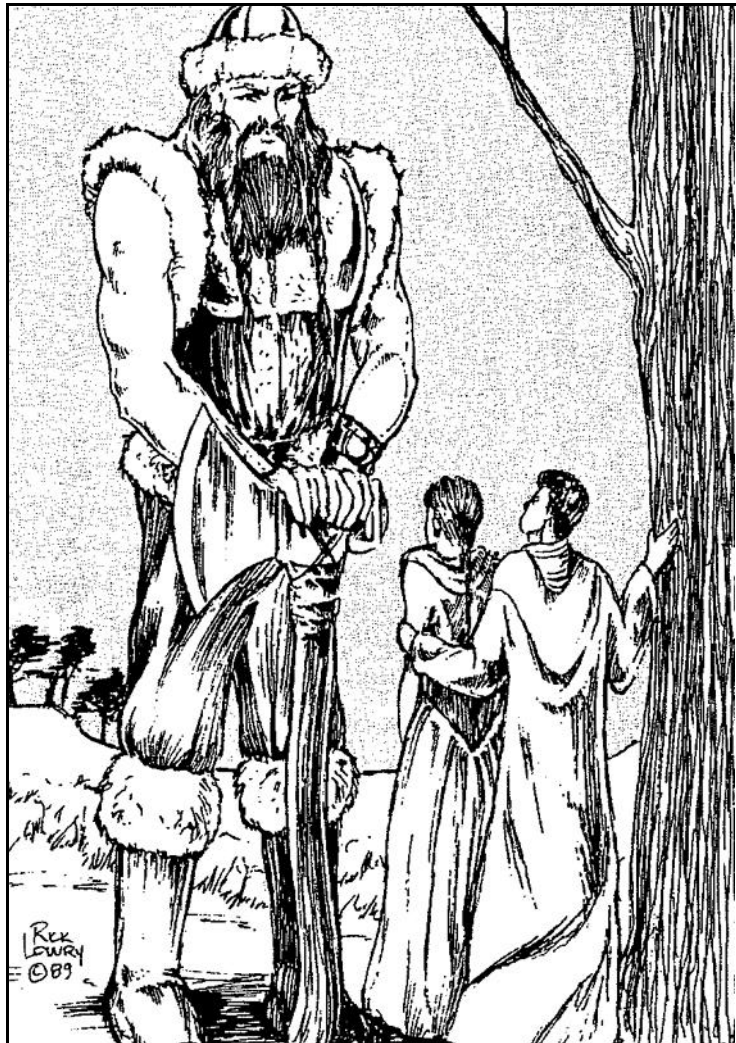
The religious leaders of each clan — usually male — are called druids or shamans. They make sacrifices to the gods, read omens for the future, conduct marriage and burial ceremonies, and bless warriors going into battle. Most can cast at least a few spells having to do with nature, the weather, and the elements. In some clans aging chieftains are ritually slain by the Druid, who then foretells the clan's future by observing the dying leader's convulsions.

The nomads believe that all of nature — the trees, sky, hills, rocks, streams, ponds, etc. — is inhabited by spirits, who have as many names as there are nomad tribes. Their primary goddess, however, has but one name — Eardra, Mother of the Earth. To her are attributed the phenomena of birth, growth, and reincarnation. Her seasons are the spring and summer. Her consort is known by several names, of which Wotan is most common. He is the god of war, hunting, death, storms and winter. The last of the gods is Loki, the Trickster. He is blamed for all misfortunes and bad luck. The nomads believe that each man has a *wyrd* or destiny — totally unknown to him, and wholly inescapable. This belief gives nomad warriors a reckless courage unmatched among their "civilized" counterparts.

### **Nonhumans**

There are a few isolated settlements of Elves in the northern forests. The superstitious nomads fear them greatly, and stay clear of their territories. The nomads are quite friendly with the Dwarves of the Whitehood Mountains, especially since they share a common enemy in Megalos. The nomads trade amber, furs, grain and meat to the Dwarves in exchange for weapons. The nomads believe that weapons of Dwarven make possess special powers — civilized men think this is a clever ploy of the crafty Dwarves. Other nonhumans are rarely seen in the northlands, and regarded by the nomads as curiosities. The first thing most nomads will want to do is fight them, just to see how tough they are.

There are also a number of giant communities scattered about. The nomads respect them, and will even trade with them. Conversely, the nomads are really the only humans that the giants trust even a little bit.



## ***Magic***

Magic is common in most areas, but not well developed due to its inherent unpredictability. Mages or shamans often wield tribal power far out of proportion to their skills. Some shamans will be eager to learn from visiting adepts; most will regard them with suspicion, and try to do away with their “rivals.”

Nomad magic is primarily concerned with nature and the elements, divination, and battle. It has a highly ritualistic leaning, as rituals tend to make the spells more predictable. Healing magic is thought to be unmanly by most tribes, and is shunned. Magic which enhances fighting ability or resistance to pain is appreciated. Rune magic (*GURPS Magic*, p. 80) is practiced by some shamans; these are often the most powerful among nomad mages.

Natural shapechanging is common. There are whole tribes of weres among the nomads. In general, assume the nomads will have no spells requiring IQ better than 13, or Magery better than 1. The nomads are neither stupid or powerless — many are cunning and very adept — but almost none are literate, and teachers are hard to find.

## ***The Law***

Law among the nomads is a matter of custom rather than decree. The traditions and taboos of a given tribe apply to everyone, even the chieftain, equally. Judgments are made by the chieftain or druid after consulting with the older warriors. Punishments are either very light or very harsh — humiliation or forfeiture of property for slight offenses; death, exile or slavery for serious ones.

Only crimes affecting the clan as a whole are generally brought before the chieftain. Individual fights are settled by duels. Women are usually represented by their nearest male relative, although in some tribes they fight for themselves!

## ***Heolford***

Four hundred years ago, the county of Heolford was the richest Megalan province north of the Whitehoods. It extended inland along the River Banduch for three score miles; its fields were rich and its cattle fat. The lords of Heolford grew rich from the furs, amber and horses that they sold in the south, and used their wealth to construct a mammoth castle-town in the center of their territory.

When the nomads overran the northern provinces, it was at Heolford castle that the Megalans made their last stand. After it became apparent that no hope remained, the defenders sallied forth to certain death. The women slew their children and then themselves, rather than suffer slavery or worse at the barbarians' hands. The few surviving wizards then conjured great magics. Fire consumed the bodies, the mages themselves, and any nomads who had the misfortune to have scaled the walls. Earthquakes shattered the lands, catching the hordes outside in landslides and great cracks which swallowed dozens at once. Afterward, only a burned-out shell remained in a devastated landscape.

The tale of Heolford was carried south by a handful of survivors, and became a favorite subject of bards and minstrels all over Megalos. The lost gold of Heolford has become legendary: the castle's treasure trove is said to contain the wealth of a dozen counties. Some say that these riches were destroyed in the magical conflagration. Others maintain that the treasures of the castle were hidden away first, to be recovered later. The nomads believe the ruin is haunted by the ghosts of the murdered children, and speak of it with fear in their voices.

The exact location of Heolford is known only to the nomads. Many adventurers from the south have gone in search of it in lands much changed from the old maps, now riddled with small lakes, irregular ridges, and deep, deep crevices. If any found it they never returned to tell the tale.

## ***Bards***

Although writing among the nomads is limited to runes carved upon stones and wooden tablets, there is an entire class of oral historians and storytellers known as *bards*. Bards are skilled musicians and performers who memorize the ballads, genealogies, fables, and histories of their clans. They compose new tales and songs celebrating the feats of great warriors and leaders. Some travel about the land, moving from clan to clan, gathering and telling tales of far-off places.

Bards have an almost sacred status among the northmen — he who slays a bard except in self-defense is said to have ill luck for seven lifetimes.

## ***Blind Lars***

Age 39, 6'2", 210 lbs., blond hair, blue eyes.

ST 10, DX 13, IQ 14, HT 10

*Advantages:* Absolute Direction; Acute Hearing +3; Animal Empathy; Handsome; Musical Ability +5; Reputation +2 (everyone, all the time); Voice.

*Disadvantages:* Blindness; Poor.

*Quirks:* Pretends that he isn't blind; Gets mad if someone tries to treat him as handicapped.

*Skills:* Acting-14; Animal Handling-15; Area Knowledge (Megalos)-14; Area Knowledge (Nomad Lands)-15; Area Knowledge (Sahud)-14; Bard-20; Carousing-13; Fast Talk-15; First Aid-15; Heraldry-13; Judo-13; Language (Dwarvish)-13; Language (Elvish)-13; Language (Sahudese)-14; Musical Instrument (flute)-16; Musical Instrument (harp)-16; Performance-15; Poetry-13; Riding (horse)-15; Savoir Faire-16; Singing-16; Streetwise-13; Survival (woods)-14; Swimming-12.

Blind Lars is one of the most famous bards in Ytarria. He began his travels at age 14, and has been playing around the country for the past 25 years. He rarely stays in one spot for long (although he did remain in Sahud for a two-year period that he refuses to talk about), preferring to travel about with any group that will accept his company (and *few* refuse).

Although more diminutive than his brothers, Lars is obviously from the Nomad Lands. He still returns there regularly to pass along the latest news from the outside world and pick up clan gossip.

Lars' only concession to his blindness is that he avoids travelling alone when at all possible. This isn't to say that he's helpless if stranded — between his sense of direction and his survival skill, he is quite capable of fending for himself.



# Zarak

Zarak is the Dwarves' name for both the mountain range which stretches across the north edge of Ytarria and the underground kingdom which exists beneath. To them the two are one and the same. Zarak is bordered on the south by Caithness, on the west by the foul Orclands, and on the east by mighty Megalos. The Dwarves trade openly with their human neighbors.

Zarak is the only nonhuman kingdom on the known part of Ytarria. Elsewhere, nonhumans live in small, scattered communities, and most acknowledge human rulers. Only the Dwarves are independent and powerful... far more powerful than most realize.

## History

Dwarves have lived in Zarak for thousands of years, long before the Banestorm, when only the Gnomes, the Elves and the Orcs shared the riches of Yrth with them. They have always been reclusive, with little love for the other races. Thus they turned inward, seeking treasures deeper and deeper within their mountains, concentrating on the subtleties of their own politics and the perfection of their crafts, often ignoring that which went on above them. Strangers foolish enough to venture into their underground lairs uninvited (usually Orcs) were caught and enslaved.

The outer world crashed in at their door when the backlash of the Dark Elves' spell destroyed in a single flash the southern tip of Zarak — that part which now lies in the Great Desert. Even now these areas are considered polluted and cursed. No Dwarf will travel there.

Recovering in their slow and sure way from this tragedy, it was many, many years before the Dwarves noticed the new inhabitants of their land. Indeed, it was not until the year 1235, when a scouting party from the newly founded Empire of Megalos ventured into the area they called the Bronze Mountains, that Dwarf first met human. Initial encounters were bloody, but the humans were persistent, and eventually they thought to offer trade instead of warfare.

From this beginning, an increasingly strong relationship has developed between the Dwarven kingdom and its nearest neighbors. Dwarves now trade freely with many areas, bringing items crafted with their exquisite workmanship, and taking away cloths and delicacies unavailable in the dark caves. And still the Dwarves are reclusive. While they do allow humans to co-exist on the surface of Zarak, they are still quite particular about who they let into their fine underground cities. Few humans have had the opportunity to witness their splendor.

## Geography, Flora and Fauna

The Dwarves claim, but rarely use, the mountain's surface. Their cities all lie underneath. No man knows how far they go. The Dwarves mine for the plentiful metals, for jewels, for stones with virtues only they know; the worked-out mines become their homes as they search ever deeper.

All manner of creatures live underground in the less frequented tunnels — bats, rats, lizards, great worms, reeks and less nameable things. But the Dwarves do not willingly share their tunnels with other living creatures, destroying them whenever they find them.

Underground, the Dwarves cultivate mushrooms. They could (and have been in the past) self-sufficient on this one food. Nevertheless, since the coming of the humans, they have found that they relish other victuals, trading with outsiders for meat, grain, and (of course) spirits.

### *Seven Brother Kings*

#### *High King Ekarron III*

Age: 150; Thick blond hair and blue eyes; 4'7", 230 lbs.

ST 12, DX 12, IQ 13, HT 13.

Advantages: Charisma 2; Eidetic Memory; Status 7; Legal Enforcement Powers (10 points); Wealth (Filthy Rich).

Disadvantages: Duty (-5 points); Nearsighted; Honesty; Pacifism (self-defense); Sense of Duty (all Dwarves); Vow (High King).

Skills: Administration-12; Armoury-16; Bard-13; Brewery-14; Blacksmith-15; Detect Lies-13; Diplomacy-15; Herbalist-10; Heraldry (Dwarven)-12; Jeweler-17; Law-14; Leadership-13; Politics-12; Savoir-Faire-16; Two-Handed Axe-12.

Ekarron is a very well-educated and well-spoken Dwarf. He believes in keeping a subtle but firm hand on his Kingdom. Thus, it may take him a while to act on a given issue, but once he does he's decisive. He is very well liked by his clan and the other six Kings, as shown by their willingness to name him as High King despite his youth.

He has had very little interaction with non-Dwarves. His clan is one of the most removed from the human lands, and he has never left Zarak. Generally he considers humans a beneficial influence, as long as they stay out of his lands.

#### *Durinann II*

Age: 385; reddish hair streaked with gray, stone gray eyes; 4'0", 195 lbs.

ST 14, DX 11, IQ 9, HT 13.

Advantages: Legal Enforcement Powers (10 points); Status 7; Wealth (Very Wealthy); Empathy.

Disadvantages: Lazy; Duty (-5 points).

Skills: Administration-10; Armoury-15; Blacksmith-13; Diplomacy-13; Heraldry (Dwarven)-10; Law-12; Leadership-11; Savoir-Faire-14; Two-Handed Axe-13.

Durinann is an unimpressive leader. Were it not for the fundamental conservatism of the Dwarven clans, he would have been replaced years ago. Once a vibrant young Dwarf, Durinann has grown lazy in his older years, to the point where he can barely be bothered to stir from his quarters to visit the forge. Consequently he keeps a very loose rein on his Kingdom, almost letting it run itself. But the existing mines are beginning to run dry, and the High Crafters are starting to grumble. Durinann will have to wake up soon, or he'll find himself out of a job.

*Continued on next page...*

## Society

Zarak is ruled by seven “brother kings,” one of whom is the High King of all the Dwarves (see sidebars, pp. 104-107). Even Dwarves of other areas, such as Thulin's Folk in the Whitehood Mountains, acknowledge the authority of the High King of Zarak. The seven kings (each of Status 7) rule over clans in different parts of the mountains, each clan being known by the name of its leader.

Next to noble birth, the Dwarves respect craftsmanship. Status of levels 5 and 6 is reserved for the best craftmasters. These High Crafters attract young followers who support the craftsman in his various endeavors in return for his training. Though Dwarves don't have formal guilds, this structure serves essentially the same purpose. Until a craftsman is recognized as a High Crafter in his own right, he is considered to be a student or vassal (both words apply) of one of his clans' High Crafters. Next to hereditary clans, these contingents are the most powerful political entities in the Kingdom.

Other than the Kings, no governing Dwarf is higher than Status 4, and these governors will always defer to a craftsman of higher rank. The Dwarves view management the same way humans view ironworking: a useful and honest job, carrying no particular prestige.

## Non-Dwarves

Men, and others, live on the surface of the Dwarves' mountains, with their permission and their sufferance. For the most part, they are hunters or farmers who make their living in trade with the folk under the mountain.

Only rarely, though, do the Dwarves welcome other folk into their subterranean halls. Even then, visits will not ripen into permanent residency, except for a few unlucky slaves.

Slaves are the most common non-Dwarven residents, most being outsiders who crept into Dwarven lands hoping to steal their treasures or spy out their secrets. Some are bought from traveling slave-takers. Most are put to work as miners or mushroom farmers, doing work that even the industrious Dwarves don't want to touch. The life of these slaves is not happy; the Dwarves tend to treat them with the same concern they would a pick or a shovel. A useful tool is maintained — as long as it's useful, and no longer.

Slavery is not universal throughout Zarak. Some Dwarven rulers will not permit it. Others will. It seems to be a matter of personal taste, though Dwarves will never enslave other Dwarves.

## Magic

Many Dwarves are powerful mages. Like the other native races of Yrth, they consider magic to be just another force of nature — one that can be manipulated in very useful ways. The Dwarves concentrate primarily on Earth and Fire magics, and on the creation of magical objects. The best weaponry, enchanted or otherwise, comes from the Dwarven smiths living deep within Zarak. Little more is known.

## Warfare

The Dwarves maintain no standing army as such. Guard forces patrol all entrances to the Land Under the Mountains. These are made up mostly of young Dwarves, with a few seasoned captains. They are armed with axes (which they use well). These forces are meant to keep out thieves and spies, not to repel a genuine invasion.

Should such an invasion occur (and it is not unknown — especially along the western edge of the mountains, bordering the Orclands), all able-bodied Dwarves of both sexes will fight fearlessly in defense of their homes.

### *Seven Brother Kings (Continued)*

#### *Thransiravst*

Age: 320; Black hair and green eyes; 4'10", 260 lbs.

ST 14, DX 14, IQ 11, HT 12.

Advantages: Legal Enforcement Powers (10 points); Charisma 2; Absolute Direction; Intuition; Strong Will 2; Status 7; Wealth (Very Wealthy).

Disadvantages: Lame (crippled leg); Gluttony; Overconfidence; Duty (-5 points).

Skills: Administration-14; Armoury-15; Bard-14; Blacksmith-16; Diplomacy-14; Heraldry (Dwarven)-12; Jeweler-16; Law-11; Leadership-13; Politics-12; Pottery-15; Savoir-Faire-15; Two-Handed Mace-9.

Thransiravst is a merry, jovial sort of Dwarf. He's also busy, industrious, and a talented and gifted leader, so his clansmen choose to overlook his sometimes inappropriate sense of humor. During his reign, he's increased his clan's productivity and trade greatly. Now his clan eats better than most Dwarves, and they are pressed to make enough items to keep up with the human demand.

#### *Blainthir VII*

Age: 265; Brown hair and brown eyes; 5', 265 lbs.

ST 14, DX 13, IQ 8, HT 14.

Advantages: Legal Enforcement Powers (10 points); Charisma 2; Combat Reflexes; High Pain Threshold; Status 7; Wealth (Very Wealthy).

Disadvantages: Absent-Minded; Greed; Gluttony; Gullibility; Duty (-5 points).

Skills: Two-Handed Axe-17; Thrown Axe-15; Blacksmith-14; Armoury-15; Heraldry (Dwarven)-10; Law-8; Administration-11; Diplomacy-10; Leadership-13; Politics-7; Savoir-Faire-12.

Blainthir is a tough but likable Dwarf who excels in combat. He's none too bright, but he lets his Governors worry about the administrative details, much to the benefit of his clan.

Blainthir spends much of his time with his hand-picked guard who defend the main eastern entrance to Zarak. And despite his status, he can often be found on the front line when a conflict occurs. A very charismatic figure, most of his clan admire his bravery and courage and love him all the more for it. However, he is a hopeless clod when it comes to politics, believing everything he's told. Only his complete faith in his loyal advisors has kept him from giving away important mining rights to Morthrinn.

*Continued on next page...*

Wars between Dwarf-clans are not unknown, but the last one in Zarak ended two Dwarven generations ago.

## **Seven Brother Kings** (Continued)

### **Morthrinn**

Age: 820; Gray hair, gray eyes; 4'2", 200 lbs.

ST 15, DX 13, IQ 13, HT 13.

Advantages: Legal Enforcement Powers (10 points); Absolute Direction; Alertness; Danger Sense; Strong Will 2; Toughness 2; Status 7; Wealth (Very Wealthy).

Disadvantages: Bad Temper; Bully; Greed; Miserliness; Stubbornness; Duty (-5 points).

Skills: Administration-13; Armoury-20; Blacksmith-17; Detect Lies-16; Fast-Talk-14; Heraldry (Dwarven)-12; History-12; Jeweler-15; Law-14; Leadership-15; Politics-12; Savoir-Faire-13; Two-Handed Maul-16.

An old and powerful Dwarf, Morthrinn runs his clan with an iron fist. He was once a High Crafter and gained his current status through carefully planned revolt, one of the few times such a thing has occurred in Zarak. In fact, Morthrinn has been behind most of the last few centuries' inter-Dwarven conflict within Zarak. Some now say the old Dwarf has mellowed with age. In reality he's quite ill, but refuses to let it be known least his fellow clansmen (many of whom have adequate reason to dislike him) think him weak.

### **Ginnargrim III**

Age: 135; Brown hair, blue eyes; 4'5", 210 lbs.

ST 14, DX 12, IQ 11, HT 12.

Advantages: Legal Enforcement Powers (10 points); Eidetic Memory; Magey 2; Toughness 2; Status 7; Wealth (Very Wealthy).

Disadvantages: Stuttering; Shyness (Severe); Racial Intolerance (Elves); Duty (-5 points).

Skills: Administration-16; Armoury-20; Axe-14; Blacksmith-20; Brewery-14; Heraldry (Dwarven)-14; Jeweler-20; Law-14; Leadership-10; Savior-Faire-10; Scrounging-12; Shield-13.

Ginnargrim is the sole remaining member of his clan's noble line, except for his two teen-aged sons. His clan once ruled over the now uninhabitable halls in the southernmost tip of Zarak, and it was there that most of his family was killed. Another freak accident (this time the collapse of a newly cut mine) took the life of his father and elder brother, leaving only the young Ginnargrim. He is a shy, retiring Dwarf, suffering from a speech impediment that has kept him out of society.

He is only too aware of his own shortcomings as king, and he leaves public appearances to his Governors. In actuality, Ginnargrim is a very capable administrator and an extraordinary craftsman, well deserving of the position he holds. But few are aware of this, and most clansmen can't wait until Ginnargrim's sons are old enough to replace their father.

## **The Law**

Dwarven laws were made for Dwarves, and rarely need concern anyone else. They teach respect for authority, for elders, for property, and for things of craft and beauty. Most Dwarves are law-abiding, and few are violent except when protecting their homes, loved ones or precious objects. Dwarves are more likely to punish by enforced community works or fine than by any sort of violence. Banishment is the ultimate punishment.

It is thought by some that all Dwarves who live or travel outside their mountain communities are criminals who have been sent away as punishment for their crimes. The Dwarves themselves are not communicative on the issue.

## **Seven Brother Kings**

The Seven Brother Kings of Zarak each rule one of the mighty clans living beneath its surface. One of their number is chosen to be High King, his clan becoming the High Clan, and his word taking on the slightest bit more power. The current High King is Ekarron III, a hearty young Dwarf barely 150 years old. His clan is known as Ekarron's Folk, and they inhabit the great underground city of Ekariel. The other six Brother Kings currently are Durinann II, Thransiravst, Blainthir VII, Morthrinn, Ginnargrim III, and Solginyarl (see sidebars, pp. 104-107).

Each King oversees the health and welfare of his clan, as well as the growth and prosperity of its living and mining areas. They are also responsible for maintaining a guard over the entrances to their caverns, and governing trade with the outside. Each Brother King is autonomous, though they will often work together. Each clan has its own policies governing trade, mining, dealings with outsiders, slavery, and many other matters of interest only to the Dwarves.

### **Thulin's Folk**

Thulin's Folk are a clan of Dwarves living beneath the Whitehood Mountains which stretch across the Nomad Lands. Despite their separation from Zarak, they acknowledge the High King of Zarak as sovereign, and they pay homage to him by sending a selection of their finest work each year. Thulin is an old Dwarf, almost a thousand years old, and his patience for the quick-lived, slick-tongued humans has almost reached an end. He has retreated almost totally from his role as leader, content to concentrate on his lifework — a magical item that he's been working on for over a century. Among the Dwarves, he has Status 7... 6 for his position as leader of a separated clan, plus 1 for his great age and skill. The High King himself will stand when Thulin enters the room, on the very rare occasions when the old Dwarf-lord visits Zarak.

Meanwhile, his governors take care of business for him. Thulin's Folk trade openly and freely with the nomad tribes who live around and about their lands. They do *not* willingly trade with Megalos, preferring to send their own agents out to Caithness or Sahud rather than sell their heritage to the Megalans. Twenty years ago, Thulin petitioned Zarak for a total boycott of the Imperial humans. His request was denied, and he returned home disillusioned with the other Dwarven kings and vowing to maintain his own boycott. Even Thulin doesn't know how close the Seven Brother Kings came to granting his wish.



# The Elves

There are no Elven kingdoms on Yrth, as Elves on the whole do not believe in such things. There are, however, communities of Elves throughout Ytarria, ranging in size from tiny (two to three families) to large (hundreds of families). Elven dwellings always blend into the natural landscape, almost invisible to the untrained eye.

## History

Elves have existed on Yrth from time immemorial. In the ages before the Banestorm, they were quite numerous, with small communities spread all throughout Ytarria, flourishing off the land they tended so lovingly. Since the Dwarves stayed mostly in their mountains and the Gnomes were quiet and unassuming neighbors, the Elves' only real competition was the dreaded Orcs who indiscriminately trampled and destroyed the Elves' beloved lands.

And thus history was made. In a desperate attempt to rid the world forever of the Orc menace, the Dark Elves cast a mighty spell, which failed disastrously — thereby creating the worst magical catastrophe in the history of Yrth. The backlash destroyed the great Elven forest-towns in the area now known as the Great Desert,

leaving scattered ruins which can still be found today by those intrepid and lucky enough to survive the harsh wastes. The incidental destruction of the southernmost section of Zarak increased tension between the Dwarves and all Elves.

Since then, the Elves have gradually lost control of their world. While not as voraciously destructive as the Orcs, humans have proven to be far more insidious. Slowly the forests have been chopped down, leveled to make way for ordered rows of crops and herded beasts. Slowly the Elves are driven deeper and deeper into the few areas that remain, forcing them to fiercely defend themselves and their homes, or face the extinction of their way of life.

## Society

Elven communities are very loosely organized. Age is considered to bestow wisdom, so serious problems are referred to a council of elders. However, the opinions of all are welcome, and decisions are not binding upon members of the community. In practice, though, the word of the council is treated as a general mandate, and only those Elves with a strong personal interest will speak at a council gathering.

Elvish societies are egalitarian, with work split as equally as possible between male and female. Children are rare, and seem to belong to the community

## Seven Brother Kings (Continued)

### Solginyarl

Age; 290; Ruddy red hair and gray eyes; 4'9", 220 lbs.

ST 12, DX 12, IQ 11, HT 9.

Advantages: Legal Enforcement Powers (10 points); Toughness 2; Voice; Status 7; Wealth (Very Wealthy).

Disadvantages: Nearsighted; Delusion (minor, hypochondriac); Gluttony; Greed; Stubbornness; Duty (-5 points).

Skills: Administration-12; Armourer-14; Axe-13; Bard-15; Blacksmith-15; Brewery-12; Diplomacy-13; Heraldry (Dwarven)-12; Law-12; Leadership-10; Politics-11; Savoir-Faire-13; Shield-14.

Solginyarl is one of the old guard, an extremely conservative Dwarf. He has an old rivalry with Morthrinn dating back to a struggle over mining rights to a certain passage (the last armed conflict between Dwarves). Morthrinn won that one, and Solginyarl has never forgotten. He now goes out of his way to foil the old Dwarf at every turn. Solginyarl runs his kingdom in a brusque, but efficient manner.



## Death of a Nation

The Elvish race is slowly being exterminated by the continuing expansion of humans into their territory. Because of their unique relationship with nature, an Elven community requires a large amount of unspoiled wilderness to flourish. Such sites are becoming less and less available as forests are chopped down to provide timber for buildings and ships, and land is cleared for cultivation.

A possible solution to the problem has been proposed by some of the mightiest Elf wizards. They intend to summon a *controlled* Banestorm, and use it to transport the entire Elvish race to another plane. Currently this is only in the planning stages, as many fear a repetition of the Dark Elves' disaster — and Elvish debates lend to stretch out over decades!

Note that this is a *different* solution than the one proposed by the Dark Elves... (see sidebar, p. 37).

as a whole. Elves have no true marriage customs, although many bond with a single mate for life. Creativity in all its forms (music, poetry, dancing, storytelling, etc.) is highly valued. Individual status usually depends solely on age and family, although a particularly talented bard or artist, or one who is particularly well attuned to nature, will gain a wide reputation.

Elves have three different racial types, most easily distinguished by their habitat. These types have remained essentially pure, mostly because the nature-oriented Elves don't care to adjust to a completely new environment.

### *Wood Elves*

By far the most numerous and common Elven type on Yrth, Wood Elves live in heavily forested regions. They are great hunters and trackers, but will never kill an animal for sport or spite. Of all the Elves, Wood Elves get along with humans best, mostly from necessity. Almost all remaining Wood Elves live in areas considered to belong to one of the human kingdoms. Many are curious about the strange inconsistencies presented by humans, and quite a few will spend some part of their life traveling human lands, learning whatever they can about their neighbors.

Wood Elf communities can be found in the woods east of Sterling in Caithness, spread throughout the Great Forest separating Caithness and al-Wazif, and sprinkled in the forests north of the Nomad Lands.

### *Sea Elves*

Sea Elves live on small islands and coastal areas. They are considerably shyer than their woodland cousins; most avoid men whenever possible. Many Sea Elves are masters of water magic, and can spend long periods of time underwater. Some sailors believe there are entire Sea Elf cities under the ocean. Of course, an underwater kingdom would have a great deal of treasure that they collected from sunken ships...

The only well-known Sea Elf communities are those on the peninsula and islands south of Alimar. Some claim that Sea Elves can also be found in the scattered isles of Araterre. Sailors consider it very good luck to have a Sea Elf aboard a ship — Sea Elf sailors are rare, but are always able to find work (many Sea Elf “youngsters” see the world in this manner).

### *Mountain Elves*

Many humans are not even aware of the reclusive Elves who call the mountains their home. They are hardier and more martial than the more common Wood Elves, often fighting the Dwarves for territory. A few young ones will at times come down from their tall mountain homes, wishing to see the world and do battle for the good. Eventually, most tire of man's wars and return to their mountains.

No Mountain Elf settlements are known to men. Rumors say that there are one or two communities high in the mountains the Dwarves call Zarak, a few more lost in the rocky peaks bisecting the Great Forest, and perhaps even some amid the strange wonders of the Ring Islands. Wherever they are, it is surely at extremely high elevations, in homes shaped directly out of bare rock and well guarded against intruders.

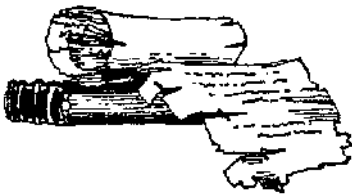
The halls of a Mountain Elf community are as magnificent as the finest Dwarven creation, for what little the Elves lack in workmanship they make up in creativity. Thus, the Mountain Elves are the only ones of their breed that the Dwarves truly respect, even though they are often at odds! There are legends of mighty magic items that were made by a team of Dwarves and Mountain Elves cooperating!

### *Elven Ruins*

Strewn throughout the lands of Yttaria are ruins of old Elvish dwellings. Elves once lived in great numbers throughout the continent; many of their communities were much larger than those of today. Most of these ruins have been destroyed by humans as they level the land for their own buildings. Most remaining Elvish ruins are in harsh or uninhabitable areas, notably the Great Desert. Though most humans believe the desert to be a natural occurrence, it was created by the magical backlash that brought on the Banestorm. That area was once rich forest and woodland, housing most of Yrth's Elves.

Elvish ruins are never easy to locate; their buildings were meant to blend into the surrounding terrain. They will usually be above ground — only the Mountain Elves bury their houses below the earth. And since Elves have never used money, and did not often trade with the Dwarves, excavators will not find large treasure rooms or fine armories.

However, the Elves are quite magical and literate, and vast storehouses of magical lore can be found in their ruins. From texts to scrolls to magical items, the Elves were quite prolific. For those not magically inclined, the Elves also wrought fine jewelry.





### **Dark Elves**

The Dark Elves are not a race, but a cult or philosophical group. They believe that the Orcs in particular, and the non-Elven races in general, represent an aberration... a crime against nature. Therefore, they must be tamed or destroyed. See the sidebar on p. 37 for more information.

Many Elves hold more than a trace of sympathy with this belief, but few act on it. They often form communities hidden even from the other Elves. Many believe that the Blackwoods are a creation of the Dark Elves.

### **Non-Elves**

Elven communities will never co-exist with those of other races; their single-minded devotion to nature puts them at odds with all Yrth's other races. Individuals will from time to time wander through the human cities, but very few will stay for any length of time. Humans and Goblins are only rarely allowed in Elven communities, most of which are deliberately hidden from prying eyes. Orcs and Reptile Men are not tolerated at all. Dwarves and Gnomes are generally ignored, and usually have no desire to stay anyway.

### **Magic**

Magic is viewed by the Elves as a force of nature — a manifestation of the Eternal, like the wind and the rain. The ability to use magic is universal among them, and considered simply another skill. Elves are careful not to use any spells which may pervert the natural order, always seeking to embrace the Eternal, not change its character. Only the Dark Elf cult explores these magics, and for that they have been ostracized and ignored.

### **Warfare**

While Elves generally avoid warfare, they are both skilled and disciplined warriors when they need to be. These days, most of their efforts are confined to keeping their homes free of human interference.

### **Law**

Elvish law forbids anything that disrupts the harmony of the community or the environment. Minor transgressions require some kind of atonement rather than a punishment; serious crimes are punished by swift, painless death.

### ***Lasaril of Sterling, Wood Elf***

Age: 145; Silver-blond hair and blue-green eyes; 6'2", 175 lbs.

ST 10, DX 15, IQ 13, HT 10

Advantages: Very Handsome; Charisma +2; Danger Sense; Voice.

Disadvantages: Alcoholic; Impulsiveness; Lecherousness; Bad Temper.

Quirks: Likes Humans

Skills: Bard-20; Bow-17; Carousing-14; Detect Lies-12; Diplomacy-12; Fast-Draw Arrow-15; Fast-Talk-13; History-13; Lute-15; Naturalist-17; Pickpocket-15; Scrounging-12; Sex Appeal-13; Shortsword-12; Singing-16; Sleath-14; a few simple spells at the GM's discretion.

Lasaril is one of the few Elves who prefers to live among humans. He is originally from the forests east of Sterling. In his impetuous youth he married a human from the Barony; she's long dead now, along with their first generation of children, but he still has descendants there. After her death he wandered the lands of Caithness, then Megalos, Arraterre, and Cardiel. He avoids the Moslem nations, finding them in general too dour for his merry tastes.

By now he's been married five different times, always to humans, and has fathered a double-dozen half-Elven children. He returns to Sterling rarely, preferring the sophisticated wonders of Megalos to more rustic pleasures. His crystal-clear voice is a legend in the taverns of Megalos, as well as his drunken debauchery and quick temper.

# The Orclands

Beyond the Great Desert, west of Caithness and Zarak, lie the Orclands. It was here that the Orcs fled when the people of Caithness defeated them 200 years ago. It is a desolate country of cool, open steppes and rocky hills, populated by antelope, bison, wolves, and monsters of all sorts. Forests are rare. And now it's teeming with Orcs...

Parts of the Orclands have low mana, especially those lands adjoining the Great Desert. Other areas are known to have normal mana.

## The Tribes

The Orcs of the lands west of the Great Desert are divided into a dozen or so great tribes, and many lesser ones. Some tribes are nomadic, wandering the steppes in search of a good fight. Others inhabit labyrinthine underground complexes and sally forth to attack their neighbors and hunt food. Orcish life is a constant round of intertribal warfare, characterized by ever-shifting alliances and coalitions. Each tribe has its hereditary allies and enemies, as well as more temporary ones. The Orcs' naturally combative nature keeps any one faction from becoming too powerful — Orc chieftains are incapable of getting along for more than a few minutes unless there is a common enemy to be fought or treasure to be won.

Orc tribes are ruled by a single chieftain — always a powerful, violent individual who holds his position through threats and intimidation. Larger tribes dominate smaller ones in similar fashion. Leadership is not hereditary; it changes hands whenever somebody tougher than the current chieftain comes along. Orc chieftains often have very short reigns.

The names of Orc tribes, when translated, are usually violent or grotesque. Some of the most powerful clans are the Blackskulls, Bloody Fang, Poisoned Talon, Death Birds, and Carrion-Eaters.

## Magic

Orcs rarely manifest magery. Those that do usually become powerful, and seek out apprentices to bolster their stature. They tend towards destructive magic rather than creative; they love battle-spells, scrying magic, and cantrips of insidious destruction. Thus, magic learning, like other martial arts, is respected and preserved by the Orcish race.

## Warfare

Orcs are in battle throughout their lives. This makes the survivors mean, tough, and *dirty* fighters. An Orc chieftain will fight only those battles worthy of him, sending lesser Orcs out to handle trivial foes. Much of a chieftain's power can be measured by the number of battles he can avoid in this manner.

## Law

The only generally accepted law among Orcs is survival of the meanest. Those who can cow other Orcs into obedience can do whatever they like, for as long as the victims will put up with it. Punishment tends to be quick and brutal... death in hard times, enslavement if there is a use for slaves at the moment. Orcs do not have prisons, and maimed tribesmen are of little use. Public torture is common, in order to strike fear into the hearts of would-be rebels.

### Castle Defiant

Castle Defiant is the main keep of the humans dwelling on the borders of the Orclands, west of the Great Desert. The folk are of Caithness stock, having settled here after the last Orc wars of 60 years ago.

After the Orcs had been defeated, Lord Jerrick, one of the leaders of the Caithness forces, decide to remain on the far side of the desert and carve out a kingdom for himself. Considered foolish and greedy by King Terrill, Jerrick was told not to expect any aid from Caithness. Jerrick agreed, and the King's men returned to Caithness, leaving Jerrick and a small band of followers.

For many years all went well, and the colony prospered. As time went on it became more and more self-sufficient, and the need to travel across the desert diminished. Trade with the Dwarves of western Zarak and with Moslem caravans from the south finally made contact with Caithness unnecessary.

Lord Kerin is the current leader of the humans at Castle Defiant. Forty-two years old, he is Jerrick's oldest son. Kerin and his people are struggling for survival against the Orcs, who have resumed raiding eastward. The brutes were turned back once a few years ago, but the castle suffered damage and heavy losses. Now the Orcs threaten again, and this time a human defeat seems certain. Will Conall relent and send aid to the beleaguered keep?



# CHARACTERS

# 4

An Yrth campaign, or any fantasy campaign, lets players give full play to their imaginations. Characters can be inspired by any Earth historical figure, or by any creation of a favorite fantasy author including wizards and clerical mages.

In general, create characters for Yrth (or most other fantasy worlds) as described in the *Basic Set*. For the average campaign, 100-point characters are suggested. Characters will be illiterate unless they pay 10 points for the Literacy advantage. All skills appropriate to TL3 and below may be learned. (For a number of alternate campaign ideas, see Chapter 6.)

This section will cover some advantages, disadvantages and skills as they apply specifically to a fantasy campaign, and discuss some new skills.





## Advantages

### **Clerical Investment**

*see p.B19*

On Yrth, or in any historical medieval background, the church is very important, and clerical investment is a serious matter. Most clerics will get a significant reaction bonus from their co-religionists, and a significant penalty when dealing with others, except in the tolerant land of Cardiel. In general, Clerical Investment on Yrth should cost 5 points; a highly-placed prelate would pay for his extra reaction bonuses as Status.

In a campaign with common clerical magic, or “miracles,” the cost of Clerical Investment will be higher for magic-using sects or orders. See *GURPS Magic*, p. 84.

Anyone who takes Clerical Investment *must* play the role! Even if the character is secretly an unbeliever, he or she must act as society expects a cleric to act, or suffer penalties up to and including the Inquisition.

### **Legal Enforcement Powers**

*see p.B21*

A medieval law officer has more power than a modern policeman, because the citizens have fewer rights. An ordinary guardsman, empowered to knock heads as he sees fit would have 10 points of Legal Enforcement Powers. So would a knight of a religious order; technically he's not a lawman at all, but in point of fact his word would not be questioned if he chose to pursue and arrest a suspect.

A Michaelite (see p. 20), or a knight sworn to a noble, would have 15 points of Legal Enforcement Powers. He can go almost everywhere and do almost anything. If a knight decides a serf needs hanging, that serf hangs, right then. And, of course, a ruling noble has equivalent powers, though he will rarely exercise them in person!

A knight of a religious order has 10 points of Legal Enforcement Powers. He would not have the “high justice,” but would be empowered to deal with ordinary wrongdoers on sight. He *would* have to make an explanation to the lord of the land.

Almost anyone of noble birth, regardless of age and status, could be considered to have 5 points of Legal Enforcement Powers. Just his family connections would let him order searches and arrests, and perhaps mild punishments!

### **Literacy**

*see p.B21*

Peasants can't read, nor can many freemen. Even among the “middle class,” literacy is the exception rather than the rule.

And many nobles seem to take pride in their ignorance. But

almost all Christian, Moslem and Jewish clerics are literate, as are other scholars, and willingly teach those who wish to learn.

### **Patrons**

*see p.B24*

The most obvious patron in a medieval or fantasy world is a great lord. But note that not all lords are patrons! A patron is at least somewhat likely to appear, either to give you an assignment or to help you out. Many lords expect nothing from their liegemen than a yearly tax payment and a levy of troops in time of war. And they aren't likely to help the liege-man out unless the problem is one that threatens the whole fiefdom.

However, if a character is a *knight*, it is far more likely that his liege-lord will be a true Patron. A knight's purpose is to do dangerous jobs for his lord, so the lord gives assignments. And since the knight risks his life for the lord, the lord will usually feel an obligation to come to the knight's aid whenever possible. Other possible patrons include:

*Merchant guilds.* A wealthy guild would be powerful indeed. Even an individual merchant might be influential enough to be a worthy Patron.

*A great mage.* This, of course, assumes that the mage does not consider his servants to be expendable tools. A Patron isn't a Patron unless he will offer help in time of trouble.

*The ruling council of a free city.* Some cities are very rich indeed, and have their own foreign policies.

*A dragon.* The great creatures don't like to approach human territories; those that desire peaceful commerce with mankind will require trusted agents and will reward them well.

*The Church.* Any specific religious order is a possible Patron. Some of the more secretive sects and orders have their own agendas...

*A god!* In a fantasy campaign with many active deities, a god is a very powerful — although perhaps untrustworthy — patron.

### **Reputation**

*see p.B17*

In a world without photographs or news media, names are better known than faces. Almost anyone can escape a reputation by offering a false name. Knights and nobles wear *coats of arms* (see sidebar, p. 16) so that they can be recognized, even at a distance, by those who have heard of them but don't know their faces.

## Disadvantages

### **Code of Honor**

*see p. B31*

Any good knight or noble would have the Chivalric Code of Honor (-15 points). Even a *bad* knight or noble would offer lip service to those ideals! A craftsman might follow a Professional Code of Honor.

### **Duty and Sense of Duty**

*see p.B34*

The feudal responsibilities of a lord to his overlord, and vice versa, are a perfect example of a Duty. On Yrth, a lord may assumed to have particular duties “quite often,” on a roll of 12 or less. This is worth -10 points normally. However, since the duty does not *often* require the lord to risk his life, it is only worth -5 points. (It would be quite legitimate to create a lazy or well-served noble whose position is no more onerous than an ordinary job, and thus is worth no points.)

The duty of a knight to his lord or order is far stronger. A knight is on duty almost all the time (15 or less), and *does* risk his life regularly, so the duty is worth the full -15 points.

As for Sense of Duty, this is entirely up to the personality. No character *has* to feel a Sense of Duty. A *good* feudal lord will feel a Sense of Duty toward his liege-lord and his people; this is a -10 point obligation.

### **Intolerance**

*see p. B34*

By today's standards, racial and religious intolerance are obnoxious. In Earth's Middle Ages — and on Yrth — both are facts of life which varies from nation to nation. In particular, religious intolerance was *praiseworthy*, a significant virtue, among the warriors on both sides of Earth's Crusades. The same is true of their modern descendants on Yrth. In Al-Haz or Megalos, a great hero would be *expected* to be cold and harsh (if not actually

rude) to unbelievers. In Cardiel, he'd be guilty of breach of the peace if he made any public display of intolerance.

An religiously intolerant character has a -3 reaction against *anyone* not of his own religion or faith. On a neutral or better reaction, he will try to convert the unbeliever to his own faith; on a worse reaction, he may attack, or refuse to associate with the unbeliever, as appropriate.

Intolerance directed only against one *specific* religion is worth -5 (for a commonly encountered religion), down to -1 (if extremely uncommon).

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## Skills

### **Criminology**

*see p.B58*

This skill is more advanced on Yrth than one might expect from a TL3 culture; some more advanced techniques (such as fingerprinting) are known through cultural leakage from Earth, though execution is sometimes primitive. Of course, scrying magics are a *great* help in catching criminals!

### **Heraldry**

*see p.B58*

This is a *vital* skill in a medieval world. Only one who knows something about heraldry will be able to recognize the great and near-great. Note the bonuses (up to +5) for a well-known device; remember that the devices of the local nobility will be *very* well-known. And no roll would be required for even the lowest serf to recognize the arms of his ruling noble or his King.

### **Interrogation**

*see p.B66*

"Interrogation," in a medieval culture, implies *physical* interrogation. When this is combined with mind-reading magic, it becomes apparent that prisoners do *not* keep secrets. Many don't even try. If one would show bravery, the way to do it is to refuse to be taken alive.

Note that this does not apply to the nobility. As a general rule, a noble prisoner will be treated very well indeed. It would be discourteous to invade his mind by magic, so this won't happen. The prisoner will be kept comfortably and offered for ransom. Interrogation is for commoners.

Racial intolerance may be taken as a *separate* disadvantage. Intolerance of all races is worth -10; intolerance of a specific race is worth -5 to -1, depending on frequency.

### **Vow**

*see p.B37*

Vows are *very* common in a medieval background. Almost all Vows are religious in nature — if the object of the Vow is not itself religious, the one making the Vow will swear by the Prophet's beard, the Virgin Mary, or something he takes equally seriously!

### **Judo and Karate**

*see p.B51*

These skills were not known in the Western Middle Ages, and are foreign to southern Ytarria and to any "classical" fantasy background. On Yrth, these skills are known and taught in Sahud, but nowhere else. It would be reasonable for a fantasy GM to forbid them entirely. Brawling, on the other hand, is a common skill!

### **Physician**

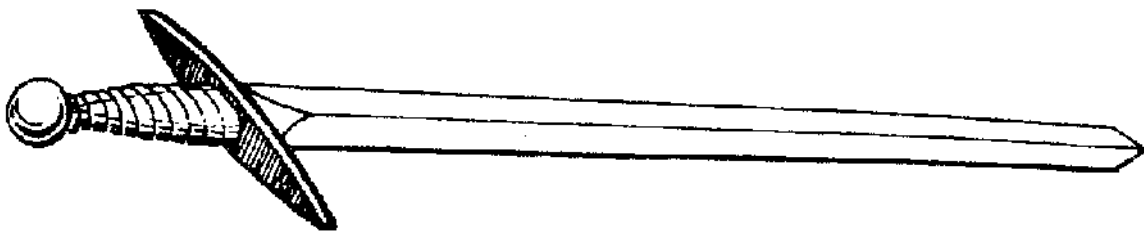
*see p.B56*

At TL4 and below, this is largely the ability to find healing herbs in the wild and create useful medications from them. Note that the "germ theory" of disease has reached Yrth and is generally accepted, though the Yrth word is 'demonet,' and many people think that demonets are invisible magical entities. Still, doctors *do* wash their hands with boiled water before performing an operation or delivering a child, a fact which has saved almost as many lives as the best healing magic.

### **Savoir-Faire**

*see p.B64*

In a medieval campaign, different social levels are entirely different worlds. It is hard to impersonate someone of a different social class. In general, a Savoir-Faire roll is required to impersonate someone more than 3 Social Levels away from your own. If your "native" social level is negative and you are trying to pass yourself off as someone of Status 1 or better, or vice versa, a roll is required at -2.



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## New Skills

Most of these skills would be common enough in a TL3 culture that a default would be allowed. In a more complex and stratified culture, such as our present-day one, *no* default should be allowed for skills like masonry, glassblowing or dyeing... the ordinary citizen has never seen these things done and has no idea where to start.

### **Artistic Skills**

#### ***Illumination (Physical/Average)***

*Defaults to Artist-2  
or DX-5*

This is the ability to decorate written text with miniature paintings and pictures. When combined with Calligraphy, it allows the user to produce official scrolls, texts and other documents. It is primarily used to earn a living.

### **Craft Skills**

#### ***Distilling (Mental/Average)***

*Defaults to IQ-4*

This is the ability to distill or brew fine ales, meads, and wines. It is a most important skill, for in many places the water is too foul to drink. Proper equipment and ingredients are necessary.

#### ***Dyeing (Mental/Average)***

*Defaults to IQ-4*

This is the ability to mix and apply dyes of various colors. It is used primarily as a source of income. It is necessary to have the proper ingredients, but a trained dyer will recognize them in the wild.

### **Glassblowing (Physical/Hard)**

This is the ability to make vases, glasses, and other fine objects out of glass. It requires a hot forge and the proper equipment. This skill is usually found only in the densely populated areas of the more civilized regions.

**Defaults to DX-6**

### **Masonry (Physical/Easy)**

This is the ability to build things out of brick or stone. It is used primarily as a source of income. Simple tools (hammer, chisel and crowbar) are required. A mason will have some knowledge of simple engineering, such as might be required to erect scaffolding and move large blocks; this sort of Engineering defaults to Mason at -3.

**Defaults to IQ-3**

### **Needlecraft (Physical/Average)**

This is the ability to sew decoratively. It is not just used to accent clothing and furnishings; it is a form of fine art. It is common among ladies of good breeding, as well as those who make their living at it. Nothing more is required than a fine needle and colored thread.

**Defaults to DX-4**

### **Netmaking (Physical/Easy)**

This is the ability to make and repair fishing nets out of strong cord. It is used primarily as a source of income in seashore towns. It may also be used to make nets used as weapons, common in the gladiatorial arenas of Megalos.

**Defaults to DX-6**

### **Tanning (Physical/Average)**

This is the ability to create leather out of animal hide. It is very useful in wilderness areas, or as a source of income for

**Defaults to IQ-4**

trappers and other game hunters. A tanner will be able to find everything necessary to make good, serviceable leather by walking through the forest, though fine suede, dyed leather, etc., may require special ingredients. A professional tanner will have a shop and large vats, on the *downwind* side of town; tanning is the smelliest of all medieval professions.

### **Wearing (Physical/Easy)**

This is the ability to use a loom to weave fabrics from yam. It is used primarily as a source of income. A weaver would know how a loom is constructed, but actually building one would be a job for a mechanic.

**Defaults to DX-2**

## **Scientific Skills**

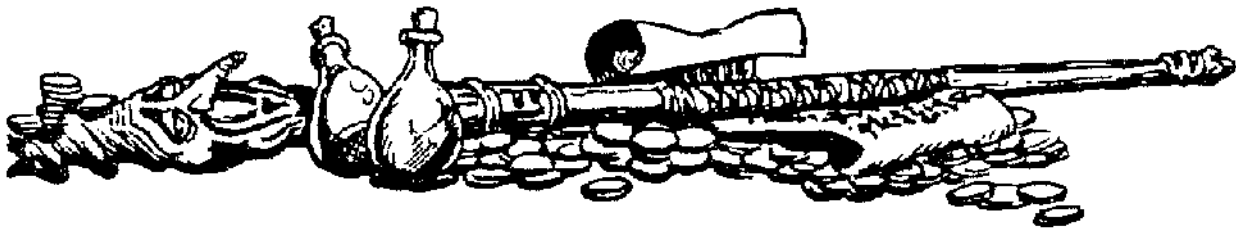
### **Cyphering (Mental/Easy)**

This is the ability to do simple mathematical manipulations — add, subtract, multiply, and divide. In any society where illiteracy is the norm, this skill must be specifically learned. It is necessary to any but the most primitive merchant or administrator, and is a prerequisite to Accounting and Mathematics. One who has Mathematics skill need not roll against Cyphering.

**Defaults to IQ-2**

Most peasants never need this skill, and many others — even nobles — never bothered to learn their cyphering. Default use of this skill is “counting on fingers,” feasible only for adding and subtracting numbers below 20.

Mathematical Ability adds directly to Cyphering skill. The Lightning Calculator ability makes this skill unnecessary.



## **Social Status and Wealth**

Status is very important on Yrth. Each status carries certain rights and duties — GMs should assign appropriate Duties to those of noble or knightly ranks. PCs should not start above Status 3 except in *very* unusual circumstances.

Standard starting wealth on Yrth is \$1,000 — 1,000 copper farthings. Characters should have a level of wealth appropriate to their status. In general, almost any noble should be Wealthy or Very Wealthy; those of knightly rank (Status 2 or 3) should be Wealthy or Comfortable; anyone of Status 1 (merchant, squire, etc.) should be of Comfortable or Average wealth. Like-

wise, characters with negative status should have appropriate poverty. Remember: in a medieval society, wealth and status go hand in hand!

If there is a great discrepancy between status, skills, and wealth, it should be explained in the character's story. If a farmer is very rich, he obviously has a *big* farm. If a talented mage is dead broke, he is clearly spending his time at non-paying pursuits. If a noble has merely average wealth, he may be a younger son, or a victim of revolution or natural disaster.

## **Jobs and Income**

In civilized areas, PCs may find jobs to provide income when they are not in play. Of course, not every job is available in every part of the world — there is little call for a fisherman in landlocked Caithness! Jobs can help cover the PCs' cost of living, as required by his Status. The *Job Table* (p. 115) lists a

number of jobs; the OM may add others as appropriate. Some have skills or experience prerequisites. Default values don't count here; the character must have at least a half-point invested in the skill.

# Jobs Table

<i>Job (Required Skills), Monthly Income</i>	<i>Success roll</i>	<i>Critical Failure</i>
<b>Poor Jobs</b>		
Servant, Helper (no attribute below 7), \$120	IQ	LJ/LJ whipped, 2d
Thief* (any 4 Thief skills at 13+, or 2 at 16+), \$150	DX	3d/3d, caught and tried
Barmaid (Diplomacy, Carousing or Sex Appeal 11+), \$130	Best PR+1	LJ/1d, LJ
Laborer/Longshoreman (ST 11+), \$15 X ST	ST	2d, LJ/2d, LJ, -li
<b>Struggling Jobs</b>		
Bravo*: low class bodyguard, thug or fighter (ST 13+ and any combat skill 14+), \$300	Best PR-2	2d/4d and jailed
Fisherman* (Fishing 12+), \$20 X skill	PR	2d/3d, -li
Gambler* (Streetwise, Gambling, Fast-Talk all at 10+), \$35 X IQ	Best PR-1	3d, chased out of town/lose a hand
Jongleur* (Bard or any music skill 14+), \$25 X skill, plus \$5 X skill for each additional musical ability	PR-2	1d, audience throws tomatoes/2d, audience throws rocks!
Porter (ST 12+), \$300	ST	1d, LJ/2d, LJ
Runner (Move 6+, DX 12+); \$60 X Move	DX	1d, LJ/2d, LJ
Shepherd, Teamster (Animal Handling 12+), \$325	PR	1d, LJ/3d, LJ
Tenant farmer* (Agronomy 12+, ST 10+), \$300	12	-li/-2i, LJ
<b>Average Jobs</b>		
Animal handler/trainer (Animal Handling 14+, Vet); \$75 X skill	Worst PR	2d/3d, -li
Artisan, Crafter (any craft skill 14+), \$80 X skill	Best PR-2	LJ/-2i, LJ
Bard* (2 music skills 15+, Bard 15+), \$50 X Bard +\$5 X total of music and performance skill	Bard-2	LJ/2d, LJ
Bureaucrat (Literacy, IQ 12+); \$850	IQ	LJ/LJ
Castle guard (as town guard, plus Savoir-Faire), \$750	Best PR	2d/4d, C
Free farmer* (Agronomy 12+, ST 10+, some land), \$800	12	-li/-3i, 2d
Mercenary* (3 combat skills 14+, any Survival), \$775	Best PR	3d/4d, C
Retainer (varies), \$60 X most appropriate skill	PR	LJ/-2i, LJ
Shopkeeper* (Merchant 14+, \$1,000 in cash or goods), \$80 X skill	PR-1	-li/bankrupt
Town guard (3 combat skills, levels totaling 40+), \$700	Best PR	2d/4d, C
Tracker (Tracking, any Survival, any Bow, 2 other weapons), \$1,000	Best PR-2	2d/4d, C
Traveling merchant* (Merchant 14+, \$1,000 in capital, Diplomacy 12+), \$90 X skill	Best PR-1	-li/bankrupt
Traveling priest/mullah* (Theology 13+, Survival 12+), \$800	Theology	-1d/2d, -li, declared heretic
<b>Comfortable Jobs</b>		
Administrator (Administration 14+, Politics 12+), \$150 X skill	PR	LJ/-li, LJ
Assassin* (Stealth 12+, Shadowing 12+, Knife 12+), \$200 X skill	Worst PR-1	4d/4d, C, caught and tried
Master artisan* (any Craft skill at 20+), \$30 X skill	PR-4	LJ/LJ, -2i
Master guildsman* (any Craft skill at 20+, Administration 14+), \$170 X skill	PR	-2i/-4i
Master merchant* (Merchant 16+, \$10,000 capital), \$175 X skill	PR	-2i/-6i
Military officer (Weapon skill levels totaling at least 60; appropriate equipment; Strategy 14+), \$1,100	Best PR	-2i, -3d/-3i, -5d, LJ, lose equip.
Professional (e.g., Healer, Lawyer, Herald, etc.) (professional skill 14+), \$120 X skill	PR	LJ/-li, LJ
Scholar (Teaching 15+, Research 14+), \$100 X skill	PR	LJ/LJ
Ship Captain (Navigation 13+, Boating 14+), \$145 X skill	Best PR-1	-li/2d, -3i
Spy (Stealth 12+, 2 thief/spy skills 12+), \$155 X skill	Best PR-2	2d/3d, LJ, C
Squire (Savoir-Faire 13+, 3 weapons skills 12+), \$925	Best weapon-1	2d/3d, C, lose horse, weapons, armor
Priest/Mullah (Theology 13+, Diplomacy 12+), \$900	Theology-2	-li/1d, -2i, LJ, declared heretic
<b>Wealthy Jobs</b>		
Court Noble/Diplomat (Diplomacy 12+, Politics 12+, Savior-Faire 14+), \$100 X PR total	PR-1	-li/-2i, expelled from court
Church official (Theology 15+, Administration 12+), \$5,000	Best PR	-li/-2i, LJ, declared heretic
Knight (As Military Officer, plus Savoir-Faire 14+, Riding 14+, Lance 12+, Status 2+, Duty), \$2,500	Best Weapon	2d/3d, C, lose horse, weapons, armor
Noble Landholder (Savoir-Faire 14+, Administration 12+), \$5,000+	PR-2	-li/-3i or lose title
Member of Noble Family (Status 2+), \$5,000+	IQ	-2i/banishment, loss of title

## Critical Failure Key

“LJ” stands for Lost Job — you were fired, demoted or lost the client. The “d” indicates dice of damage (“3d” is 3 dice of damage, “10d” is 10 dice, etc.) — you were in an accident, fight, etc. The “i” indicates a lost month's income (“-2i” means losing 2 months' income) — you were fined, forced to pay for damages, had to replace equipment, etc. If there are

two entries separated by a “/”, use the second result *only* when a natural 18 is rolled. “C” indicates a crippling injury. Pick a limb randomly, and make a HT roll (see p. B129) to see how permanent the injury is.

Note that for some dangerous jobs, the result of a critical failure can be serious injury. The GM may choose to play out these episodes to give the PC a fighting chance.

# Character Types

This section describes some typical fantasy/medieval character types; it is by no means a complete or exhaustive list. Mages are omitted; refer to *GURPS Magic*, p. 95 for examples of those. Note, though, that any of the characters listed below can be given magical powers and a few appropriate spells, to create an interesting specialist-wizard!

The listings below are stereotypes; very interesting characters can be made by mixing and matching!

The listed Advantages, Disadvantages, and Skills are merely *suggestions*, common abilities (or disabilities) for people of this class or profession.

## **Administrator**

Administrators are glorified clerks — but every nation needs them. They are most common in towns and big cities. They often have a unique perspective on politics, and access to unusual information... a senior administrator can easily become the power behind the throne. Administrators are *not* a typical PC type, but they might come into an adventure by hiring an adventuring party.

Common advantages include Alertness, Lightning Calculator, Literacy, Mathematical Ability, Patron (his employer), and Wealth — a good administrator can get rich without even stealing.

Common disadvantages include Addiction, Compulsive Behavior, Dependents, Greed and Miserliness. Any physical disadvantage is possible.

Important skills would be Accounting, Cyphering, Detect Lies, any Language (often several), Heraldry, History, Law, Research, Scrounging, Social skills and Writing. In some positions, Streetwise might become important.

## **Assassin**

Assassins are professional killers. Most specialize in quiet, efficient murder, priding themselves on the ability to strike and vanish before anyone notices. However, some assassins (particularly religious would-be martyrs) don't care about being caught; in fact, they wish to draw attention to the death of their target, even if they must die too.

Useful advantages for an assassin include Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Danger Sense and Night Vision. Some have a Patron (their employer), but most are on their own; their employer will deny he ever heard of them!

Appropriate disadvantages would include Enemy, Fanaticism, Overconfidence (which could be fatal) and Sadism (very unprofessional!).

Any weapon skill could be useful to an assassin, especially Knife and unarmed combat. Likewise, all Thief/Spy skills are useful. Other vital skills include Acrobatics, Acting, Disguise, Fast-Talk, Poisons, and Tactics.

## **Bard**

Bards are performers: singers, actors and anyone else who makes a living by entertaining others. A bard may be a wanderer, or a permanent fixture in a tavern — or a noble's court! A bard with a few magic abilities can be interesting. Some bards are also thieves, or sell information to thieves. In many areas, the person of a storyteller is sacred (see p. 103).

Useful advantages are those which give a reaction bonus or otherwise help make friends: Attractiveness, Charisma, Empathy, Musical Ability, Reputation, Voice. Language Talent and Literacy are useful but not required. Eidetic Memory will serve a storyteller well!

There are no 'typical' disadvantages. Fictional bards are often afflicted with personal problems like Addiction, Compulsive Behavior, Compulsive Lying, Laziness, Lecherousness or Overconfidence.

Classical bardic skills would include Bard, Carousing, Dancing, Detect Lies, Disguise, Fast-Talk, History, Languages, Literature, Musical Instrument (or several), Poetry, Singing, Sleight of Hand, any Social Skills, Streetwise and Ventriloquist. Few bards would have *all* those talents, of course! A traveling bard might also want some appropriate weapon skills in order to deal with bandits and tough audiences.

## **Cleric**

Clerics dedicate their lives to their religion — often, but not necessarily, to public service in the name of that religion. A cleric can be a humble brother, or a powerful Archbishop or Mullah. Certain religious orders will have specific requirements for their members. See the sections on different religions for more about the different types of clerics. See also *Monk*, p. 118.

A medieval priesthood tends to attract talented misfits. A very intelligent serf child, or a physically-disadvantaged but clever or active child of a noble family, would both find themselves aimed toward the clergy at an early age.

A cleric *must* have Clerical Investment. Other typical advantages include Empathy, Literacy, Patron (the order). Reputation (as a member of the order) and Voice. A high-ranking cleric may have both Status and Wealth. Some orders seek out those with Magical Aptitude; others have nothing to do with magic.

Disadvantages would usually include Dependents (his 'flock,') Duty, Pacifism (only in some orders). Sense of Duty and Vow (see p. 25 for specific Vows). Many medieval and Yrth clerics would have Fanaticism and even a strong degree of Religious Intolerance.

The choice of skills would depend entirely on the type of cleric. A generic "parish priest" type might have Area Knowledge, Administration, Bard (for sermons, of course!), Cyphering, Detect Lies, Diplomacy, Heraldry, History, Law, Politics, Research, Savoir-Faire, Singing, Teaching, Theology (required!) and perhaps Writing. But more specialized clerics might make more interesting PCs. Fighting priests like the Templars (p. 26-27) would require knightly skills. Healers like the Karrollites (p. 28) would have medical skills. Intriguers like the Jesuits (p. 27) would have scholarly abilities and, perhaps, spy-type talents — certainly including Intelligence Analysis!

## **Crafter**

Crafters — those who make their living with craft skills — are often the most important economic commodity an area has. Farmers are necessary, too, but there are *lots* of farmers. Rarely will there be more than a few experts at a given craft in any but the largest cities. Most specialize in a single craft. See pp. 16-20 for more about craftspeople and guilds.

In a wide-ranging campaign, crafters (except armourers and the like) would find little to do as PCs. In a city-based campaign, a crafter might make an excellent PC, as he would be in a position to participate in both open politics and midnight guild intrigue.

Typical crafter advantages are Reputation, Status (as guild member), and Wealth. Of course, a journeyman would have less reputation and status, and little wealth, and an apprentice owns little more than the shirt on his back.

There are no specific disadvantages associated with the craft trades. Any physical disadvantage is a possibility. A city-based

craftsman will have dependents. A professional Code of Honor (do only the best work, *no matter what*, and support the guild and its laws) would be worth -5 points in a campaign where the PC actually spent time working at his craft. Personality quirks, especially general grouchiness, are very appropriate for master craftsmen.

Obviously, a crafter PC must have the appropriate artistic and/or craft skills for his Tech Level. A master will have one or two skills at very high levels, and a few related skills at lower levels. Other useful skills might include Area Knowledge, Detect Lies, Diplomacy, Fast-Talk, Merchant, Politics (to deal with guild-brothers and the nobility) and Teaching.

### **Diplomat**

Diplomats serve as emissaries and part-time spies. A diplomat need not serve a lord; a powerful trading guild might send an ambassador to a foreign country, for instance. They often spend a great deal of time traveling; a diplomat and his retinue would make a good PC party. The best diplomats are keen observers and careful spokesmen. They are usually noble by birth themselves, often younger sons.

Useful advantages include Attractiveness, Charisma, Danger Sense, Eidetic Memory, Empathy, Intuition, Language Talent, Literacy, Patron (the diplomat's lord), Reputation, Status, Voice and Wealth.

Significant disadvantages would include Duty, Enemy (representatives of hostile powers), Fanaticism (perhaps), Sense of Duty and maybe even a Vow. Other interesting disadvantages could include Alcoholism, Compulsive Behavior, Dependents, Lecherousness and Overconfidence. A diplomat might be Megalomaniac, not on his own behalf but on behalf of his nation.

Any skill might be useful to a diplomat. Some of the most important would be Acting, Bard, Cyphering, Dancing, Detect Lies, Heraldry (required), History, Holdout, any Language (usually several), Law, Poisons, Research, any Social skills, Strategy, Theology and Writing. A diplomat who has no combat abilities had best hire guards.

### **Healer**

Healers (also called herbalists or physickers) are welcome almost everywhere. In a low-tech environment, their abilities are most effective when supplemented with healing magics, but it is possible to be a healer on knowledge alone. See p. 138.

Appropriate advantages would be Empathy and Strong Will. Clerical Investment and Magical Aptitude would fit some healers.

Common disadvantages include Pacifism, Sense of Duty and Dependents.

The most important skills, of course, are the medical ones. Since a low-tech physician is a herbalist (see p. 113), Naturalist and Poisons are both appropriate. Area Knowledge, Cyphering, Diplomacy and Research might all benefit some healers.

### **Knight**

Knights are combat-trained nobles who belong to a chivalric order or who swear themselves to a liege lord. Each order has particular requirements for knighthood. The knighting ceremony will require taking one or more Vows or Duties, in return the new knight gets a Patron (the order or the new lord) and a Reputation (as a member of that order or a follower of that lord). Knighthood carries Status 2 in most cultures, and a knight must have at least Comfortable wealth (owning and maintaining a warhorse and full plate armor is not cheap!) A good knight will have social skills as well as combat abilities, and will be expert in local law and cus-

toms in order to mete out justice as his lord would wish.

Historically, knighthood was available only to men. On Yrth, Caithness grants knighthood to women.

Appropriate knightly advantages include Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Patron, Status (usually 2), and Wealth. If he is either a very good or a very bad knight, he will have a Reputation of his own, and he will in any event share the reputation of his lord or order when he wears his surcoat — which should be all the time. Any knight has at least 10 points of Legal Enforcement Powers; the liege-man of a powerful noble has 15 points.

A knight might have a brother-knight, or a very competent squire, as an Ally. A very young squire, on the other hand, would be a Dependent.

A knight *must* have a Duty. A good knight will also have the Chivalric Code of Honor (p. B31), a Sense of Duty and a Vow. He may have an Enemy (the enemy of his lord or order). Significant physical disadvantages are unlikely. Family Dependents are quite in character and might be held for ransom by a foe.

A knight *must* have useful levels of skill in Area Knowledge, several Combat/Weapon skills (Broadsword and Lance are required), Heraldry, Law, Riding and Savoir-Faire. He *should* have Dancing, Diplomacy, Falconry, Savoir-Faire, several other Social skills, Strategy and Tactics, though not every wearer of the white belt will be such a “complete knight.”

### **Mercenary**

Mercenaries are warriors for hire. Some are loners; others belong to organized mercenary bands. They favor weapon skills, but will often have other specialties. A mercenary may also be a spy, an assassin, a tracker or a healer. Most will have one or two preferred weapons with a related Fast-Draw skill.

Useful advantages include Combat Reflexes, Common Sense, High Pain Threshold, Military Rank, Rapid Healing and Reputation. A mercenary *leader* would probably have at least Comfortable wealth, even if it's all tied up in his horse and armor.

Common “bad merc” disadvantages include Bloodlust, Cowardice, Greed, Megalomania and Overconfidence. A good mercenary, on the other hand, might have a Code of Honor, Honesty or even Truthfulness. Any merc might have an Enemy earned in an old campaign, and perhaps even a price on his head. And any merc might be Impulsive or Stubborn, or have a tendency to Berserk.

Gross physical disadvantages are rare, but minor maimings (One Eye, One Hand) would be very common in a campaign where magical healing is expensive.

Combat/Weapon skills, Armoury, Strategy and Tactics are all very useful. Architecture (for sieges), Carousing, Engineering (siege engines), Gambling, Heraldry, Leadership, Mechanic, Riding, Running and Streetwise would also be common.

### **Merchant**

A merchant may be a street peddler, a wealthy shop owner, or a caravan-master who doesn't see the same city twice in a year. Merchants may also be part-time explorers looking for new trade routes and unique goods. The merchant's god is Cash, and his creed is “Buy low, sell high.”

Useful advantages include Alertness, Common Sense, Eidetic Memory, Empathy, Intuition, Lightning Calculator, Literacy, Reputation and — if he's a *good* merchant — Wealth.

Common disadvantages for a merchant are Dependents, Greed, Miserliness, Overconfidence and Pacifism. But a merchant might Berserk when his money is threatened...

Appropriate skills include Accounting, any Animal skills,

Cyphering, Detect Lies, Fast-Talk, Holdout, any Language (often several), Law, Merchant, Research, Scrounging, any Social skills and Streetwise. A merchant will also have skills appropriate to his particular trade. For instance, a weapon-seller would know enough Armoury to talk intelligently to a smith, and at least enough Broadsword to heft a blade and know if it was properly balanced.

### **Monk**

A monk is a specific type of cleric — a humble servant of the Church. A monk may wander among the people, helping, preaching and living on charity. Or he may live in a monastery, learning and teaching. These are the types of monk most suitable as PCs.

Some monks are *cloistered* — they remain within a monastery at all times and see no outsiders, spending their lives in study and prayer. Others choose to live in harsh climes with few luxuries, and have few possessions. Neither of these two types is very appropriate for a PC; it is hard to see how a cloistered monk could enter an adventure even as an NPC!

Typical advantages include Literacy, Strong Will, and Patron (the order). Clerical Investment is required. Charisma could be very useful.

Disadvantages would be as for a Cleric, p. 115.

Appropriate skills for a wandering monk could include Bard, Diplomacy, Fast-Talk, any Language (perhaps several), Heraldry, History, Law, Scrounging, Singing, Streetwise, Theology, Teaching or Writing.

An intellectual monk, a resident of a non-cloistered monastery who might sometimes leave to visit the outside world, could include Artist, Bard, Calligraphy, Cyphering, Diplomacy, any Language (perhaps several), Heraldry, History, Law, any other Scientific Skills as a specialty (as appropriate for the TL and order), Singing, Theology, Teaching or Writing.

### **Noble**

Nobles are members of the ruling class of a medieval society. In general, PCs should not be high-ranking nobles unless *all* PCs are. Alternatively, a noble PC may be very young, or have many older brothers and little hope of succeeding to a title — so the other PCs won't *have* to defer to him in order to roleplay well. Keep in mind that the *responsibilities* of a feudal noble are great.

Advantages appropriate for one of noble rank include Legal Enforcement Powers (5 to 15 points, depending on exact position), Patron (parent or feudal lord) and Wealth. A noble might be literate, but many were not!

Common disadvantages of nobility include the Chivalric Code of Honor, Duty, Enemy, Honesty and Sense of Duty. “Bad” nobles may have any interesting psychological disadvantage; Greed, Megalomania and Sadism are all typical.

Likely skills include Administration, Area Knowledge (required), any Combat/Weapons skills. Cyphering (perhaps), Dancing, Detect Lies, Falconry, Fast-Talk, Heraldry (required), any Language, Leadership, Politics, Riding, Savoir-Faire, and any Social skills. Craft skills, except for Armoury and the more decorative crafts, are very unlikely; nobles weren't expected to work with their hands. Artistic skills are more likely for a female noble than for a male.

### **Ranger**

Rangers or woodsmen can make a living in many different ways. Trackers specialize in tracking or hunting game. When the game is human, they are called Bounty Hunters. Woodsmen with identical talents but a different job description might be “foresters,” guarding a lord's woodlands, or “scouts,” elite

troops specializing in scouting and guerrilla warfare. Specialized rangers can be found in mountains, swamps, deserts, or any other terrain capable of supporting wildlife.

Common advantages include Absolute Direction, Alertness, Animal Empathy, Combat Reflexes, Danger Sense, Rapid Healing and Toughness.

There are no truly typical disadvantages. A powerful Enemy, or Shyness, might explain why the person had chosen a woodland life. Only minor physical disadvantages will be encountered; a tracker must be fit.

Good skills would include any Animal or Outdoor skills, most Combat/Weapon Skills (especially Bow and Crossbow), Area Knowledge, Camouflage, First Aid, Jumping, Running, Stealth and Weather Sense (see *Meteorology*, p. B61).

### **Retainer**

Retainers are the trusted servants of the nobility. It's a generic term; a “retainer” is any member of the noble's retinue. They may be trusted bodyguards, secretaries, servants, animal-handlers, artisans, confidants, teachers, or all of the above.

There are no particular advantages common to all retainers, except, usually, the Patronage of the noble they serve. No retainer will have a Status less than 0; many retainers of high nobles will have a Status of 1 or even 2, and some will have Comfortable wealth of their own.

A good retainer would have the disadvantages of Code of Honor, Duty and Sense of Duty. The retainer might even have made a Vow. If their lord or lady is young, the retainer can take them as a Dependent.

Almost any skills are possible, depending on the retainer's specialty.

### **Scholar**

Scholars are devoted to learning; they may be researchers, teachers, explorers, naturalists, technicians or librarians. Most specialize in a specific area: magic, theology, history and so on. They may be found in large cities or in remote monasteries (many scholars are clerics). Even if they're not mages, they are often feared for their knowledge; the common people can't tell the difference between magic and science.

Unless a scholar is independently wealthy, he must find some way to support himself. Some make their living as teachers. Others are supported by noblemen who are (or wish to be considered) lovers of knowledge. Some are fortunate enough to earn money directly from their research — for instance, a historian may discover clues to treasure.

Common scholarly advantages include Alertness, Eidetic Memory, Intuition, Language Talent, Literacy, Lightning Calculator, and a noble Patron.

Typical disadvantages are Absent-Mindedness, Age, Delusions, Gullibility, Honesty, Pacifism, Phobias, Shyness, Stubbornness or Truthfulness. Almost any sort of physical disadvantage is possible. A medieval “mad scientist” could have some chilling mental disadvantages as well.

Skills might include Administration, Cyphering, Heraldry, History, any Language (usually several), Law, History, Linguistics, Literature, Mathematics, Naturalist, Research, any other Scientific skills as a specialty (as appropriate for TL), Teaching, Theology, Writing.

### **Spy**

Spies collect information for a master — a feudal lord, or a powerful mage or trading guild. Some spies travel; others work close to home (for instance, watching for treason within a king's own capital). In addition to the abilities listed below, a spy will

need to have the appropriate skills of his “cover” for it to hold up over time,

Common advantages include Absolute Direction, Absolute Timing, Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Danger Sense, Double-Jointed, Eidetic Memory, High Pain Threshold, Literacy, Strong Will and Patron.

Likely disadvantages are Compulsive Behavior, Enemy, Fanaticism, Overconfidence, Impulsiveness, Stubbornness and Sense of Duty.

Good skills for a spy include Acrobatics, Acting, Area Knowledge, Carousing, Climbing, any Combat/Weapon skills, Cyphering, Diplomacy, Fast-Talk, any Language (usually several), Heraldry, History, Jumping, Law, Research, Savoir-Faire, Strategy and any Thief/Spy skills.

### **Squire**

A squire is in training to be a knight. Thus, he should emphasize all skills necessary to qualify for knighthood, but does not yet have the Vows, Patron or Reputation required of an actual knight. However, some squires *will* need to take certain vows, and often the order or training knight is considered a Patron. Certainly it would be a poor knight who would not move mountains to rescue his squire, and vice versa!

A squire's advantages are as for a Knight, except that he has, at best, 5 points of Legal Enforcement Powers, and his Reputation will be “squire of such and such an order or lord” — not as great as a knight's reputation.

He has no required disadvantages other than his Duty to his knight or the training order. A *good* squire will have Honesty, a strong Sense of Duty toward both his knight and his knight's master, and other knightly mental and social disadvantages.

Skills are as for a Knight, though not at such high levels.

### **Sybarite**

Sybarites do nothing, and they do it with great enthusiasm. They have the money to simply enjoy life. Many are young nobles who haven't yet (or never will) come into a responsible position, and are always looking for new thrills. A sybarite might join an adventuring party for the excitement, or be drawn into a

city campaign as part of some intrigue.

Wealth is required, and Status is very likely. Also likely are Allies (other wastrels, or faithful retainers), Attractiveness, Charisma and Literacy.

Appropriate disadvantages are plentiful: Addiction, Bully, Compulsive Behavior, Delusions, Gluttony, Gullibility, Impulsiveness, Phobias, Racial or Religious Intolerance, Jealousy, Lecherousness or Overconfidence. Nastier mental disadvantages are also possible. Laziness is common, but not necessary — a Sybarite might work very hard at a favorite pursuit, which he doesn't consider work! Any physical disadvantage is a possibility, and might help explain why the individual has abandoned the responsibilities of a noble. Duty and Sense of Duty are usually right out! But a sybarite might follow the Gentleman's Code of Honor (p.B31).

A sybarite is likely to have a full range of social skills, and might also be very good with dueling-type weapons. Carousing is required! Consider in particular Acting, any fashionable Artistic skills, Diplomacy, Falconry, Fast-Talk, Gambling, any Language, Riding, Savoir-Faire and Sex Appeal.

### **Thief**

Thieves can range from gentlemanly cat burglars to out-and-out thugs. A thief must be brave, desperate or stupid to ply his trade in a world like Yrth, where punishments are severe and often permanent.

Good advantages for a thief are Alertness, Danger Sense, Double-Jointed, Luck, Night Vision, and Patron (perhaps a Thieves' Guild).

Common disadvantages would include Enemy (perhaps the local guards, or even the Michaelites), Greed, Kleptomania, Overconfidence, Poverty and low Status. One Eye or One Hand might indicate a thief who had been caught.

Skills would start with the whole list of Thief/Spy abilities. Also useful are Acrobatics, Area Knowledge, Carousing, Climbing, Fast-Talk, Gambling, Jumping, Knife, Running and Throwing. Other weapon skills, or unarmed-combat skills, are less likely but still possible.

## **Nonhuman Characters**

In a fantasy world, many types of nonhuman characters are possible. Most nonhuman races have special powers or abilities. Being a member of one of these races is therefore an *advantage* (or, in some cases, a disadvantage), costing character points.

Nonhumans are created using the same attribute table used for humans — but nonhumans can get *bonuses or penalties* in one or more attributes. These bonuses and penalties affect the final attribute level, not the point cost. For instance, a Dwarf gets a +2 bonus to ST. This means that if he pays 0 points for ST, he gets a 10 (from the Basic Attributes table) plus a 2 (this bonus) for a total ST of 12. If he pays 10 points for ST, he gets an 11 (from the table) plus the bonus of 2, for a total of 13. And so on.

Many nonhuman races have “automatic” disadvantages. These do not count against the limit of 40 points for a character. To the nonhuman, these are perfectly normal traits. A nonhuman PC can buy off a racial disadvantage at creation, with the GM's permission. It is possible to create a Halfling without Gluttony!

Where not described otherwise, assume that nonhumans are like humans. In most “classic” fantasy worlds, nonhumans are much less common than humans, and their homes are far from humans places. GMs should remember this when deciding how many nonhumans to allow into a continuing campaign.

In Yrth or similar human-dominated worlds: When nonhumans are in human lands, they will usually react at +1 or better to chance-met members of their own kind!

*Note:* The races below are greatly simplified, “capsule” versions of races defined in full in *GURPS Fantasy Folk*. The point values below were reached by using racial generation rules found in that book. Some of the racial advantages and disadvantages below are not found in the *Basic Set*, or their racial point cost is different from their individual point cost. For more detail on the races below, or itemized point cost breakdowns, see *Fantasy Folk*. It gives thorough descriptions of more than 20 fantasy races, and rules for creating new races.

### **Centaur**

**65 points**

Centaur's have the torso, arms and head of a man with the body of a horse. They are intelligent creatures who usually inhabit temperate plains or brushlands near Elvish forests. They prefer to keep to themselves.

*Advantages and Disadvantages:* Centaur's have ST +3, HT +2, and IQ-1. A Centaur's lower body ST is 13 greater than his upper body ST. This lower-body ST score is considered to be the Centaur's Fatigue score for all activities *except* spell-casting.



They have DR +1, and the advantage Alertness +1. Centaurs have a maximum running speed of twice normal on any relatively flat, straight surface.

They have the Disadvantages Overconfidence, Phobia: Mild Claustrophobia, and Stubbornness. Their large, awkward forms are frequently an inconvenience in other races' cities. All Centaurs have the Animal Handling and Survival (Plains) skills at their individual IQ levels and the Running skill at HT.

To determine a Centaur's height (at the top of his head), use the height given by the ST table, and add 8". His weight will be eight times normal for a human of his height.

*Friends and Enemies:* Centaurs react at +1 to Elves.

*Likes and Dislikes:* Centaurs don't really like being in any buildings. They get along reasonably well with anyone who doesn't bother them, but have a -2 reaction to intruders on their territory.

## Dwarves

**30 points**

Dwarves are short, stocky, gruff miners and cave-dwellers. All male Dwarves are bearded (Dwarf-women are rarely seen). Dwarves are moody: some are vulgar, others merry, surly, cruel or dignified — but their personalities are *always* empathetic. No Dwarf is an introvert.

All Dwarves are craftsmen; status among them is determined as much by craft ability as by birth or heroism. They love gold and jewels, and will happily work all day to mine precious things and build with them. Anything they build will be both useful and beautiful; they make very fine weapons.

Their own preferred weapons include the hammer and the pick (martial versions of the tools they spend practically every waking moment with) and axes. Their great strength lets them use massive weapons efficiently.

*Advantages and Disadvantages:* Dwarves have ST +2 and Fatigue +2. All Dwarves have +1 DR. They have the racial advantage of Longevity; further, they only begin aging rolls at age 100, and roll only half as often as humans. Dwarves can carry more than humans of the same ST. Their encumbrance levels increase at 5, 10, 20 and 30xST. Dwarves have a -1 to Move due to their short legs. They have the racial quirks Distrust Elves (the remnant of an ancient tragedy), Prefer Enclosed Places and Never Shave Beards. They are also Intolerant of Orcs; on Yrth, this is just a quirk, but elsewhere, in places where Orcs are more common, it might be a significant disadvantage.

All Dwarves have an automatic +3 on any Craft skill they learn. They have Axe/Mace skill at DX level. However, they are typically very poor with missile weapons, and get a -2 on missile weapon skills.

A Dwarf is 1 1/2 feet shorter than the human average for his ST, but weighs, on the average, 100 lbs. more than a human of his height. Usually this extra weight is solid muscle.

*Friends and Enemies:* Dwarves have a -2 reaction to Elves; this is an ancient enmity. They disdain ordinary Elves, but their dislike for the Mountain Elves is tempered by healthy respect. They react at -3 to Orcs and +1 to Gnomes. They *hate* Dragons — no reaction better than Poor is possible. Their overall reaction to men is neutral; men, after all, are clumsy and short-lived, but they are also clever at some things, and appreciative customers.

*Likes and Dislikes:* Dwarves love good craftsmanship and react at +1 (or better) to any good craftsman or to any proposal involving a challenge to their skills. They despise things that are shabby or ill-made. Some Dwarves are afraid of open spaces, but they stay happily underground and are never seen; most

Dwarves are quite comfortable outdoors. However, they don't care about nature (except for metals and gems); shown a mountain stream, they start planning dams and water-wheels. They have a keen sense of personal pride and honor. In their dealings among themselves, they are clannish and political. They respect and protect Dwarf-women.

## Elves

**40 points**

Elves are slender, long-lived humanoids. Most Elves live in small tribes (20 to 100 members) apart from the lands of men. They multiply slowly; the teeming hordes of men and Orcs are a great threat to their existence. All Elves are of the same basic race, but tribal habits differ greatly; see p. 108.

*Advantages and Disadvantages:* All Elves get a +1 to IQ, a +1 to DX and a -1 to ST. Elves automatically have Charisma and Appearance +1 each, and the advantages Combat Reflexes, Magery 1 and Musical Ability +2. All Elves get +1 bonuses to Bard or Savoir-Faire if they choose to study these skills.

Elves are incredibly long-lived. They have the Unaging advantage; most humans believe that the Elves are literally immortal! In reality, few Elves over 700 or so are encountered; some become hermits, others seek out one adventure after another until they perish, and many simply seem to vanish. On the other hand, some Elves, especially mages, have lived and remained active for thousands of years, and take careful precautions to protect their long lives.

Elves have what amounts to a Sense of Duty toward all nature. This is a -15-point disadvantage. They also have a Code of Honor which would be described, in human terms, as "Always behave with elegance and style."

*Friends and Enemies:* Elves react to Orcs at -2, to Dwarves at -1, and to Gnomes at +1. Otherwise, the Elves will judge on the basis of behavior rather than race.

*Likes and Dislikes:* Many Elves have Animal Empathy. No Elf will willingly allow needless harm to trees, animals, or people of any sort (Dark Elves don't consider non-Elves to be people).

## Dark Elves

**30 points**

These are not a separate race, but a separate "cult." It costs only 30 points to be a Dark Elf, because of their Intolerance of all other races — an additional -10 points.

## Half-Elves

**30 points**

Elves can (rarely) mate with humans and produce offspring. A Half-Elf automatically has IQ +1 and Magical Aptitude. Half-Elves have the racial advantage of Longevity. They appear human, but tend toward a lighter-than-average build. Cost is 30 points.

## Giants

**175 points**

Giants are humanoids nine or more feet tall. They are rarely seen by humanity, preferring to live above and below ground in extreme seclusion.

Yrth's Giants are generally a gentle, private folk, preferring the solitude of their homes. However, they can be remarkably dangerous if roused.

*Advantages and Disadvantages:* Giants get a +16 to ST! They have DX -1. They have HT +4 and three extra Hit Points. They have PD 1, DR 2, and the High Pain Threshold advantage. They have a reach of 2 hexes and have a maximum speed of twice normal score on a flat, straight surface. They have Acute Taste/Smell +3.

Giants have the disadvantages Bad Temper, Severe Shyness and Stubbornness. Their size is also often an inconvenience among smaller folk. Humans and most other small races have an irrational fear of Giants because of their size and power, and Giants have Reputation -2 around such folk.

For a PC Giant, base height on the Giant's strength *before* adding the +16 — then increase it by 60 %. Average weight is 4 times that of a man of the same ST before the +16.

*Friends and Enemies:* Giants resent being compared to Ogres, They react at a -3 to Ogres, and a -2 to anyone who mentions Ogres in any but the most disparaging terms. Most smaller races react at a -2 to the thought of a Giant coming near them,

*Likes and Dislikes:* Most Giants have very “human” personalities, but they are uncomfortable in human lands, where all the furniture is built for midgets! Giants at home will react at a -2 or worse to non-Giants intruding on their privacy.

## Gnomes

### 20 points

These cousins of the Dwarves live on the surface, most often in mountains or foothills, tending flocks and herds. They are smaller and slighter than true Dwarves, and wear their beards trimmed short. They are very versatile, and can be found almost anywhere humans are, doing almost anything. Those who live over a Dwarf-clan's mountains will accept the leadership of the Dwarf-lord; others will give their loyalty to whatever race claims dominion over the area. They are almost never ambitious for themselves. Their love of nature is perhaps equal to that of the Elves, in their own unassuming way.

*Advantages and Disadvantages:* Gnomes have the advantage of Longevity. They have Fatigue +1, DR +1, and the Dwarven bonus (0 Encumbrance and -1 to Move. With any craft skill not involving metal working and engineering (especially wood-working skills) Gnomes have a +4 to DX. They have a -1 to Move due to their short legs.

*Friends and Enemies:* Reaction to other races is generally neutral, unless the Gnomes are disturbed on their own territory; then they react at -1. They react at -3 to Orcs. Elves and Dwarves both react to Gnomes at +1, and Gnomes react to both these elder races at +1 at all times.

*Likes and Dislikes:* Gnomes like herding, the rustic life, and good craftsmanship. They never forget a favor or an injury. They are solid, centered and matter-of-fact.

## Goblins

### 5 points

Goblins have green skin, pointed ears and sharp white teeth. They like magic and respect mages. There are few mighty Goblin wizards, but the race produces a remarkable number of hedge wizards and dabblers. They are great traders and merchants; they travel everywhere, trading where they travel, and wherever they trade, a few will stay to live. There are no exclusively Goblin nations or even cities on the known part of Yrth, but they are the majority population in several parts of Megalos.

*Advantages and Disadvantages:* A Goblin gets a -2 on ST, +1 on DX and +1 on IQ. They are small and slender; height is normal for their ST, but weight is 10 pounds less. Goblins have the advantage Night Vision and the disadvantage Impulsiveness.

*Friends and Enemies:* Goblins have no particular racial friends or foes.

*Likes and Dislikes:* Goblins react at +1 to anyone who knows magic — more for an obviously powerful mage. Because of their impulsiveness, they have a -1 reaction to any cautious or cowardly person or plan.

## Hobgoblins

### -25 points

These ancestral kinsfolk of the Goblins are large, brutish

and savage. A few live among Goblins as servants. Those that remain in the wild live in small bands in forests or wastelands, fleeing from powerful foes and attacking the weak. They are simple hunters and gatherers. A typical Hobgoblin owns nothing but a weapon (which he made himself or stole) and some rags or ratty furs to keep him warm. They are brutal and direct, but not as cruel and devious as Orcs. They speak either a pidgin version of the old Goblin tongue, or a human language.

Create a Hobgoblin using the normal human tables for height and weight.

*Advantages and Disadvantages:* Hobgoblins have -2 IQ, +1 DX and +1 ST. They have Night Vision and the disadvantages of Stubbornness and Poverty: Dead Broke.

*Friends and Enemies:* Hobgoblins react normally to Goblins, and toward other races at -2; other races also react to them at -2.

*Likes and Dislikes:* Hobgoblins have simple tastes. They like food and loot, and dislike anyone outside their immediate band.

## Halflings

### 10 points

These small, peaceful folk are mainly interested in farming, eating, drinking and the “good life,” but they make determined warriors when pushed. Halflings are stocky and round-faced; they almost never grow beards. Most live in small villages of their own, but some inhabit men's cities.

*Advantages and Disadvantages:* A Halfling gets DX +1, HT +1, and ST -3. They have the disadvantage Gluttony. Halflings can also take a 5-point Addiction to tobacco that does not count against their personal limit of 40 points in disadvantages, reducing racial point cost to 5. Halflings get the Stealth skill at DX +1, with an extra +1 against Hearing rolls (+2 if completely immobile). They have a +1 with Bow, Sling, and any throwing skills. They have a -1 to Move due to their short legs. The Halfling code of honor could be summed up simply as “hospitality.”

Halflings are 1 1/2 feet shorter than normal humans of their ST, but have normal weight for humans of their ST.

*Friends and Enemies:* Halflings have no particular friends or foes. Because they generally seem cute and harmless, they get a +1 reaction from humanoid races — but not from Reptile Men, monsters and so on.

*Likes and Dislikes:* Anyone who sets a generous table, or offers to share his ale, will get a +1 reaction from a Halfling. Anyone who seems “wild” or “dangerous,” will get a -2 reaction from a village Halfling (though city-bred or adventuring cousins will be less timid). A bad reaction from a Halfling usually means snubs and closed doors rather than combat; rare indeed is the Halfling who will attack someone who hasn't threatened his life, or at least his comfortable home. Halflings have the racial quirk Dislike Travelling by Water.

## Kobolds

### -30 points

Kobolds are small, blue-colored and belligerent. A single Kobold is no great menace... but they usually travel in troops of 12 to 20. Most are wanderers — travelling from one place to the next, doing simple jobs or stealing as the mood strikes them.

*Advantages and Disadvantages:* Kobolds get -2 on IQ, -2 on ST, and +1 on DX. They have the Disadvantage Weak Will -1 and the racial Quirks Love Practical Jokes and Easily Offended. PC Kobolds should not buy up IQ or ST past 10 — even exceptional Kobolds aren't very strong or smart. Starting Kobolds should never be more than 25-point characters. PC Kobolds work best in a “silly” campaign.

Kobolds have normal human proportions; figure height and weight normally.

*Friends and Enemies:* Kobolds have no particular racial friends or foes.

*Likes and Dislikes:* Kobolds love jokes and pranks. They don't understand subtlety, but a hotfoot or a bucket of slop in the face (of someone else) will amuse them immensely. They are quick to take offense for real or imagined slights — and equally quick to forget, if they can be distracted. Whenever a distraction is offered, a Kobold must roll vs. IQ to keep his mind on the subject!

## **Minotaurs** **75 points**

A Minotaur is a large humanoid with the head of a bull. They are most often found in wild forests and deserted plains. Minotaurs tend to be solitary and aggressive, and will eat just about anything, up to and including human flesh. Males are reputed to prefer a diet of human virgins. Minotaurs are as close to monsters as a character race should ever become.

Minotaurs rarely use armor, unless they have looted it from a human victim. Their weapon of choice is a large axe, or chance branch used as a club.

*Advantages and Disadvantages:* A Minotaur gets +3 on ST, +1 on DX, +3 on HT and -2 on IQ. They have a +3 to DR, and an extra +2 on the head. They have Magic Resistance +2, Peripheral Vision, and Absolute Direction, and the Brawling skill at DX level.

Minotaurs have the disadvantages Hideous Appearance, Berserk, Bloodlust, Intolerance, and the Odious Racial Habit “Eat Other Sentients.”

The Minotaur's horns *each* do normal impaling damage for his ST. The Minotaur's head butt is treated as a *slam*. If the Minotaur hits, the victim may roll against his Shield skill to see if he got his shield in the way of the horns. Otherwise, he takes damage from both horns.

A Minotaur stands 3' taller than a human of similar ST, and has the weight appropriate for his height.

*Friends and Enemies:* Minotaurs get a -3 reaction from others due to their dietary habits; they are Intolerant, reacting at -3 to almost everyone.

*Likes and Dislikes:* Minotaurs like battle and slaughter. The few that enter “civilized” territory do so in order to find jobs as guards, bullies or soldiers.

## **Ogres** **90 points**

Ogres are massively-built, appallingly stupid humanoids of incredible strength. They stand 7 to 8 feet tall. They weigh a half a ton or more of pure muscle.

Many live among Orcs, who they serve as heavy laborers and shock troops. On their own, Ogres have nothing resembling a culture. Most are just lone wanderers, haunting the wilderness and eating whatever they can kill.

They are not related to Giants at all, and Giants will *strongly* resent any suggestion that there's a connection.

*Advantages and Disadvantages:* Ogres have a +10 to ST, a +4 to HT, DX -2 and IQ -3. Their thick hide gives them DR 3 and PD 1. They have the advantages High Pain Threshold, Night Vision, Magic Resistance +1 and Acute Smell/Taste +1. They also have the Brawling skill at DX level. Ogres have the disadvantages Ugly Appearance and Reputation -3. Their massive size is also an inconvenience.

For a PC Ogre, base height on the Ogre's strength *before* adding the +10 — then increase it by 40%. Average weight is 5

times that of a man of the same ST before the +10.

*Friends and Enemies:* Ogres sometimes associate with Orcs, but have a -3 Reputation among others. In the wild, Ogres have normal reactions to other races unless they are hungry. But few people stay to see if an Ogre wants to be friendly.

*Likes and Dislikes:* Ogre personalities are just what one might expect from large, stupid humans. Some are sullen; some just want to be liked. Most enjoy fighting.

## **Orcs** **-10 points**

Orcs are the most common “cannon fodder” of fantasy worlds. They are generally considered to be stupid, dirty and aggressive. All these things are, in fact, true. Whether Orcs are primitive savages or disciplined legionaries, they will usually be led by the strongest and most ruthless among them.

*Advantages and Disadvantages:* Orcs have IQ -2, HT +1, two Extra Hit Points (see p. B101), and Acute Hearing. Individual orcs, or even whole tribes, have the advantages Acute Vision, Alertness, Combat Reflexes, High Pain Threshold, Night Vision and Rapid Healing. Common disadvantages include Unattractive Appearance (not all Orcs are ugly, but most are!) and Bully. Orcs are Intolerant, and have a -3 Reputation among all civilized races.

Height is 2" less than normal for ST. Weight is 10 lbs. over human average for their height.

*Friends and Enemies:* Practically every race on Yrth dislikes Orcs, reacting to them at -3 due to their evil reputation. Humanity is their greatest rival, because only humans can match Orcs for aggressiveness, fecundity and sheer orneriness. The Elves and the Dwarves' feud with the Orcs is particularly ancient and bitter, however. An Orc will gladly sacrifice his own life for a chance to take an Elf or Dwarf with him. Elves and humans will defend themselves from Orcs, and seize any reasonable opportunity to push them back from their homes, but the Dwarves are particularly ruthless and aggressive in their genocidal hatred of the Orcs.

*Likes and Dislikes:* Most Orcs are brutal and treacherous, respecting only force. They enjoy revelry, luxury and torturing small animals.

## **Half-Orcs** **0 points**

Half-Orcs are the offspring of Orcs and humans. A Half-Orc can pass for a husky human, but is usually quite unattractive. They have HT +1 and IQ -1. A Half-Orc has one extra hit point and Acute Hearing +1. In most areas a Half-Orc would have a -2 reaction from anyone, including Orcs.

## **Reptile Men** **75 points**

These creature are not at all related to humans — they seem to be descended from dinosaurs. They look like huge, two-legged lizards; they come in many colors. Their shimmering scales make them beautiful; their huge teeth and claws make them fearsome. They are decidedly carnivorous.

They prefer hot, open plains and savannas where they can chase their prey; many live in desert and badlands areas where other races can't survive. Though there are exceptions, most Reptile Men live in small, savage tribes.

A Reptile Man has normal height for his ST, and weighs 30 lbs. more than a human of the same height.

*Advantages and Disadvantages:* A Reptile Man gets a +4 on ST, +2 on HT and -1 on IQ. Because of his claws, he gets a +2 to damage in hand-to-hand combat. He can also *bite* in close combat, doing cutting damage appropriate to his ST. His scales give him a natural DR of 1 (he can still buy Toughness at the normal cost), and his wide-set eyes give him natural Peripheral

Vision. A few tribes of nomadic Reptile Men are likely to view men, elves, etc. as dinner, and Halflings as *hors d'oeuvres*; this gives the whole race a bad Reputation (-3 on reactions). They are very suspicious of all other races and prefer to keep to themselves — they have the disadvantages Intolerance and mild Shyness. Mammalian tongues are difficult for the Reptile Men to master — they can never learn a non-Reptile language beyond their individual IQ level, and they cannot take the Language Aptitude advantage.

Horses unused to Reptile Men will be terrified; a rider must make a Riding roll to keep his mount from shying and throwing him when it first encounters Reptile Men. Or the horse may try and kick them...

Reptile Man hide makes good armor. It weighs 50% more than regular leather armor, costs at least twice as much, has PD 3 and DR 3. An uncured Reptile Man hide weighs 30 lbs. and is worth \$500. Reptile Men react at -4 to anyone wearing such armor!

*Friends and Enemies:* Most races view Reptile Men with fear and react to them at -3. Dragons react to them at +1, and vice versa. Reptile Men react normally to most others, except for the nomad tribes who view non-Reptile Men as potential meals.

*Likes and Dislikes:* Reptile Men enjoy hunting, combat, and lying in the sun; the females are just as big and tough as the males.

## Vampires 100 points

Vampires are magical, undead creatures who still walk upon the earth. They must feed on the blood of living beings in order to continue their undead existence. Not all vampires are evil, but most are, and even the good ones must be totally ruthless to survive! There is no “race” of vampires; all vampires were once ordinary beings who were bitten by another vampire.

*Advantages:* A vampire's ST is *doubled*; HT is increased by 5, and they have a DR of 2. Vampires also have the Night Vision and Immunity to Disease advantages. Metal weapons pass through them without effect, but they take full damage from any weapon made of wood or other plant material. They cannot be poisoned. Magical attacks (and high-tech ray guns) affect them as normal. Vampires do not age. They also have powerful magics (see below) which they can use at *no energy cost*.

*Disadvantages:* Vampires are magical; they require mana in order to exist. A vampire in a no-mana area loses 1 HT per *turn*, soon aging to a powder-dry corpse. The level of mana doesn't affect them — they are just as powerful at low mana as high.

Almost all vampires are (justifiably) Paranoid.

Vampires cannot cross open running water under their own power. A vampire cannot enter a dwelling for the first time without being invited by someone within.

If exposed to direct sunlight, the vampire takes one hit of damage per minute. Heavy clothing halves this damage. Even indirect sunlight (e.g. indoors) hurts their eyes terribly; they are at DX-4 on all actions.

Vampires lose one HT every day at noon. If they do not spend the daytime hours in a coffin filled with the earth of their home-land, they lose two *extra* HT at noon each day. A vampire whose coffin is opened between sunup and sundown is mentally stunned; it must make an IQ roll before reacting!

A vampire will take 2 dice of damage from holy water. However, a mere vial-full will only annoy him. It takes a pint of water to do 2 dice damage.

Daily HT loss can only be replenished by drinking the blood of an intelligent mammalian creature using the Steal Health spell (see below). A vampire *cannot* repair his daily HT loss through healing (though healing spells will cure other injury). A vampire

has no reserve of HT below 0. If his HT is reduced to -1, he crumbles to dust!

*Friends and Enemies:* Everyone reacts with hatred and fear (usually justified) to a known or suspected vampire. If a reaction roll is needed, make it at -6.

*Likes and Dislikes:* A vampire can sometimes be turned by a holy symbol in the possession of a true believer, as long as the wielder is conscious and actively presenting the symbol. If such an attempt is made, try a Contest of IQ between vampire and foe (Strong Will counts!); if the vampire loses the contest, he may not touch the holy symbol or its user on that day, and must stay at least 3 hexes away from the symbol when possible (even if it means fleeing). If the vampire ties or wins, then the symbol doesn't affect him! If affected, the vampire may try a Contest of Fast-Talk vs. IQ, modified by Strong or Weak Will, to *charm* his victim into putting down the holy symbol.

A vampire must roll vs. HT-5 to cross any portal sealed with garlic, or, in general, to tolerate the odor of garlic without fleeing.

### Vampire Magic

Vampires automatically know five spells at level 15: Shapeshifting, Steal Health, Control Mammal, Charm, and Body of Air. These spells may not be studied or improved; they are inherent to the vampire (though the vampire may learn other spells, and even be a mage). There is *no energy cost* for them to use any of these spells.

**Shapeshifting** — The vampire can take the form of a giant bat; the change (either way) takes 3 seconds. Stats are the same as for a wereeagle (p. 122).

**Steal Health** — For every minute the vampire spends feeding on the blood of an unconscious or helpless victim, the victim loses 3 HT, while the vampire gains either 1 HT or 1 ST, as the vampire chooses. If the victim's HT drops below 0, he dies. The marks left by this feeding are unmistakable.

**Mammal Control** — The vampire may control the actions of one large mammal (any size) or a group of small ones (up to 100 lbs. total weight). This spell can be used on intelligent mammals (IQ 8 or greater), but it is resisted at +2.

**Charm** — A victim who fails to resist this spell (roll vs. IQ) becomes the vampire's faithful slave and obeys *any* command, no matter how dangerous. The vampire must instruct the subject verbally or in writing, though the victim will automatically protect the vampire, even without orders. In all other respects, the subject will be mentally normal and alert. He will be unable to explain (and unwilling to think about) his loyalty to the vampire. This spell takes 3 seconds to cast, and lasts one minute after the vampire leaves the subject's presence. Once a person successfully resists a vampire's charm, that person is immune to this particular vampire's charm forever. However, once successfully charmed, each successive attempt by the same vampire will be resisted at -2 (with a maximum of -10). After five successful charms, the vampire may make that subject an “agent” who will remain charmed 24 hours a day, and will devote themselves to caring for and protecting the vampire. A vampire may have only one agent at a time.

**Body of Air** — The body of the vampire becomes vaporous, along with his clothing and any small objects he carries. In this misty form, he can change shape, seep through cracks, float through the air. He can no longer be affected by physical attacks, but he cannot do physical harm either. This spell may not be used in combination with the shapeshifting spell — the vampire must return to human form first. If exposed to direct sunlight while in mist form, the vampire dies instantly.

## Weres

varies

Weres are humanoids with the ability to shapechange into a single animal form. This form is indistinguishable from the natural creature, except for its special powers. Weres are themselves neither good nor evil; some individuals are very evil, while some are powerful fighters for good. Most simply hide their abilities to avoid persecution. Were-powers are unaffected by mana level.

Weres will automatically change into their beast form one night a month, on the full moon. A “good” person will simply run around and bay at the moon. An “evil” one must make an IQ-5 roll to avoid committing atrocities, and may be penalized for bad roleplaying if he *tries* to be good. The GM is the final arbiter, based on the character's actual behavior, of who is good and evil!

Some weres can deliberately change at other times (an additional 5-point Advantage), others cannot. The change from human to beast form, or vice versa, takes 3 seconds. During this time, the were can do nothing and take no active defense.

Legend has it that natural weredom is contagious — if you are bitten by a were you will become a were yourself! It is completely up to the GM whether this legend is true or not; the players shouldn't know. If it *is* true, a roll on HT is necessary to avoid becoming were after a bite. If you become were, you *will* change shape at the next full moon. To be cured, you must find powerful magical help. Since being a were is considered an advantage overall, a PC who wants to remain a were must immediately take extra disadvantages, or commit unearned character points to pay for the change.

*Advantages and Disadvantages:* Weres have a special advantage: Regeneration. An injured shapeshifter, regardless of his form, regains HT lost to injury at the rate of 1 extra hit per 12 hours, *in addition* to any “normal” healing or medical aid. Crippled limbs regenerate; *lost* limbs do not.

However, weres are very vulnerable to silver. They can handle silver objects without physical damage, but the presence of silver negates their Regeneration ability, and they will take double damage from silver or silver-coated weapons. Contrary to myth, though, other weapons *will* affect a shapeshifter. For those wishing to buy silver weapons: hand weapons (swords, etc.) cost 5 times the price of ordinary steel ones, but break as though they were “cheap.” Silver-headed arrows also cost 5 times normal price. If guns exist, silver bullets cost 10 times normal price. None of these can be bought in ordinary shops, unless the area has suffered a plague of weres!

Weres have normal stats when in human form. However, they have special ST, DX, and HT stats, as well as extra DR and possibly PD, when in beast form. The exact amount is determined by the type of beast they change into. Anyone with a 14 or greater DX gets a +1 to the listed DX in were form. If their DX is 9 or less, they get a -1. IQ is unaffected by the change. A were in beast form can use its DX only for fighting and other animal functions — not to open locks, write letters, play badminton, etc. It can understand human speech, but can't talk.

All wounds taken in beast form carry over into human form after the change back. If your human HT is much lower than your beast HT, you could transform from a somewhat wounded beast to a *badly* wounded, or even dying, person! A dead or unconscious were reverts back to human form.

Described below are the six main types of weres found on Yrth. Legends of were-creatures include all sorts of beast shapes — usually that most frightening to the person telling the tale (Polynesians told stories about weresharks). GMs may create other types as their campaign requires.

## Werewolf

15 points

The most common type of were. A werewolf has his natural ST, DX 14, HT +2, PD 1, DR 3. Speed becomes 9. He attacks by biting (close combat) for cutting damage (p. B140). Weight does not change. This is a true beast form. The two-legged, hairy-faced, humanoid “wolf-man” is unknown on Yrth.

## Werebear

15 points

A werebear has double normal ST, DX 13, HT +2, PD 1, and DR 4. Speed becomes 8. He attacks by biting (close combat) for cutting damage (p. B140), or strikes with paws (reach 1 hex) for cutting damage (based on ST, +2 damage for claws). His weight is quadrupled! Size: 2 hexes normally, 1 when he stands to fight. All werebears have the Berserk disadvantage (p. B31).

## Wereboar

25 points

Wereboar: A wereboar has double normal ST, DX 14, HT +2, PD 1, DR 3. Speed becomes 8. He attacks by slashing with tusks (thrust/cutting damage, based on ST) or trampling (1d-1 crushing damage). His weight triples! Size: 2 hexes.

## Weretiger

40 points

A weretiger has triple his normal ST, DX 14, HT +2, PD 1, DR 3. Speed becomes 10. He attacks by biting (impaling, as per p. B140) and clawing (thrust/cutting damage, based on ST), both in close combat. Weight is quadrupled! Size: 2 hexes.

## Were-eagle

15 points

A *very large* eagle — wingspan of 12 feet. He has normal ST, DX 13, normal HT, DR 3. Speed becomes 20! He attack by slashing with his talons in close combat, doing thrust/impaling damage based on his ST. Weight is halved. Size: 1 hex.

## Were-snake

10 points

A giant, nonpoisonous python. ST doubles, DX 13, HT doubles, DR 3. Speed becomes 4. He attacks by crushing (p. B143). Weight remains unchanged. Size: 4 hexes (12 feet).

## Creating New Races

GMs can easily create new races (or translate races from literature or other games). Use the races here as examples.

There will be a point value for the “advantage” or “disadvantage” of belonging to a certain race. To compute this, start by calculating the value of the race's attribute modifiers. Use the cost to a human. For instance, a +1 on any attribute is worth 10; a +3 is worth 30, a +4 is worth 45, and so on. Negative modifiers, of course, have negative cost.

Advantages and disadvantages have their normal point value.

Advantages and disadvantages which involve reaction bonuses and penalties can be ignored unless they apply to *most* of the races the race will contact (or, alternatively, the *most common* or *important* race in the campaign). The Charisma advantage is considered universal. A Charismatic character gets the bonus against any creature, no matter how strange.

A race may have other strong or weak points that don't have a direct counterpart in the Character Creation section. GMs should just select a reasonable “cost” for these. A complete racial generation system, including many exotic, non-human abilities, can be found in *GURPS Fantasy Folk*.

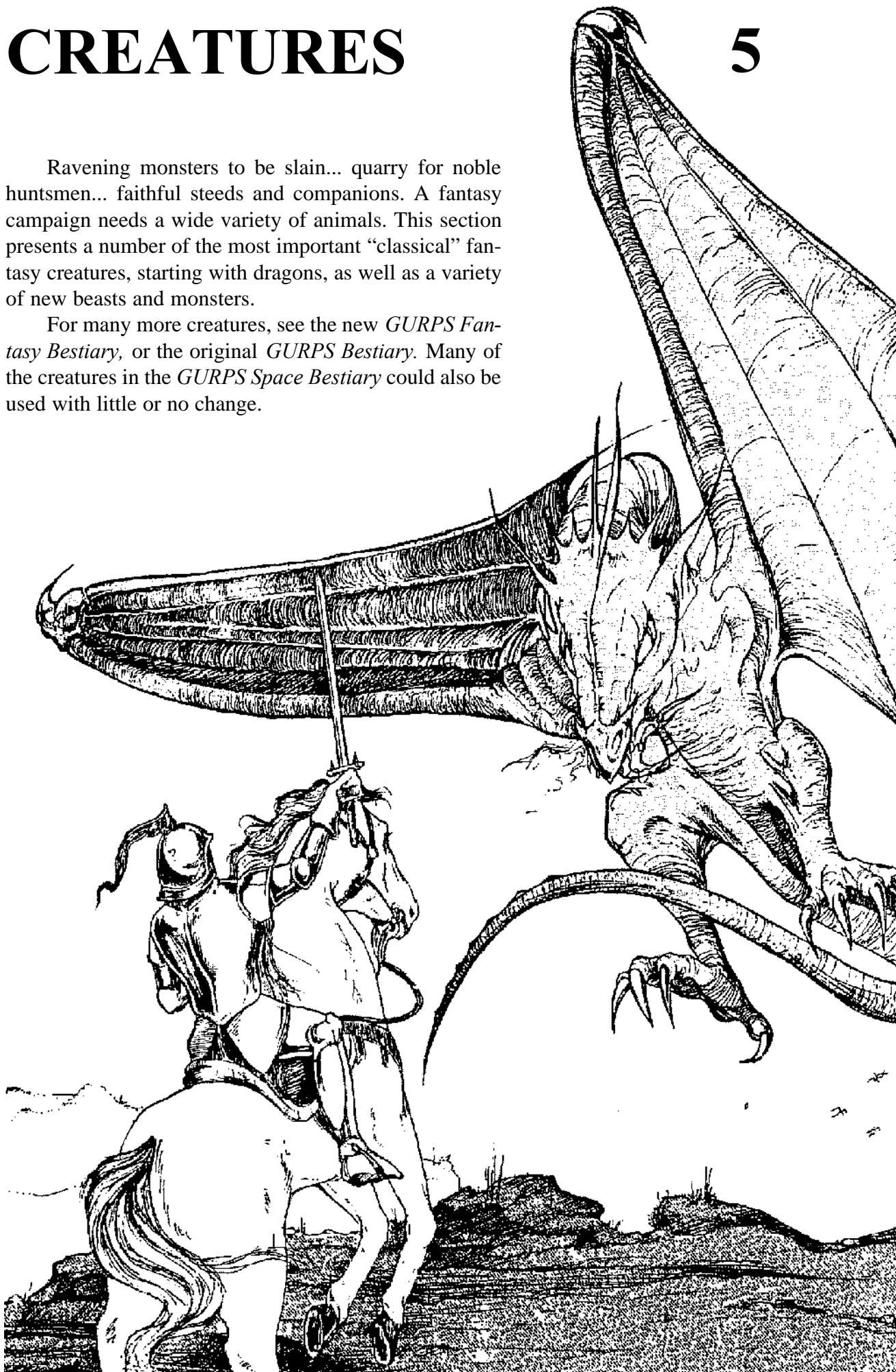
*Example:* Half-Orcs have HT +1 (10 points), IQ -1 (-10 points), the advantages of one extra hit point (8 points) and Acute Hearing +1 (2 points), and the disadvantage of a bad Reputation, giving a -2 reaction from anyone (-10 points). Taken together, these balance out to the racial cost of 0 points.

# CREATURES

5

Ravaging monsters to be slain... quarry for noble hunters... faithful steeds and companions. A fantasy campaign needs a wide variety of animals. This section presents a number of the most important "classical" fantasy creatures, starting with dragons, as well as a variety of new beasts and monsters.

For many more creatures, see the new *GURPS Fantasy Bestiary*, or the original *GURPS Bestiary*. Many of the creatures in the *GURPS Space Bestiary* could also be used with little or no change.



# Dragons

Dragons are huge, long-lived reptilian monsters of terrible beauty. They are native to Yrth, and live and breed in mountainous areas. A newly hatched dragon is about the size of a man. He immediately sets out to find his own territory. Most perish at the hands of men, monsters, or other dragons. A few survive.

Dragons continue to get larger, older, and wiser throughout their lives. They never get weak or senile. It is said that they are immortal, dying only as a result of violence. They are intelligent, born knowing their own language and capable of learning any other. They are also very magical, storing mana in various parts of their bodies. Most dragons know magic, though it is unknown just how they learn and practice their spells. An adult dragon may know dozens of spells (which they can learn just as if they were human — treat all dragons as having *Magery 3*), all at level 21 or better.

Dragons' powers are not affected by low or high mana, but they are almost helpless in no-mana areas, taking one hit per turn until they escape or die. Many dragons prefer *low*-mana areas, because wizards are less likely to attack them there. On Yrth, Dragons are most common in the Ring Islands, the Great Forest, and the northern parts of the Whitehood Mountains.

Dragons are never common. It takes a large territory to provide enough fresh meat; a full-grown dragon can eat two cows a week, and will attack elephants and mammoths for variety. Even a hatchling eats as much as a man! And, because they rob men of their lands and cattle, and Dwarves of their caves and gold, they are the enemy of both races.

Thus, dragons have gradually been exterminated in the civilized lands. No young dragon can hope to survive long in the nations of mankind; only a mature dragon, flying from far away for reasons of its own, will be able to overcome the local guardman. Such a monster may soon grow fat, flying out at night to pilage, or even demanding tribute from the people it terrorizes.

But always, eventually, the champions come to do battle. If nineteen die, still the twentieth will come. Or (awful thought) a whole human army will lay siege to its lair. Eventually, the dragon must return to the mountains, find new lands to terrorize — or die. Of course, not all dragons are hostile raiders; some are willing to talk.

## Dealing with Dragons

Dragons' motivations will vary from individual to individual. Some care only for food and treasure, and some are extremely proud and haughty, while others may choose to cooperate with humans for their own reasons. A dragon's oath, once given, will never be broken. Some dragons will use human servants or agents. And although a human army is one of the few things a dragon really fears, they may sometimes participate in wars. A few of the greatest heroes have even ridden dragons. A dragon can carry no more than *Light encumbrance (6xST)* in flight; this reduces its flight move by 4.

The best way to approach a dragon is to be very polite and offer treasure. Food is welcome, but only a young or very hungry dragon will be mollified by food alone. Threats are unlikely to work, and usually result in the early demise of the adventurer.

Dragons have *Alertness +2*, and are very difficult to sneak upon.

## Fighting with Dragons

Dragons have several methods of attack. Like most beasts, they can bite and claw, doing the damage listed below. Younger dragons do cutting damage; adult dragons do impaling damage.

A dragon may also lash with its tail. This may be a sweep

to knock foes over, or a strike against one particular foe. The dragon may lash into any of its rear hexes. A dragon over 4 hexes in size can lash into any back hex and/or any hex *adjacent* to a back hex!

For a *sweep*, the dragon picks either the rightmost or leftmost foe in range and rolls a quick Contest of ST. If the dragon wins, the foe falls over and the dragon rolls against the next foe — and so on. If the dragon ties or loses, the foe remains standing and the sweep is over.

A *strike* is a tail attack rolled against one foe at the dragon's normal DX. It does crushing damage equal to the dragon's normal biting damage.

Most dragons breathe fire. Some have no breath weapon; some breathe other substances besides fire (these are rare indeed). The range of a dragon's breath is equal to its area in hexes; a 10-hex dragon can breathe fire 10 hexes away! Each breath costs the dragon 2 fatigue points; thus, a young dragon will likely conserve its breath, but an old one will breathe as many times as needed. The bigger the dragon, the hotter the breath — damage is one point less than the dragon's biting damage. Thus, a large dragon does 3d-1 damage with each breath. Dragons' breath affects only one target per breath; it automatically hits (but cannot fire through one figure to get to another). The only defense is to Block, or Dodge *and* Retreat (see *Flame*, p. B129).

Dragons who know spells will also use them in combat.

## Friends and Foes

Dragons have a general -4 reaction from most races, and never better than a Poor reaction from Dwarves. However, Reptile Men respect dragons, reacting at +1, and likewise *receive* a +1 from dragons.

### Hatchling Dragon

ST: 10-15	Speed/Dodge: 8/4#	Size: 2 hexes
DX: 9	PD/DR: 1/1	Weight: 150-200 lbs.
IQ: 10	Damage: 1d-1 cut#	Habitat: Mountains
HT: 10-15	Reach: R,C	

#Speed on the ground is 4.

### Young Dragon (20 fears old)

ST: 15-25	Speed/Dodge: 10/5#	Size: 4 hexes
DX: 11	PD/DR: 2/2	Weight: 500-800 lbs.
IQ: 11	Damage: 1d+1 cut#	Habitat: Mountains
HT: 15/15-25	Reach: R,C,1	

#Speed on the ground is 5.  
Likely to know at least one non-dragon language.

### Adolescent Dragon (100 years old)

ST: 25-40	Speed/Dodge: 12/6#	Size: 7 hexes
DX: 12	PD/DR: 2/3	Weight: 800-1,500 lbs.
IQ: 12	Damage: 2d cut#	Habitat: Mountains
HT: 15/25-40	Reach: R,C,1	

#Speed on the ground is 6.  
Likely to know several languages and 1d spells at level 15+.

### Adult Dragon (300 years old)

ST: 50-60	Speed/Dodge: 18/6#	Size: 10 hexes
DX: 14	PD/DR: 4/6	Weight: 1,500-2,500 lbs.
IQ: 14	Damage: 3d imp#	Habitat: Mountains
HT: 15/55-70	Reach: R,C,1,2	

#Speed on the ground is 6.  
Likely to know many languages and 4d spells at level 21+.

### **Monstrous Dragon (1,000 years old)**

ST: 70+      Speed/Dodge: 26/6#      Size: 14+ hexes  
DX: 14      PD/DR: 4/7      Weight: 3,000+ lbs.  
IQ: 16+      Damage: 3d+2 imp#      Habitat: Mountains  
HT: 15/90+      Reach: R,C,1,2  
#Speed on the ground is 6.  
Likely to know all languages and 2d x 10 spells at level 21+.

### **Elder Beasts (5,000+ years old?)**

Some dragons have lived practically forever. These are far beyond human understanding — as large as hills, very wise, and intensely magical. Some Elves would say that they are living examples of the Eternal. Whatever the case, they are extremely powerful — should one care to want you dead, you are. Now and then they will bestir themselves to take an active role in their world, but more often they simply sit and watch.

## **Wild and Fantastic Creatures**

Yrth's wilderness areas hold most of the beasts of Earth, and many more... some native, some imported from other worlds by the Banestorm.

### **Basilisk**

ST: 3      Speed/Dodge: 4/6      Size: 1 hex  
DX: 12      PD/DR: 1/0      Weight: 1-2 lbs.  
IQ: 3      Damage: \*      Habitat: Desert  
HT: 12/4      Reach: R

The basilisk is a three-foot-long snake with a hideous face and a crest atop its head; some legends claim that it is winged. It is believed by some to be the deadliest creature in existence, and is found only in the Great Desert.

The basilisk kills with its gaze — the only safe way to view one is through a mirror. It is immune to all spells and kills with a native psionic ability, a modified form of the Telekinetic Attack (p. B172). It possesses this ability at a Power and Skill of 16.

With certain exceptions, the basilisk must be able to see or touch its victim in order to initiate the attack. It must concentrate for one turn before attacking — unless the victim is looking directly at it, in which case its innate homing sense allows an instant connection to the onlooker.

To make the attack, the basilisk rolls against the Telekinetic Attack skill, modified by -1 for every yard of distance to the target. If the roll is successful, the victim takes 2d+2 damage every second. No further skill roll is required unless the basilisk's concentration is broken or the victim leaves its sight. At that point a new roll is needed (at the new range) to keep contact, DR and Toughness offer no protection from this attack, and no defense roll is allowed.

Any attackers are at -2 to hit a basilisk due to its small size, plus an additional -5 if using a mirror to sight the target, or -10 if attacking with eyes closed. A basilisk's blood is rumored to be highly poisonous, but so far no one has lived long enough to substantiate this rumor.

Basilisks on Yrth are found only in the Great Desert.

### **Bushwolf**

ST: 15-20      Speed/Dodge: 7/6      Size: 2 hexes  
DX: 12      PD/DR: 1/1      Weight: 50-120 lbs.  
IQ: 4      Damage: 1d+1 cut      Habitat: Plains  
HT: 11-13      Reach: C

The bushwolf is a strange beast. Actually a marsupial, complete with rear-facing pouch, the bushwolf has the head and teeth of a wolf, a long supple tail more like a kangaroo's, and a tiger-striped body. They are about 5-6 feet long, smaller and lighter than a true wolf, and not nearly as quick or coordinated. They have a rather odd shambling gait — either a leisurely trot which they can maintain for hours at a time, or an offbeat canter that they use when they're in a hurry. They're even capable of hopping on their back legs for a short period of time, should circumstances warrant.

Bushwolves feed on small grazing animals and ground birds, generally wearing down their prey in long, slow chases. They live in small caves, rock piles, or in the hollows of trees or logs and hunt singly at night.

They appear almost comical until one gets a close look at their powerful jaws and wicked teeth. Invariably the bushwolf kills by crushing the skull of its prey.

Bushwolves are most commonly found in the badlands of al-Haz and al-Wazif.

### **Caustigus**

ST: 15      Speed/Dodge: 4/4      Size: 1 hex  
DX: 14      PD/DR: 2/2      Weight: 200 lbs.  
IQ: 10      Damage: \*      Habitat: Swamp  
HT: 16      Reach: C,1,2

The caustigus is one of Yrth's strangest creatures. Although intelligent, it is vicious and solitary. It is known only in the Acid Swamps of Solfor, somewhere in the Orclands. It is immune to the burning acid of the swamps (see below). Its exact appearance is unknown; it has a distorted humanoid head, no neck, and four long arms with taloned hands. Some can speak English or Orcish, but they normally react to intruders only *as prey*.

Its arms each have a 2-hex reach; it can use them all at once. It attacks by reaching up to pull its victims into the acid. It must win a quick Contest of DX to grab someone.

If it succeeds, a quick Contest of ST ensues on its next turn. (If it uses two hands on the same person, it gets a +3 to its ST.) If the caustigus wins, the victim is pulled one hex toward the acid. Anyone who falls into the acid will take damage each turn, and is doomed unless the creature flees.

It is hard to hurt. Damage to arms regenerates at 1 point per turn for each arm, unless the arm is completely severed (each arm has HT 8).

Its only vulnerable spot is the head, which cannot regenerate damage. Furthermore, its eyes are used to the swamp's dimness, and are very sensitive. It is unable to see in any bright light. Reduce its DX by 1 for each torch within 6 hexes; a Flash or fireball would make it flee immediately. Also, eye-piercing shots do the same damage that they would on any other creature.

The caustigus will not fight to the death. Should it feel its life is in danger, it will release its prey and flee beneath the water.

*The Acid Swamps:* The "water" in these midnight swamps is a thick, soupy acid. It does one point of damage for each second a victim is immersed in it. DR and Toughness protect for only as many seconds as the DR is worth (e.g., DR 2 protects for 2 seconds). The acid will also eat through almost any armor. For each two seconds spent in the acid or in contact with it, subtract 1 from both DR and PD.

Earth, certain types of stone, glass, and a few rare organic items (including the swamp's vegetation) are immune to the acid. Cloth, normal vegetable matter, and so on will be eaten away at 1 DR per turn. Metal items are destroyed at one hit per 2 seconds.



Reptile Man hide is also immune to the corrosive effects. (In fact, it could be fashioned into a container for the liquid.) Anyone wearing Reptile Man armor takes only half damage if they fall in. Reptile Men are not harmed by the acid, but cannot drink it!

A Caustigus attack is a good way for the gamemaster to weed out unwanted magic items; those too-powerful magic swords of total destruction (that seemed like such a *good* idea at the time) will lose more than their edge if immersed in the swamp's deadly acid for a turn or two...

## Gryphon

ST: 30-35    Speed/Dodge: 15/7#    Size: 2 hexes  
DX: 14    PD/DR: 1/1    Weight: 500-600 lbs.  
IQ: 5    Damage: 2d-1 cut    Habitat: Mountain  
HT: 15/20-25    Reach: C

A gryphon is a beautiful creature with the head, wings and forefeet of an eagle and the hindquarters of a lion. It is a fierce predator of the forests and mountains. Its feathers store mana, which aids in flight.

Gryphons *can* be tamed if captured young, but their handlers suffer a penalty of -3 to any animal-control skills. Being half bird and half mammal, they cannot be controlled by either the Control Bird or Control Mammal spell! An untamed gryphon might sell for \$5,000; a tame one is almost priceless but will not cooperate with anyone but its trainer.

In flight, the gryphon's maximum load is Light encumbrance. It has a Speed of 6 on the ground, 15 in flight (11 if encumbered). It attacks by clawing and pecking in close combat for 2d-1 damage.

Gryphons are common to all forested and mountainous areas of Yrth, especially the Fence of God, the Great Forest, and the Emperor's Forest in Megalos.

## Harpy

ST: 12-17    Speed/Dodge: 20/10#    Size: 1 hex  
DX: 14    PD/DR: 1/1    Weight: 100-200 lbs.  
IQ: 5    Damage: 1d cut    Habitat: Mountain  
HT: 13-16    Reach: C

Harpies are vile creatures, appearing to be half woman and half bird. In reality, there is nothing human about them at all — they are not intelligent, do not use tools, and do not speak. They have no hands, but have large claws on their wings. They are found in groups of five or more, and are active day or night.

Harpies are exceedingly unwholesome and dirty, and delight in befouling food and drink so badly as to make them totally unusable; the stench is enough to warn most people away. Anyone so foolish (or desperate) as to eat the rood anyway must make a roll against HT. On a successful roll, the person merely feels sick and loses 2 HT. On a failed roll he will be seized by painful stomach cramps and lost 1d+1 HT immediately; he will be at -3 to all skills and attributes until the lost HT is restored.

Harpies will not harm anyone who does not get in their way, but will viciously attack any who interfere with them. They attack with claws and talons in close combat (flying at the head especially) for 1d cutting damage. Anyone wounded by a harpy must make a successful HT roll to avoid infection (p. B117). On the ground, harpies have Speed 3, Dodge 7.

Harpies are most commonly found in the badlands of al-Haz and al-Wazif, and in the mountainous areas of the Great Forest and the Emperor's Forest.

## Hellshark

ST: 75-90    Speed/Dodge: 10/6    Size: 20 hexes

DX: 13    PD/DR: 1/1    Weight: 10+ tons  
IQ: 3    Damage: 3d+1 cut    Habitat: Saltwater  
HT: 12/60-80    Reach: C

Hellsharks are the most deadly and ferocious creatures swimming in Yrth's oceans. So huge that they can swallow a man in a single gulp, hellsharks are living, breathing eating machines. They swallow anything and everything that comes into their path, fearing nothing — not even the great kraken of the deep. Hellsharks have even been known to go after boats, especially low-riding sailboats, and are a particular problem near milkfish farms where a quick snack is always waiting.

Hellsharks have huge, gaping jaws filled with rows of sharp teeth. Their bodies are slender and tapered and they are incredibly fast, gliding quickly and quietly through the murky waters.

## Hippogriff

ST: 32-40    Speed/Dodge: 15/7#    Size: 3 hexes  
DX: 14    PD/DR: 1/1    Weight: 600-700 lbs.  
IQ: 4    Damage: 1d+2 cr    Habitat: Mountain  
HT: 15/20-25    Reach: C

The hippogriff has the hindquarters and legs of a horse and the forequarters of a gryphon — in other words, the head and wings of an eagle with the chest of a lion. It flies with the aid of mana stored in its feathers.

Hippogriffs are exceedingly rare; a young one would be worth \$20,000 or more, a wild adult at least \$10,000. The horse blood makes them much easier to tame — there are no penalties to animal control skills. Hippogriffs attack by kicking with the hooves like a horse (1d+2 crushing) or biting with the beak (1d cutting).

Due to its horse-like legs, the hippogriff is much faster on the ground than the gryphon: Speed 12, Dodge 6. In flight, the hippogriff can carry up to Medium encumbrance — for Light encumbrance, reduce Speed by 4; for Medium, reduce speed by 8.

Hippogriffs are most common in the northern areas of the Whitehood Mountains.

## Hydra

ST: 20-25    Speed/Dodge: 7/6#    Size: 3 hexes  
DX: 12    PD/DR: 2/3#    Weight: 600-800 lbs.  
IQ: 3    Damage: 1d+1 imp    Habitat: Swamp  
HT: 16/24-30#    Reach: C,1

The hydra is a unique reptilian monster with many heads. According to legend, two heads will grow whenever one is lopped off, unless fire is immediately applied to the wound. They are solitary, diurnal creatures, attacking anything on sight.

Each turn the hydra can attack with up to three heads into any front or side hexes; each head bites for 1d+1 impaling damage.

A hydra may be encountered with only one head, or with more than a dozen. Each head has PD 1, DR 1, and 6 hits. These values apply only to the heads — the body values are listed above. The heads are at -4 to be hit; damage done to one head does not affect the others or the body.

The hydra can never be stunned or rendered unconscious, only killed. A head dies if it takes 6 hits; the body dies if it takes damage equal to the hydra's full hit points. If all heads are killed, the body will also die. If the body is killed, the heads will survive for a time, losing 1 HT per hour.

Whenever a head dies, it shrivels and falls off. In 3 turns, two new heads will begin to grow in its place. After 7 more turns, the

new heads have reached full growth and can attack. At any time before these ten seconds are up, 6 points (total, not per new head) of fire damage will permanently cauterize the wound and wither both of the new heads.

Hydras on Yrth are known only in the coastal marshlands of Cardiel.

## Kraken

ST: 7-20#      Speed/Dodge: 10/6#      Size: 30-1,000 hexes  
DX: 13      PD/DR: 3/2      Wt: 500-10,000+(!) tons  
IQ: 3      Damage: \*      Habitat: Saltwater  
HT: 15/20-200      Reach: C, 1-70

Krakens are giant squids which inhabit the deep seas of Yrth. They rarely come anywhere near shore. They continue to grow throughout their lives and thus range considerably in size — anywhere from a mere 35 feet long to over 100 yards. Their bodies are streamlined, with width being only 1/6 of total length.

The ST listed above is actually for each of the kraken's ten tentacles. Two of these range from 10-70 yards in length (depending on the size of the kraken), with the other eight being much shorter. In diameter, the tentacles run from less than half a yard for the smaller krakens to more than a full yard for the larger ones.

In one turn, the kraken may grapple with any two of its tentacles and still defend normally — if it uses more tentacles it gets no active defense. Out of the water, a tentacle can reach one-third of its total length in height. The tentacles get no Dodge, unless the kraken's body is lying on the surface of the water — it must be able to see to defend.

The turn after it has grappled its victim, the kraken will try to draw its prey towards its beak. Each tentacle can lift 20 times its ST in pounds, and move at a rate of one yard per second. If a victim is too heavy for one tentacle to lift, the kraken will try to grapple with a second one. Grappling with all tentacles, the kraken can drag up to ten times its own weight at two yards per second. Thus, a large kraken is capable of sinking small ships!

To break free from a tentacle, the victim must roll a Contest of ST (p. B87). An attempt to pull off more than one tentacle can be made — simply add their ST together before rolling the Contest. The tentacles do crushing damage according to their ST. Roll a Quick Contest — the tentacle's ST versus the victim's HT. If the kraken wins, the victim takes as many hits of damage as the kraken won by. Otherwise, nothing happens. In addition, if a victim is dragged below the water, he will begin to drown (see *Drowning*, p. B91). Should he be brought to the mouth still living, the beak does cutting damage based on its ST (see p. B136), the ST of the beak being 3 times that of a tentacle.

Each tentacle can take damage up to 20% of the kraken's total hit points before being disabled, and can only be amputated by cutting damage. Impaling damage against a kraken's tentacles is not doubled. Damage to the tentacles does not affect overall HT. Reaching the kraken's head or vitals normally requires going into the water to attack — the mark of a true hero!

## Nightstalker

ST: 40-45      Speed/Dodge: 7/6      Size: 4 hexes  
DX: 13      PD/DR: 1/2      Wt: 1,700-2,000 lbs.  
IQ: 5      Damage: 2d+2 cr#      Habitat: Forest  
HT: 15/40-50      Reach: C,1

The nightstalker is the largest carnivorous mammal on Yrth. They are giant bear-like animals of incredible ferocity; as the name implies, they are nocturnal. A nightstalker encountered in its den by day will fight at -1, or -3 if driven into the blinding sunlight.

Day or night, most nightstalkers will charge on sight. They attack with their claws for crushing damage, or bite for the same amount of cutting damage. A nightstalker usually ambles along on all fours, but they are capable of standing on their back legs and crushing their opponents in powerful “bear-hugs.” They hunt the large herbivores of the forest, but they relish human meat. They cannot climb trees, but a full-grown nightstalker can knock down a tree up to 6” thick.

Nightstalkers inhabit the wooded areas of Megalos and Caithness.

## Paladin

ST: 10-15      Speed/Dodge: 3/3      Size: 2 hexes  
DX: 12      PD/DR: 4/6#      Weight: 400-600 lbs.  
IQ: 3      Damage: 1d+1 imp#      Habitat: Plains  
HT: 16/20-25      Reach: C

Paladins are turtle-like grazing mammals, covered in tough bony plates, articulated over the head and tail, and set in a solid dome covering the top of the main body. The stomach and belly are, however, quite soft. The tail, on the other hand, is long and supple, protected by durable plates and ending in a ball of sharp thorny spikes. They are very slow-moving, and so well protected that little bothers them. When trouble threatens, they generally continue ambling forward, swinging their deadly tail back and forth. Even the most ferocious of predators is usually dissuaded by this tactic, and leaves well enough alone. The tail works like a spiked mace, is equally difficult to parry, and does 1d +1 impaling damage. It is their only form of attack.

Paladins have PD 4, DR 6 over the hard parts of the body armor. The head and tail are PD 3, DR 4. The soft belly and undersides of the limbs (generally only accessible by flipping the beast over onto its back) are PD 1, DR 1.

Paladins only inhabit the southern areas of Ytarria, and are particularly common on the plains of al-Haz.

## Pegasus

ST: 40      Speed/Dodge: 20/10#      Size: 3 hexes  
DX: 14      PD/DR: 1/1      Weight: 1,100 lbs.  
IQ: 7      Damage: -      Habitat: Mountain  
HT: 15      Reach: -

Pegasi are shy winged horses living in the hidden valleys of high mountain ranges. They are extremely difficult to capture and can never be truly tamed. Pegasi will never attack; if threatened, they will fly away.

A pegasus flies with the aid of mana stored in its feathers. In flight, it has Speed 20, Dodge 10. On the ground, it has Speed 14, Dodge 7. Flying, it can carry up to Medium encumbrance — reduce Speed by 4 for Light encumbrance, and by 8 for Medium.

On Yrth, pegasi are only found in the northern ranges of the Whitehood and Bronze Mountains.

## Reek

ST: -      Speed/Dodge: 1/0      Size: 1 hex  
DX: -      PD/DR: 0/0      Height: 20-60 lbs.  
IQ: -      Damage: \*      Habitats: Caves, jungles  
HT: 5-20      Reach: C

A reek is a nasty, slimy creature found in caverns, deep woods, and jungles. It looks like a huge decaying lump of brown jelly, though there are some slight color variations. It feeds by covering and dissolving organic matter, both living and dead. Reeks hate sunlight, and are active any time that it isn't too bright. They are usually solitary, though they can occasionally

be found two at a time, as their mating season lasts the whole year. Like worms, reeks are hermaphroditic.

Reeks attack by contact, doing 1 hit of damage per turn. No DX roll is required — if they can reach your hex, they hit. Armor protects for the number of turns equal to its DR. They ignore impaling weapons, but are affected by cutting and crushing damage, as does fire. Reeks cannot fall down, be stunned, lose their balance, etc., and there is only the general body to hit. Reeks do not exactly lose consciousness, but become unable to move at 0 HT, and are destroyed when they are at  $-3 \times \text{HT}$  (there is no roll at  $-\text{HT}$ , etc).

Most reeks cannot climb and aren't fast enough to catch prey. They are most dangerous when unseen — make an IQ-2 roll to avoid stepping on one in your path! Anyone stepping *into* a reek can pull free by making a ST roll; otherwise the creature must be killed to get it off. All rules about striking into close combat apply.

Those reeks that can climb use trees or cave walls as platforms to drop on unsuspecting visitors. Certain types have magical abilities powered by mana stored in their nuclei. These can cast one or two spells at level 15, and store up to 15 fatigue points of mana at a time, recharging expended points at a rate of 1 per hour. The GM may develop new types of magical reeks as desired.

Some reeks reach gigantic proportions. In general, multiply weight, hit points and damage by the number of hexes of size.

Reeks are not affected by any of the control animal spells.

### Strider

ST: 25-30	Speed/Dodge: 18/8	Size: 1 hex
DX: 15	PD/DR: 0/0	Weight: 900-1,100 lbs.
IQ: 3	Damage: 2d+1 imp#	Habitats: Plains, Desert
HT: 15/20-24 Reach: C,1,2		

The strider is a huge flightless bird, standing up to 10 feet tall, of which most is feet and neck. It has bristling hair-like feathers covering its elliptical body, while its long serpentine neck and flat wedge-shaped head are bare. Though the bird's greatest defense and favorite tactic is to run when threatened, a strider is also quite dangerous when cornered. Its claws are heavily taloned and able to kick out in a 2-hex radius — tales are told of striders reaching out and disemboweling a mounted knight as he rides past. Its beak is sharp and pointed, the strong neck endowing it with all the properties of a broad-headed spear. The beak will do 2d-1 impaling damage to whatever it hits.

For all its ferocity, the strider does not normally attack men. It is an omnivore; it uses its beak to dig up succulent tubers and small rodents in its native desert lands. Striders can live in better country, but thrive in the wild only in the badlands of al-Haz and al-Wazif and the dry plains of Cardiel. They can be domesticated, but remain stupid, skittish and dangerous ( $-2$  to Animal Handling rolls). Only magical control allows them to be ridden.

A real treasure anywhere is the egg of a strider. These monstrosities are over 3 feet in circumference and contain several gallons of fluid. They are extremely heavy. A whole one is equal to at least a thousand hen's eggs.

### Treetipper

ST: 35-40	Speed/Dodge: 4/5	Size: 5 hexes
DX: 10	PD/DR: 0/2	Weight: 2,000-2,500 lbs.
IQ: 3	Damage: 1d+1 cr#	Habitat: Forest
HT: 15/25-30 Reach: C		

Treetippers are big, unwieldy animals with long shaggy fur over their entire body, four short, strong limbs ending in long curved claws, and heavy tails which they use for balance. They

are slow-moving eaters of plants, insects and carrion — anything they can get their rake-like claws into. But their most common eating posture is to move up next to a tall tree, squat on their haunches, and use their forepaws to drag tree branches down into their mouth. Hence the name “treetipper.”

Treetippers have only their size, claws and the layer of thick bone plating underneath their skin to protect them. They have become rarer and rarer in Ytarria, with the ever-decreasing forests and increasing human population.

Treetippers attack by slashing with their claws for 1d+1 crushing damage, or biting for 1d-1 crushing damage. This will sometimes fend off their natural foes, wolves and nightstalkers, but avails little against bow-wielding humans.

Treetippers are found only in the northern forested areas, and were once quite common in Caithness.

### Troll

ST: 20-30	Speed/Dodge: 5/5	Size: 1 hex
DX: 13	PD/DR: 1/1	Weight: 250-300 lbs.
IQ: 10	Damage: *	Habitats: Forest, Jungle
HT: 12+/20+# Reach: C, 1,2		

Trolls are huge, greenish humanoid monsters. They are rare, but may be found almost anywhere — wilderness, jungle, or skulking in city ruins or sewers. They are carnivorous and *love* children.

A troll attacks by ripping and striking with its huge, clawed hands. Figure damage as for “biting” (p. B140), based on ST, but *doubled* and with a 2-hex reach!

Trolls have a powerful regeneration ability. Only damage done by acid, fire, or lightning will be permanent. All other damage regenerates at the rate of one hit every third turn. If a Troll is hacked to bits, the pieces will rejoin within an hour unless burned. If the pieces are separated, each will grow a mouth immediately, and crawl around eating offal until it can grow into a new Troll (1-6 weeks, depending on the size of the piece). The flesh of a troll is unwholesome; nothing will eat them.

### Unicorn

ST: 35-40	Speed/Dodge: 18/9#	Size: 3 hexes
DX: 15	PD/DR: 1/1	Weight: 800-1,200 lbs.
IQ: 5	Damage: 2d+1 imp#	Habitat: Forest
HT: 15-17 Reach: C		

A unicorn resembles a horse or a goat, with a goat's beard and a single sharp, twisted yard-long horn growing out of its forehead. The horn is usually black at the base, white in the middle, and red at the tip, though some are pure white. The unicorn is a solitary, reclusive creature — most people will never see one, and no one has ever seen two together. It is not sentient and cannot speak any human language. Nor is it magical (except for the horn); it cannot cast spells.

In combat, the unicorn is reputed to be the fiercest animal in nature, and no sound is more horrible than its braying. Most say that it can be killed but never captured, and that it can never be tamed. Some legends say that it has a weakness for female virgins, and will put its head on a virgin's lap and allow itself to be stroked until it falls asleep. At this point it may be captured, but it cannot be tamed, and capturing one will not win its friendship.

The unicorn's horn, or “alicorn,” is reputed to have many magical abilities — including neutralizing any poison on contact. They are very rare and valuable... a true alicorn would be worth at least \$100,000!

Unicorns have keen senses (Vision, Hearing, Taste/Smell 18) and are quite stealthy (Stealth 18). If they detect anyone ap-

proaching, they will steal away before they can even be seen. If cornered, they will fight viciously, though they will likely take the first opportunity to flee if the battle is going against them.

In combat, the unicorn fights primarily with its horn, though it can kick and bite as a horse. The horn attack is handled as a slam attack, with the unicorn doing 2d+1 impaling damage on a successful slam. If the unicorn wins the Contest of DX (in the slam) by 8 or more, it automatically does maximum damage. Critical success by the unicorn means that it has hit its opponent in the vitals. The unicorn can also parry with its horn (Parry 7). Biting damage is 1d crushing; kicking is 1d+2 crushing. The only known location of unicorns in Yrth is the Great Forest.

### Wyvern

ST: 20-30    Speed/Dodge: 20/10    Size: 10 hexes  
DX: 14    PD/DR: 2/3    Weight: 800-1,100 lbs.  
IQ: 6    Damage:\*    Habitats: Mountain  
HT: 14/24-30 Reach: C,1,2

A wyvern is a dragon-like creature with only two legs and a long, snake-like, barbed, poisonous tail. Like dragons, wyverns are fierce predators and fly well. However, they are not intelligent and have no flame-breath. They are solitary diurnal creatures found in remote wilderness, and seldom come close to civ-

ilized lands; those that do are immediately hunted down.

A wyvern will strike with its tail (2-hex reach!) from above, then land to carry off its prey; it can carry up to Medium encumbrance. Due to its barb, the tail does 1d+2 impaling damage. It can penetrate up to heavy leather armor or chainmail (plus any toughness), but nothing thicker. Against a metal-armored foe, a wyvern is fairly helpless, though it will slamattack a knight to get to less armored prey.

The tail's venom is very strong. Anyone stung must make a roll against HT-6. Failure means the venom does 2d damage in addition to any damage done by the barb, and the victim is at -4 DX for the next three days — critical failure means instant death. If the HT-6 roll is made, the victim takes only half damage (in addition to the damage done by the barb), and is at -2 DX for the next three days. The wyvern can strike up to 20 times before exhausting its venom, and takes about 8 hours to replace each dose used.

Its talons are used for grasping its prey, doing 1d-1 cutting damage in close combat. On the ground, its Speed is reduced to 3, Dodge to 7. Wyverns are common to all the uncivilized mountainous, forested areas of Yrth, especially thie Firuz region of al-Haz.

## Domestic Animals

### Harding

ST: 9-13    Speed/Dodge: 8/6    Size: 1 hexes  
DX: 12    PD/DR: 1/0    Weight: 100-350 lbs.  
IQ: 4    Damage: 1d+2cr#    Habitat: Mountain, Plains  
HT: 15/7-11 Reach: C

Hardings are goat-like creatures native to Yrth. They have short, thick tusks curling beside their mouths; they use these to dig food out of otherwise inaccessible spots. They thrive in the most dismal of areas, seemingly able to eat anything that nature offers. Hardings provide a thin nutritious milk which is often made into Harding cheese; a long wiry fur that can be woven into a warm cloth (Harding wool); and a tough, chewy meat whose taste has been unfavorably compared to leather.

### Horses

As a vital form of transportation, and the primary vehicle for battle, horses are very important to Yrth. The distance a horse can travel in a day is normally no greater than that for a man (see p. B187), but the horse is the one who gets tired!

There are other types of horse — but these two are the varieties most likely to be important in the campaign.

#### Destrier

ST: 40-50    Speed/Dodge: 15/7#    Size: 3 hexes  
DX: 9    PD/DR: 0/0    Weight: 1,500-2,000 lbs.  
IQ: 4    Damage: 1d+2 #  
HT: 12-15    Reach: C,1

Large, mean beasts bred for warfare, these are the rarest and most expensive of horses. They attack by kicking with their rear hooves and striking out with their forehooves. They may also bite in close combat, doing 3 hits of crushing damage. Destriers are the standard mounts for noble knights and high-ranking cavalry officers. Combat destriers are all stallions, and are almost certain to fight with other stallions, or to attack any human in range, when not under the supervision of their master or a groom they know. Destrier mares, not having been combat-trained, are less dangerous.

#### Saddle Horse

ST: 28-35+    Speed/Dodge: 12/6    Size: 3 hexes  
DX: 9    PD/DR: 0/0    Weight: 900-1,200 lbs.  
IQ: 4    Damage: 1d cr#  
HT: 12-14    Reach: C,1

Saddle horses are lighter mounts, generally used for pleasure riding or for traveling from one place to the next. They are bred for a comfortable gait and a pleasant disposition. They may be trained to fight like a destrier, but this is quite rare.

#### Milkfish

ST: 30-50    Speed/Dodge: 3/3#    Size: 3 hexes  
DX: 9    PD/DR: 2/3    Weight: 1,500-3,000 lbs.  
IQ: 4    Damage: 1d-3 cr#    Habitat: Saltwater  
HT: 14-16    Reach: C

#Land speed is 3; water speed is 6, still with a Dodge of 3.

Milkfish are not really fish at all. They are large mammals which live in shallow and sandy places along seashores, grazing on seaweed. They have squat ugly faces covered with whiskers, thick, bony front limbs used for digging and balancing themselves in the water, and long, lumpy bodies which end in a flat whale-like tail. The hide is tough and leathery, with thick blubber underneath. Their only attack is an ineffectual tail-slap.

They are extremely easy to domesticate. Enterprising herders have found that in addition to the rich milk that give the animals their name, milkfish meat is tender and tasty, and the fatty layer underneath the tough outer skin can be used to make useful oils.

#### Woolens or Blacksheep

ST: 5-9    Speed/Dodge: 8/6#    Size: 1 hex  
DX: 13    PD/DR: 1/1    Weight: 50-150 lbs.  
IQ: 5    Damage: 1d-3 cr#    Habitat: Plains  
HT: 14/6-8    Reach: C

Woolens are small grazing beasts which closely resemble sheep. Always black, their fur is thick and fine and easily spun, making it a preferred textile throughout Ytarria. Their meat is also quite delicious.

# FANTASY CAMPAIGNS

6

Of all the genres of fiction and gaming, fantasy is the widest. There is no single conclusive definition of fantasy. If a story includes magic, it's *probably* fantasy. Elves, dragons, and a pseudo-medieval background are common, but not required. There are many distinct sub-genres: *heroic fantasy* such as Tolkien's and Howard's, *Celtic fantasy* about the creatures of Faerie, *urban fantasy* set in the here-and-now, *fantasy realism*, which does not have to be a contradiction, and more.

In the final analysis, fantasy is what the writer creates when he says "This is a fantasy." There are as many different fantasy worlds as there are creators. And, by changing a single assumption — for instance, the frequency of magic — another new world is created. Even within a single game world, many different kinds of campaign are possible.

This section will discuss the things that go into creating a fantasy world and a fantasy campaign



# Setting

The very first question to answer when a new world is being created is “Where is it?” Before the creator can write a million words of description, he must be able to sum up the setting in a single sentence. Here are a few of the possible choices for a fantasy setting:

## *Unrecorded History*

This is our own Earth, but not the Earth we know today. It assumes that mighty races and nations thrived, hundreds of thousands of years ago, only to fall into oblivion. Robert Howard's *Conan* stories, set in the prehistoric “Hyborean Age,” are perhaps the best-known example.

Such a background lets the writer use almost any mythological element he pleases, in any way he likes. Thor and Odin become real northern chieftains (or perhaps real living gods), the Fenris-wolf a real monster to slay (or perhaps the original werewolf). He can take today's continents and change them as much or as little as he likes.

## *Historical Earth*

This is our own Earth, but *not quite*. Starting with a familiar background, the writer adds elements of magic, conspiracy, and whatever else he likes. In a novel, this becomes a story of “what *really* happened that the history books don't tell you.” In a game, this allows the GM and players to do detailed research into *any* historical period while maintaining a fantasy atmosphere. When campaigning in such a world, the GM may want to enforce the rule “Do nothing that will change written history.” In other words, the PCs can use magic to foil the Gunpowder Plot — they can even be the real reason Guy Fawkes was caught. But they can't decide to let him escape and blow up Parliament after all! Or, if they do, the GM is entitled to make up a reason why Fawkes failed, *despite* the PCs' aid.

Among the writers who have succeeded with this kind of pseudo-historical setting are Tim Powers (*The Anubis Gates*, *On Stranger Tides*) and K.W. Jeter (*Infernal Machines*).

## *Parallel Worlds*

A *parallel* world is one in which history proceeded like that of our own Earth, with some difference which made the present day very different. Suppose Julius Caesar had survived the assassins' knives? Suppose Pasteur had caught rabies and died?

The challenge of creating such a world is to work out, logically, everything that might have happened thanks to the chosen change. Randall Garrett's “Lord Darcy” stories are set in a parallel world, much like our own, which also happens to include magic.

Parallel worlds, especially those which diverged from our own history fairly recently, let the GM introduce NPCs based on today's famous figures in entirely new roles. For instance, L. Neil Smith's *The Probability Broach* features a small-time housebreaker known to his friends as Tricky Dick...

## *Alternate Earth*

An “alternate Earth” is like a parallel world, but less so. It is recognizably similar to our own world, but with no common points of history and geography. It may contain significant cultural parallels, depending on the whim of the creator. For instance, Harry Turtledove's *Videssos Cycle* tells the story of a Roman legion transported between worlds. Their destination is wholly Earth-

## *Crossover Campaigns*

One of GURPS' strengths is its ability to mix different roleplaying genres without sacrificing playability. This leads to a number of potential “crossover” campaigns.

## *Horror*

From arcane, eldritch demons to grave-yards full of animated, sword-bearing skeletons, horror and fantasy fit each other perfectly. The only problem is determining what will really *scare* the PCs — after all, in many worlds it won't be uncommon to get attacked by a purple, tentacled blob. Instead of trying to frighten them with monsters, the GM should concentrate on *atmosphere*. Players expect certain elements in a fantasy campaign. If the GM takes these and *twists* them just a shade to the dark side, the players will notice.

What if the players ride into an Elvish village and find everyone in it frozen to death — in the middle of summer? Or perhaps an evil mage has found a spell that requires fifty pounds of Pixie wings — the PCs keep discovering dead, mutilated sprites along the side of the road.

## *Supers*

In a world where magic is common, a super is nothing more than a wizard in tights. Still, it makes for an interesting surprise (especially if the CM *begins* his fantasy campaign by teleporting the characters from his (or a friend's) *Supers* campaign!

Bricks would become known far and wide as mighty warriors — knights might travel the length and breadth of the land for the opportunity to vanquish such a mighty foe. Most others would simply be thought of as strange wizards. A psi might be hailed as a prophet or seer — or burned as a witch. In the Moslem lands, a super would be required to serve time in the army, just as Islamic mages (see p. 83),

## *Cyberpunk*

There are two ways to combine fantasy and *GURPS Cyberpunk*. The first is the approach taken by FASA's *Shadowrun* — Elves 'n' Orcs in a cyberpunk background. No problem; just take all of your standard fantasy races and give them guns, mohawks and an attitude.

An alternative approach is to keep the attitude (and maybe the mohawks) but drop the technology. Imagine a fantasy background run with the cyberpunk ethos... with magic taking the place of bionics and the Net as the “source of power.” Wizards aren't sages or merchants; they're hard-edged, alert businessmen. They and their bodyguards have all the magical augmentations that money can buy... Dark Vision instead of IR eyes, and so on. Anything that cyberpunk technology can do, mages can do as well.

*Continued on next page...*

like, but not Earth. And the nation they come to serve is not Byzantium, but it is very much *like* Byzantium!

Similarly, the *Thieves' World* series, edited by Robert Asprin, is set on no recognizable Earth, past or future. But the people and lands are convincingly medieval.

Yrth is an alternate world, brought into closer similarity with Earth by the Banestorm.

### **Crossover Campaigns (Continued)**

#### **Space**

This is a very common theme in science fiction literature — one of the best examples is Poul Anderson's *The High Crusade*. Imagine a world where the knights of the crusade got their hands on interstellar spaceships, and took the Holy Crusade against the infidel into the farthest reaches of the galaxy!

There is also the “pulp” campaigns suggested by Edgar Rice Burroughs' Barsoom or Venus books — swords and blasters and bug-eyed monsters, all intent on defiling human women.

Ultra-technology can also be introduced into a fantasy world (one method for Yrth is suggested in the sidebar on p. 55). This will quite likely result in the “Techno Wars” as the wizards attempt to eradicate all evidence of the advanced technology.

#### **Special Ops**

Life in a fantasy army is a long-neglected subject Especially in times of war and dissent (such as Yrth is about to enter), the life of a legionary is only dull for very brief (and usually welcome) periods.

Perhaps the characters form an elite unit, such as a Fist of Michaelites (see sidebar, p. 20), or are highly-trained spies for the Megalan Emperor.

In a modern-day twist, the PCs could be a mercenary team from the 20th century who got caught in the Banestorm. They've arrived with full clips and a lot of questions — and why are all of these guys in robes trying to kill them?

#### **Survivors**

A fantasy world does not *have* to represent a young civilization — many interesting “fantasy” worlds (Robert Adam's *Horseclans* stories, for instance) are really post-technological rather than pre-technological.

Perhaps the nuclear or genetic cataclysm that nearly destroyed the world triggered a mana upheaval. Machinery suddenly ceased to work correctly (or was destroyed) and children began to display strange... powers. Stephen Boyett's *Ariel* would make an excellent game background.

### **Future Worlds**

Fantasy may also be set thousands or millions of years from now, giving magic to the distant future rather than the distant past. No effort need be made to explain *why* magic now works, and the echoes of today's world will be at once spooky and familiar. The premier example in fiction is Jack Vance's *Dying Earth* cycle. Michael Reaves' *The Shattered World* is another good specimen,

### **Science Fiction**

This is also a future setting, but everything is justified; part of the art of creating this sort of world is inventing the explanations. Magic becomes a force, perhaps psionic, to be harnessed by the wise. Elves and Dwarves become gene-modified races, perhaps created as servants or amusements. An example is James Kahn's novel *World Enough, and Time*.

## **Magic**

If fantasy has a “common denominator” at all, magic is it. Almost all fantasy worlds include magic-users, and are largely defined by the nature of their powers.

Still, the first question to ask is “Does this world contain magic at all?” If a world is similar to that of Earth's Middle Ages but has its own invented history and geography, it will read like a fantasy even without magic. An example is the world of Lantara, setting of the adventure “All In A Night's Work” on the *GURPS Basic Set*. The people of Lantara *believe* in magic, but it is either nonexistent or so rare that the average person never encounters it at all. If a world has no magic, it might be because it is a no-mana area (making magic impossible) or because no one there knows any spells... yet.

But if the fantasy world *does* include magic, there are several important decisions to be made. How strong is the magic, how widespread is it, and how does it work?

If the world is to include magic, the GM will find *GURPS Magic* very useful; Chapter 9 of that book includes more discussions of alternative magic systems. If the system used is not *GURPS*, acquire the appropriate book of magical stats, creatures and spells.

### **Mana Strength**

The *GURPS Basic Set* defines *mana*, the force behind magic, as being “very high,” “high,” “normal,” “low,” or nonexistent for game purposes. See p. B147. The world's overall mana strength determines how well magic works.

Mana level need not be uniform throughout the world. On Yrth, for instance, Caithness has low mana while Megalos has normal mana; the boundary between the nations is determined by the mana change. So Megalos makes heavy use of magic in daily life, and Caithness doesn't!

*Normal mana* means that spells work exactly as described in the rules, and only “mages” (those with magical power — see below) can use them. This is the “generic” condition of most fantasy worlds.

*Low mana* means that magic works poorly and is hard to cast, but it *does* work. Few wizards will choose to live in such a place, if there are higher-mana areas they can reach. Those who remain will find their talents proportionately more in demand. Magic may have little impact on daily life for the common people. If the whole world has low mana, then magic may be common but will usually be feeble (see sidebar, p. 71).

*High mana* means that *everyone* can learn spells, and cast them relatively easily! In a high-mana nation or world, magic will be an important part of daily life. A small spot of high mana will likely be the object of wizardly battles; it would be valuable as a home base.

*Very high mana* makes magic so powerful that it is hard to control and therefore very dangerous. A world of very high mana would be an unusual place indeed!

### **Aspected Mana**

There can be areas of unusual mana, as described on p. 84 of *GURPS Magic*. In such an area of “aspected” mana, some types of magic do especially well, while others work poorly or not at all. It is even possible that *all* mana could be aspected.

Mana levels may also change over time. These changes may be slow or rapid, predictable or random. Imagine the cultural effects if, for instance, everyone knew that a certain no-mana area would be covered by a “wave” of normal mana within 10 years. Or imagine the effect on a campaign if the capital of a magic-using nation changed, without warning, to a low-mana area!

### **Scientific Justification**

There need be no scientific explanation at all for mana; it's just there. On the other hand, the GM can *create* a reason for mana to exist, and perhaps for it to change. Even if the GM has an explanation of mana, he doesn't have to tell the PCs what it is! Perhaps they can eventually find out — and the knowledge may or may not bring power.

The *GURPS* rules assume that mana is a renewable resource; it cannot be exhausted. For a detailed treatment of the idea that an area's mana *can* be exhausted, see Larry Niven's *The Magic Goes Away* and its sequels.

### **Magery**

Magery, or “magical aptitude” (see p. B21) is the inborn talent for magic. One with magery is called a *mage*. In areas of normal and low mana, only a mage can cast spells. In areas of higher mana, mages still get an advantage in spell use. There are three levels of magery, of increasing potency.

This follows the general fantasy assumption that not everyone can use magic, and that even among wizards, some are born with more power. The GM who wishes to abolish this distinction may of course do so!

### **Frequency of Magery**

If some people are born magic-users, the GM should determine the frequency. This is described for Yrth on p. 11; it is a good “average” number, making wizards relatively common but not quite an everyday sight. It also assumes that more wizards will be born where the mana is higher.

The GM may vary this by making mages very common, or so rare that each one is famous. (In this latter case, few PCs should be mages!) Or, perhaps, “ordinary” mages are common, but those with Magery 3 are few and far between.

### **Character Points**

Two very significant factors in the “flavor” of a campaign are the starting point level and the rate at which character points are awarded.

100 points is the default starting level for a fantasy campaign. This will allow the PCs to be much better than average, but will put them significantly below the serious Yrth “power brokers.” If a player is trying to create a knight, he will have to settle for a very inexperienced one — the average bright is between 150 and 200 points!

150 points allows the characters to assume the role of up-and-coming heroes (or villains). They've been around long enough to have established a reputation of some sort, and will probably have several valuable Patrons or Allies. By the end of *Lord of the Rings*, Merry and Pippin were probably 150 points each.

200 points will give the player a full-fledged hero. Whether this be a knight, a noble or a *powerful* priest, he will be renowned (throughout his home lands, at least) as a foe to be reckoned with.

Different rates of CP awards also produce different effects. 1-3 points per play session will result in very slow character development. The advantage of this style is that it forces the player to develop the character's *role* — not his point total. The disadvantage is that many players will feel like their character isn't progressing at an acceptable rate.

Awards of 4-6 points are considered the norm — this is a good blend of character advancement and controlled point expenditure

10-15+ points per session will result in a wild ride down the road to stardom. Almost before they know it, the PCs will be rocketed into the arena of serious politics and adventuring. This style forces the pace of a campaign, and can result in overpowered characters. It works well for a short campaign, however.







### **Op Teams**

"You all meet in a tavern..." That line has started more fantasy campaigns (some good, many bad) than any other. There are other options for assembling the PCs into one group (and ensuring that the group doesn't degenerate into a backstabbing brawl by the campaign's end!).

The "op team" is a group of specialists assembled for a specific mission by a specific employer — maybe the crown, or possibly a Patron such as an elderly wizard or mystic priest. In this particular case, party loyalty is (or should be) guaranteed by the large bonus they stand to collect when the job is over. One or two party members may not make it through — but it will be in everyone's best interest to have a large enough group to complete the mission.

After the job is done, such a team might conceivably stay together if they performed well. They wouldn't necessarily have to remain in the employ of their original patron — there is usually a good market for freelance adventurers!

Typical positions that need to be accounted for in any good op team include a medic, a mage, a stealth-oriented character, and a couple of good fighters. Depending on the size of the group, there are many more positions that *could* be added.

If the GM and players are up to the challenge, each player could have a pool of 3-5 characters from which he chooses at the beginning of a mission, representing a *large* mercenary team. This allows a finely-tuned group to be assembled ("Ok, we've got an Alchemist, a Cartographer, a Sailor and two Bodyguards. All we need is a Butterfly Collector and we can hit the road.")

### **Degree of Spell Knowledge**

A related question: what spells are known? In most fantasy worlds, some spells are common, while others are close-held secrets of a few guilds. And some powerful spells may have been lost in the dim past. The GM who wishes to limit spell use in this way should go through his spell list and designate which spells are which. In general, the more powerful a spell, the less widely known it will be — but variations are interesting.

The existence of secret spells is a good adventure hook. In order to learn a new, powerful spell, a mage must earn a lot of money, or do a favor for a more knowledgeable wizard, or discover a book of secrets. And such books are rarely on the shelves at the downtown library!

In an area of high or very high mana, the creator should also decide how many non-mages are users of magic, and what sort of spells they know.

### **Knacks**

A *knack* is the inborn ability to use a spell, as described on p. 86 of *GURPS Magic*. For a world in which all magic is by knack, see Piers Anthony's *Xanth* novels. Orson Scott Card's *Alvin Maker* stories also include this style of magic. The GM should determine the frequency with which knacks are found among the population.

### **Types of Magic**

There are many different possible types of magic. The creator of a fantasy world must decide which ones exist. Perhaps there is only one type of true magic; perhaps there are many. If there are many types, are they equally powerful? Can a single person use any type of magic, or must each magic-user choose only one sort of skill?

If there are many different types of magic, one can add interesting color by assigning a different name to the users of each type. For instance, a "wizard" might be someone who uses regular magic, while a "sorcerer" is one who works by ritual, and a "shaman" casts runes.

### **"Regular" Magic**

This is the type of magic described in the *Basic Set* and *GURPS Magic*. There are a large number of spells, each of which must be learned separately. One must learn the simple spells of a given "college" before more complex ones can be attempted. Most spells can be cast fairly quickly and have a fairly limited effect. Spells are powered by the caster's own energy.

### **Ceremonial Magic**

Ceremonial magic (see p. B151) is an alternative way to cast the "regular" magic spells. The ritual takes a long time, but it adds to the chance the spell will work, and lets the caster draw on the energy of others to help power his spell. In a world where ceremonial magic was the *only* way of casting spells, magic would usually be reserved for important purposes. However, ceremony might still be used to create "mundane" magical items. A circle of wizards would not convene to bring light to a dark room, but they might take the time to create a permanent magical light. Tactical battle magic (see p. 138) would be rare, but great strategic spells might be cast to blight the enemy land or shake down a castle.

### **Inherent Magic (Knacks)**

As described above, this is magic which is inborn in an individual — the person can cast the spell as a natural ability. A world of knacks might be a world of "wild" magic, depending on which knacks were allowed.

## ***Improvisational Magic***

This type of magic is described on p. M76. It can be used to cast a spell which the wizard doesn't know — or it can be the *only* variety of magic, in a world where there are *no* fixed, permanent spells. Improvisational magic makes wizards very powerful — but very unpredictable.

## ***Rune Magic***

This kind of magic, especially appropriate for a Norse or Celtic background, is described on p. M80. It is a special type of improvised magic, which can be used either to create magical objects or to cast improvised spells. The possessor of a “runestone” can improvise spells very quickly.

## ***Cantrips***

Cantrips, or magical poems, are another kind of improvised magic; see p. 86. To cast a spell, a mage must create a poem asking for the desired effect. This kind of magic will be enjoyed most by players who enjoy thinking on their feet, and it works well in a less-than-serious campaign.

## ***Clerical Magic***

In many fantasy worlds, gods or other supernatural powers are a direct source of magic, if not the *only* source of magic. A properly-ordained servant of a god — a *cleric* — can use spells, usually only those of a type associated with that god (see p. M84).

There are many possible ways to regulate and limit clerical magic. Perhaps only the truly pious can use it — or perhaps belief isn't necessary if the god's will is being done. Perhaps clerical spells can *never* be used in any fashion of which the god would not approve. In a world in which clerical magic is common and effective, religions will have even more power than they do in a society like Yrth!

## ***Psionic “Magic”***

Psi powers (see p. B165) could exist in a fantasy world. Non-psis would not be able to tell their effects from magic. Even the psi users themselves might think that they were using magic of a “different kind.” Of course, psi is not dependent on mana level... unless the GM decides it is. Psi would be especially effective to create a world with two entirely independent and mutually incomprehensible types of “magic.”

## ***Magic Items***

Enchanted objects are as much a part of fantasy as is magic itself, from the hero's enchanted sword to the Quest for the Magic Thingie. The *Basic Set* and *GURPS Magic* rules assume that it is difficult and expensive to make magic items, but not so difficult or expensive that it isn't done!

But this assumption could be changed in many ways. Magic items could be so hard to make that they are almost unknown. Or they might be common, but unreliable, with a large chance to malfunction each time they are used. (If they are cheap and reliable, of course, they simply form an alternate technology — see below).

## ***Magic as an Alternative Technology***

In the real Middle Ages, life was “nasty, brutish and short.” Writers often assume that the presence of magic would make a fantasy Middle Ages cleaner and pleasanter, but rarely go into detail. The world-builder should give it some thought. Here are a few of the most obvious points:

### ***Predestination***

There are many players who rebel violently at anything they perceive as attempted coercion from the gamemaster. Other players, however, are very interested in becoming involved in the developing plotline of the campaign — and if this means occasional cooperation with the GM, t'tien so be it.

A GM can achieve some interesting results if he lets a player know that person's character has a destiny. This can be anything from “He is bound by birth to slay the great lizard Kvornak during a night or the full moon” to “You were marked at birth as the future king of all Moravia. Claim your crown from the demon-prince Agoroth and all shall hail you.”

If presented correctly to the other players, it results in their enthusiastic cooperation with fulfilling the fates. If a player balks at this perceived “favoritism,” the GM can always recruit his character as an agent of the enemy.

This is a very appropriate technique for a “story-telling” GM. The player chosen to fulfill the destiny should either be a very good roleplayer or a very bad one. A good roleplayer will be most creative and flexible within the bounds of the pre-determined character destiny; a poor roleplayer often has trouble determining direction for his character — this will help him define his role. If the GM uses this plot device extensively, he should take care to rotate the destiny from player to player, or cries of favoritism will be just!

If the destiny grants any special powers, the GM should feel free to charge an Unusual Background cost to the character so enriched.



## Public Health

If healing magic exists, ordinary injuries need not lead to permanent maiming or quick death by infection, and disease need not turn into plague. Open sewers, the bane of the medieval city, would be unnecessary if Earth spells allowed cheap tunneling. No one need drink filthy river water when the Purify Water spell is cheap and easy.

### Is There a God in the House?

In many fantasy worlds, gods are thrown in as sort of an afterthought — a supernatural mana-recharger that can get someone good seats at the Astros' game if they can roll a 3 on three dice. When designing a campaign, the GM should think about the type of divinity — that he wishes to allow. In some cultures (including those of medieval Earth and its derivative, Yrth) the rulers' power is based on the peoples' belief that they rule by divine will, and the Church (or churches) have huge political power.

*No Gods:* Active churches do not necessarily imply “real” deities. While a cleric might believe every word he preaches, in reality he may just be a mage that suffers the delusion “I get my powers from a god.” This makes issues simple, as there is no question of divine influence, and each faith has an equal claim to be the “one true path.”

*One God:* In a campaign with multiple churches, this can create something of an imbalance. If only God A is real, then why can God B's priests cast spells? If there is no difference in God A's priests and other mages, then what difference does He make? And if he *does* make a difference, then why would any PCs choose not to worship him?

Of course, if there is only one religion in the campaign, matters are greatly simplified.

*A Few Gods:* There is a small group of gods who either created the universe or were a byproduct of its creation. They each have a particular sphere of power in which they are the final authority, and constantly vie with each other over worshippers. Many times these gods are related to each other (usually siblings), and inter-family rivalry can get ugly...

*Chock Full O' Gods:* There are literally hundreds or thousands of gods. Every god that has ever been thought of, dreamt, hypothesized or hallucinated exists. There is a god of bottle washing, a god of tree bark, a god of beetles — more than anyone can keep track of. There is no set rule for divine intervention — some gods are aloof, preferring to let their subjects work out their own lives. Others are involved and manipulative, always interfering with their subjects' lives. And, of course, many of the gods are constantly competing for power and prestige, and some are engaged in bitter warfare, using their human worshippers as pawns.

On the other hand, *powerful* healing magic would allow the rich and powerful to live indefinitely, as long as they could afford rejuvenation spells. Even the dead can be revived by a powerful enough spell. This could easily lead to a permanent aristocracy of immortals! The GM who doesn't want this effect should decide how he will prevent it or explain it away. Perhaps the Church doesn't permit it...

## Feeding the Masses

Many fantasy medieval cities are far larger than any of their historical counterparts. The size of a city is limited by the amount of food that can be brought in from the surrounding countryside. Perhaps a great city might be served, not just by river traffic, by fleets of flying carpets. Or perhaps the wizards just *create* food and water at need.

Of course, if food and water can easily be created, a besieged city will not fall to starvation.

## Everyday life

How much does magic affect the visible, everyday life of the simple farmer or townsman? Good question. Most world-creators seem to want just enough effect to make the magical nature of the world obvious... without making too much difference in the way the world “looks.” For instance, while it would be all right for a *wizard's* cart to be drawn by magic, ordinary farmers should use ordinary horses.

Magical *items* of a mundane nature are often less “intrusive” than spells. Here is a useful assumption to justify a profusion of minor but permanent magic items: If an object has had the same spell (e.g., Light) cast on it over and over again, a likely result of a critical success is to make the spell *permanent*. Thus, if a wizard walks around town every night, casting a Light spell on a hanging globe at each street corner, then after a few years the town will have a number of permanent night-lights.

## Battle Magic

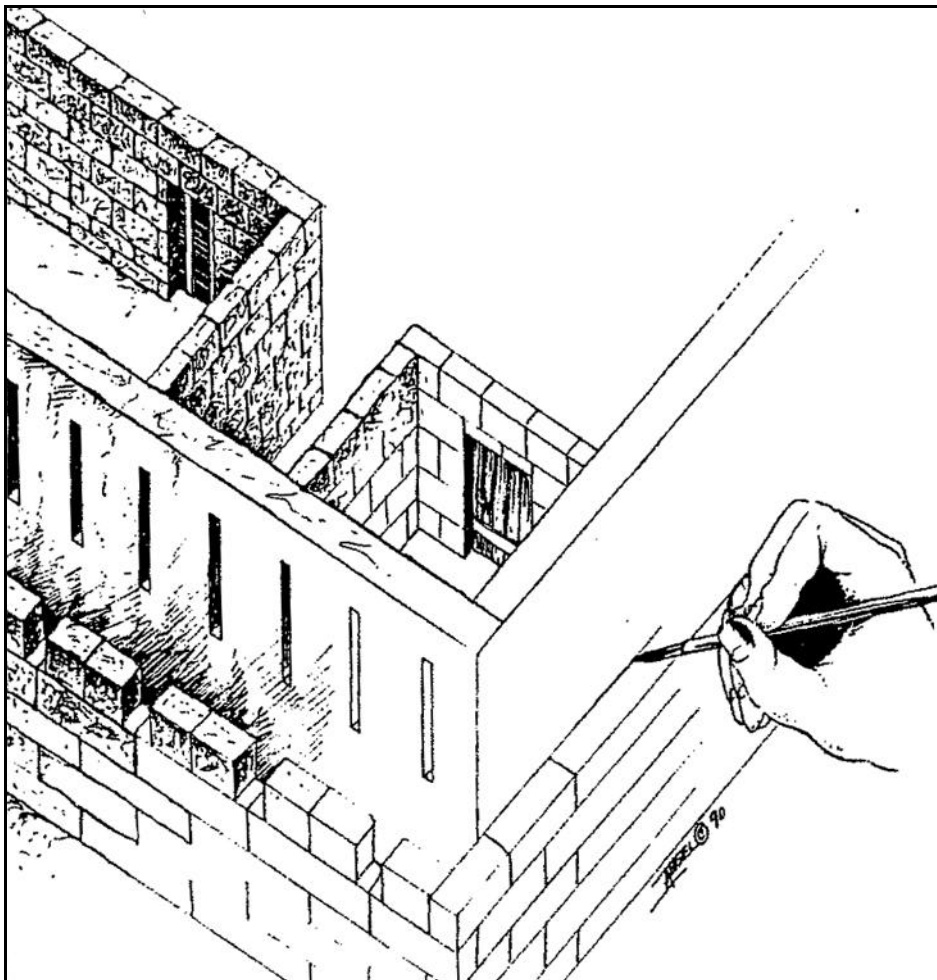
Man is a warlike creature, and magic — if it exists — will certainly be used for war if at all possible. Battle magic can be divided into *tactical* and *strategic* spells.

The *GURPS* spell lists includes many tactical spells — quick, short-range spells that a wizard can use to discomfit a single foe or a small group. Such spells make the game interesting, and are possible with many different kinds of magic, including knacks, improvisations and clerical magic.

However, *strategic* spells, though beloved of fantasy authors, can easily unbalance a game. If a single wizard can wipe out armies or topple towers, what use are the other characters?

*GURPS Magic* includes a few spells, such as Earthquake, which can be used as strategic battle spells, but they are difficult and require a great deal of energy. If other, easier strategic spells are allowed, magical wars become possible. But the world-builder must either accept wizards as the “arm of decision” in any conflict, or create other limitations on their power. See Glen Cook's *Black Company* series for a world in which wizards are decisive in open battle, but still require the support of spies and armies.

Magic will certainly change the art of siege. Historically, most sieges were a race between starvation inside the city, and disease among the army camped in the mud outside. Wizardry would eliminate both threats. But towers could be toppled by earthquakes, or by tunnels quickly created by Earth to Air spells. Meanwhile, the army outside is scourged by summoned windstorms and fireballs from the battlements...



## Society

Most fantasies assume a vaguely Western-medieval form of society and government: an agricultural economy ruled by feudal nobles, policed by armored knights. Again, a creator can stay with this stereotype and be sure that his players will know what to expect. Also, it's possible to research the Middle Ages enough to be as realistic as you like — except for the effects of magic, as discussed above, which are entirely up to the world-builder anyway!

Other forms of government and society are possible, of course. They can be assigned to different nations or different races. Some players will enjoy the contrasts and the challenge of learning new customs. Others — those who are more interested in the interpersonal aspects of roleplaying, as well as those who just want to kill orcs — can be put off by this kind of social detail.

## Tech Level

The medieval stereotype implies a Tech Level of 3 (see p. B186) — good enough to make steel weapons, not good enough to make gunpowder. If gunpowder exists, many other elements of the background must change... unless it is too rare and costly to use for mass battles. Gunpowder will also make *magic* less powerful. In a pre-gunpowder society, only a mage can slay at a distance, or kill many with a single blow... which is why the wizards of Yrth have suppressed gunpowder.

## Fish Out of Water

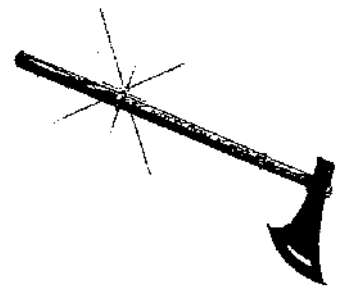
One of the most enjoyable parts of GMing is thrusting characters into a situation for which their players were unprepared and unsuspecting. Fantasy campaigns are the most cliché-ridden in the hobby ("Oh no. Not another invasion from the Evil Country to the North"). To shake things up, the GM may have to resort to drastic measures.

One of the simplest is to transport the PCs into someplace completely different than they were expecting — say, Times Square on New Year's Eve. If they use even 10% of the force that they are accustomed to in their home country, at least some of them will wind up in jail. And getting back to their homeland will take some doing!

The GM can provide a sympathetic NPC or two — perhaps some teenage boys who believe the fantastic story, or a curious reporter who helps them navigate through the pratfalls and pits of 20th-century USA. There will certainly be occult groups that are quite prepared to believe that the characters are who they claim to be — but they might not be interested in helping...

The GM can also reverse this process — the characters are modern-day, normal people who find themselves suddenly transported into a world they don't believe exists (as in *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*). For the truly brave (and self-analytical), the GM can require that the players create GURPS versions of *themselves!*

The PCs could slip in through a dimensional portal (such as the Banestorm), or perhaps be summoned by a critical spell failure. Or perhaps the spell that summoned them was *successful*, and someone (or *something*) on Yrth really wants the Earthlings here. Or maybe the sununoner really wanted Earthlings, but not *this* particular bunch!



### ***Where Did You Want This Dragon?***

One of the grossest clichés of all gaming is the dungeon. In its most offensive form, a dungeon is nothing more than a randomly generated set of corridors and rooms rilled with traps, treasure and monsters. The entire complex is located in a secluded area where it will sit, undisturbed, until the intrepid band of looter... errrr, characters comes along to pillage it. In the best of these, there is a powerful artifact or magical item hidden deep within its bowels — once this arcane object is removed, the dungeon will begin to fall apart.

Nice, but hardly realistic. It is highly unlikely that any large complex would stay abandoned long enough to be populated by monsters. There might be one or two beasts that use it as a lair, but these would be easily driven off by the first group of people that thought there was treasure to be had.

There is also the matter of ecology. The larger beasts that could drive off any human incursions (dragons, basilisks, etc.) simply require too much food to survive. A dragon that needs a cow or three a week is not going to fare well in a 40' by 50' room in the third level of the tombs of Baja the Sandy.

If such a thing as a dungeon exists, the most likely occupant is a group of intelligent creatures. A band of Orcs, possibly with a few dozen Hobgoblin servants, will turn a dungeon crawl into an interesting experience. And, as a bonus, the Orcs have usually gathered all the treasure into one place! Of course, this makes the dungeon-delvers into a gang of racially-motivated thugs, breaking into strangers' homes to kill them and take their property.



Of course, magic can be added to *any* tech level. For a wonderfully-worked-out example of magic in a Tech Level 5 background, see Randall Garrett's “Lord Darcy” stories. One could even combine ultra-tech scientific wizardry with real magic!

### ***Magic and Technology***

At any tech level, the world-builder must decide how wizards get along with scientists and technicians. The story of Yrth assumes that the mages have done their best to suppress technology. But if wizards see their craft as one science among many, they will be neutral or even cooperative toward other researchers.

This harks back to the replacement of technology by magic. If magic can keep people clean, safe and healthy, and make travel and communication simple, there is little need for technology. But wherever magic is limited, technology has a chance to take hold. And in some situations, if wizards and scientists cooperate, interesting hybrids can appear!

### ***Magic and Society***

Another important question: How does society feel about magic-users? Are they admired? Are they treated as honest tradesmen? Are they feared, shunned, perhaps even attacked on sight? Are they treated as powerful weapons or valuable resources, and impressed into the service of their rulers? What laws (see p. M108) exist to control magic and mages?

How are mages trained? Are they apprenticed to other mages, or self-taught? Are there guilds of wizards (see p. M109)?

### ***Races***

The first decision for the world-creator to make is whether to include any non-humans at all. Some fantasy stories are human-only, but most include nonhuman races. And, of course, it would be possible to create a fantasy world with no human characters at all!

#### ***What Races Exist?***

A staple of many fantasy stories is the existence of several other races — similar to humans in some ways, different in others — sharing the world, more or less peacefully. Most such races trace their ancestry directly to the Celtic tales of the Sidhe and to Norse mythology. J.R.R. Tolkien, creator of the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, drew on both these sources, but his own interpretation was so compelling that obvious “Tolkien Elves,” “Tolkien Dwarves,” and “Tolkien Halflings” are everywhere — especially in fantasy *game* worlds.

The advantage of using such familiar archetypes is that they *are* familiar. Everyone will have a good idea what an Elf is and how to deal with one. The problem comes when players' views of Elves differ from those of the world-builder. No creator wants to be told “You can't have an Elf do that! That's not what an Elf is!”

If this is a danger... or if the creator just wants to get away from Tolkien... it's time to find some new nonhumans. These can be made up entirely, or taken from unusual sources. Eastern and Indian mythology, for instance, offer a whole variety of new intelligent nonhumans. Or races from science fiction can be adapted to gaming terms and, perhaps, touched with magic (of course, any sufficiently advanced technology *is* indistinguishable from magic anyway, so who knows?). And, of course, gaming sourcebooks are available for nonhuman races, including SJ Games' own *GURPS Aliens* and *GURPS Fantasy Folk*.

## ***Nonhuman PCs***

If nonhuman races exist in the campaign, someone will eventually want to play one. The GM should decide whether each race will be usable as PCs. A race which is too powerful, too opposed to humanity, or just too alien, will not work well in a party with human PCs. Make this decision when the race is first created. A race which is not to be used for PCs need follow no standard of “reasonableness” when its powers and statistics are chosen; it exists for dramatic effect. But a PC race must be “balanced” in game terms.

## ***Nonhumans in Society***

Most fantasy worlds assume that humanity is the dominant race... perhaps a latecomer, but still the most numerous and powerful species. Nonhumans are described in terms of their interaction with humanity. This is the most comfortable world for most players, who like to think of mankind at the top of the heap.

Like any assumption, this begs for contradiction. A creator can turn things around and create a world ruled by, for instance, Dwarves... with humans as servants, farmers and expendable warriors.

## **Campaigns**

Creating the world is only half the job. Almost any world can house almost any kind of campaign. The *Fantasy Campaign Plan*, in *GURPS Magic*, sets out many of the specific decisions; this section will cover the basic questions.

### **Campaign Style**

There is no one “right” style of fantasy roleplaying. It depends as much on the players as on the GM: what kind of people do they want to portray, and what do they (the characters as well as the players) hope to accomplish?

#### ***The Serious Campaign***

In this sort of campaign, the GM and the players start by setting the “ground rules” very firmly. Any purely fantasy elements, such as magic, are rigorously defined. Once these definitions are established, play proceeds as realistically as possible. Characterization is stressed; PCs can be cautious or even cowardly. The object is to play out “What would things be like if all this were real?”

#### ***The Cinematic Campaign***

In this campaign, reality takes a back seat to storytelling. Certain rules — especially those having to do with injury and death — are relaxed. This is a swash-buckling campaign; the GM should reward flash and style, even when the *realistic* result would be “You're dead.” If a PC is a coward, he should be a *spectacular* coward!

The object of the campaign is to tell a good story. The details of magic and spellcasting become less important; if the story requires that a spell or a scheme work, it will. See p. B183. Watch *The Princess Bride* for a cinematic fantasy, or read any of the *Conan* stories.

#### ***The Silly Campaign***

Why not? Fantasy is fun, and fractured fantasy is the most fun of all. This type of campaign features Kobold PCs, magicians who fumble their spells, lots and lots of inept gods (see sidebar, p. 138), and very odd quests. The cinematic combat rules should be used, to give PCs a chance to survive their foolishness. Cantrip magic, possibly based on limericks, is appropriate. Play up characters' quirks and Odious Personal Habits.

#### ***Learning From History***

When developing a campaign, many GMs find themselves pulling their hair out by the roots, trying to come up with ideas that haven't already been hacked to death. The best source of info for the GM at the end of his rope is the local library.

Any good history book will provide dozens of good campaign ideas — especially a book or two on legends from around the world. While they might recognize Paul Bunyan if the GM has a big blue ox show up, it is very unlikely that the average player will know if the entire campaign was cribbed from the Irish legends of Tuan.

If the players *are* history buffs, the GM should remember that just because it happened that way once, it doesn't have to happen that way again. The players will make certain automatic assumptions based on their knowledge of history. The GM can turn these to his advantage, keeping the PCs off balance.

For instance, if the characters see a Viking longship approaching, they'll be expecting to deal with a crew of blond Nordic types. They will be thrown for a loop if a group of Orthodox Jewish Kobolds disembark and demand that the party join them in a candle-lighting ceremony or perish!

#### ***Required Reading***

For a campaign based specifically on a particular work of fiction, the GM should define the “required reading” for players. Alternatively, he may ask them *not* to read the source material until the campaign is over, to preserve some secrets!

Even if the campaign is not based on any single story, the GM may want to suggest appropriate reading for his players, to give them some general background or put them in the mood. This might easily be nonfiction, if the campaign has historical parallels.

For a literary example (using the term loosely), see the Harvard Lampoon's *Bored of the Rings*. In cinema, watch *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*.

## Campaign Scope

The “scope” of the campaign — the physical area that it covers — is another important decision. Any type of world can hold a campaign of any scope, but the campaign's scope determines the breadth and detail in which the world will be filled out.

### *The Wanderers*

At one extreme, a campaign can be “picaresque.” The PCs are wanderers, going from one adventure to the next. There is no rhyme or reason to their journeys. The characters are content to follow the whims of Fate, and the players are happy to go on whatever adventure the GM concocts.

On Yrth, such a party might be vagabonds or mercenaries. They might also be a Hand of Michael (see p. 20), agents of a king or sultan, and so on. They serve a master and have loyalties, but they are unlikely to sleep twice in the same place.

This style of campaign has several advantages. PCs can come and go freely. The GM need not work up any single locale in great detail, but he has the chance to create and display wide areas of his world. The players will have as much travel and variety as they can stand. On the other hand, there may be little sense of “history,” because neither players nor characters will come to know any place well.

### *The Natives*

At the other extreme, the campaign can stay in one area forever. Usually this will be a big city, to allow a variety of adventures.

This type of campaign allows much more depth, in several senses. The GM can create a huge continuing cast of NPCs who will interact with the PCs over a long period of time. The players will have the chance, if they like, to get deeply involved in politics and intrigue. Jobs and non-combat skills will become more important; players can create characters who wouldn't work in a wandering campaign, but who are right at home (literally) in the city. PCs are far likelier to marry, build houses, and work on their own long-term schemes. In fact, the GM may find that he no longer has to work to create adventures, because the PCs' own plots, and the machinations of the NPCs, will take on their own life.

The GM who enjoys this kind of background will find a number of “city supplements” available, including *Tredroy*, which is set on Yrth and uses the *GURPS* system.

### *The Questers*

This campaign takes a middle ground. The party is journeying, and may have adventures on the way, but they have a single important goal, the subject of a long-term campaign. This combines some of the advantages of both extremes; the PCs have a home base and a sense of history. But character types are still limited to those who could reasonably go “on the road,” and the players may come to feel “channeled” toward their objective.

## The Final Goal

Whatever the style and scope of the campaign, the objective should be the same: to showcase the world the GM has created, in such a way as to allow the players the greatest possible chance for roleplaying creativity.

### *Money in a Fantasy World*

What is used for money in a fantasy world? It all depends on the background. Yrth uses generic gold, silver and copper; these are recognized by all players. But strange systems of coinage can add to the “fantasy” feel. What about a society that values only dragon-claws? Or one where drugs and potions are the only common currency?

It is possible, of course, to create a society that doesn't use money. But be careful. Some players will enjoy the challenges of dealing with a barter economy or a pure socialist state. Others will be frustrated.

### *Counterfeiting*

Counterfeiting is a risk in any society. And unless all wizards are holy clerics, *magical* counterfeiting will happen in any fantasy world. There's an old legend that fairy gold melts away when it touches cold iron, but not all wizardly fakes will be as cooperative. It shouldn't be impossible for a mage to create fake currency, but it shouldn't be *easy*, or all the PCs will be doing it!

### *Cost of Living*

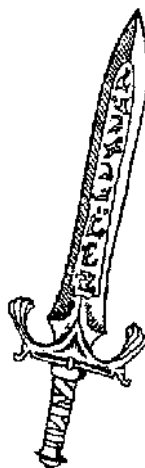
The GM should also decide how much money is available in the campaign. In a wandering campaign, the PCs will not have regular jobs, but must live by their wits. In a city campaign, anyone who does *not* have a regular job will probably be watched by the guardsmen! The Yrth job table and cost of living will allow quite a bit of disposable income for PCs in “average” jobs. To make the PCs work harder for their money, double the cost of living...

To a certain extent, this is determined by the game world. Some worlds will be wealthy and comfortable, while others are comparatively stark and starving. But it is basically a *campaign* issue. The GM decides how important money should be to the PCs, and how hard it should be for them to get it and keep it.

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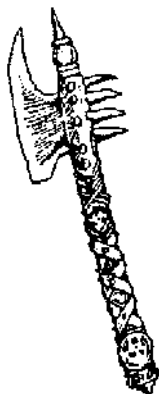
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