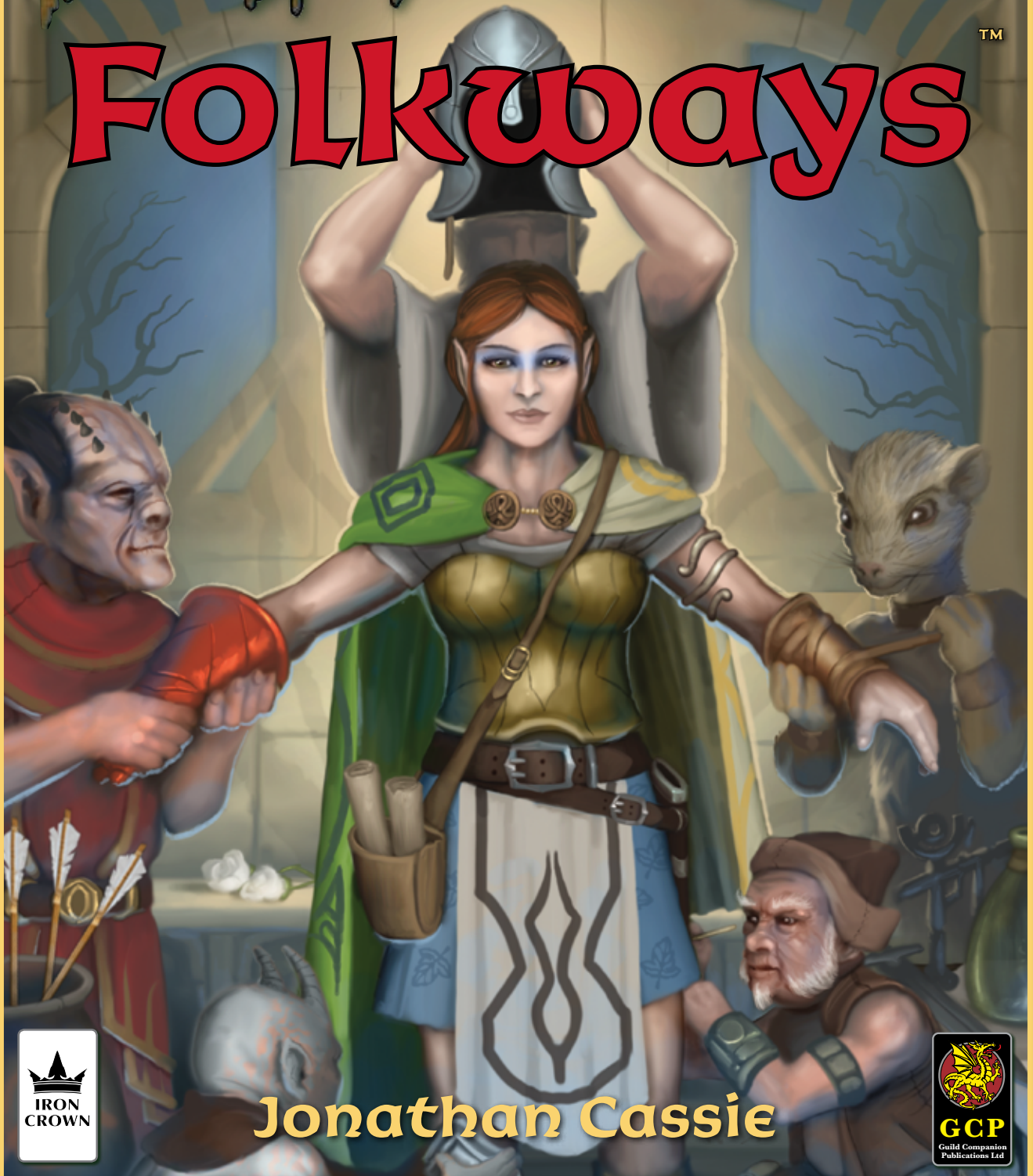


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Folkways™



Jonathan Cassie



#GCP-HARP-1006

Folkways

By Jonathan Cassie

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Author: Jonathan Cassie

Editor: Nicholas HM Caldwell

Cover Art: Raymond Gaustadnes

Interior Art: Maria Duffield, Raymond Gaustadnes and Rick Hansen

Layout: Terry K Amthor

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1 Author's Notes



Toni Morrison said: “If there’s a book you want to read, but it hasn’t been written yet, then you must write it.” For me, Folkways is that book. I have been role playing for more than thirty years. In that time, I have enjoyed dozens and dozens of games and systems, some of them big ticket games put out by publishers with deep pockets, but others have been games from small presses supported only by the love of the game itself and the small community of its players. The games that I have always loved best and returned to time and again are those games that are more than just their mechanics. I think anyone who has spent time in role playing can and does appreciate an elegant system of mechanics. Clever interactions of skills and abilities used to overcome fiendish challenges can make an otherwise mundane game session totally memorable. For me, though, mechanics are the least important part of the role playing experience (*not unimportant!—just least important*). What has always motivated me as a player and as a gamemaster (*GM*) is character. How does a character come to find herself in the circumstances being played out in the game? What background and history does the character bring to their present reality? Who are they and how did they get to be that way? Characters don’t emerge *ex nihilo* fully formed and ready to take on the world. They have a backstory...an existence that predates and precedes the game you are about to take them through. How can we know how a character is going to react to certain people, problems, obstacles and opportunities? In some games, the answer to this question is simple: with a flail, short sword or spell. But that’s never been satisfying to me. There’s more to it than that. Recounting the great game experiences I’ve had with friends, we inevitably tell stories about game sessions that had nothing to do with rolling dice and combat resolution. Rather, the most interesting of sessions had to do with character and how that character was growing. Reflecting on all of these questions point me inevitably to one notion: culture.

And, frankly, that’s when things start to get a big squidgy. Because in so many game designs, this aspect of the game (*to me the most important part*) is clearly considered the least important part. This shouldn’t be any great surprise, considering that the role-playing hobby originated in the wargaming hobby and that the first role-playing game rules were almost entirely about the kind of game experiences that wargamers were interested in. The idea of building a character with a background, history, family and values and then getting to really comprehensively know that character and live in that character’s skin for dozens of game sessions was unimaginable. Leading inevitably to game systems in which you find 400 pages of complex rules about such things as how encumbering a standard adventurer’s pack is or how to build a starship from scratch but, when you went to find the process to understand how a flesh-and-blood person would respond to anything that might happen during a game, you found nothing. How many systems confront you with this? If you’re like me, the answer is “*most of them.*” And even those games that give you something, in my experience, give you so little that you have nothing to go on anyway. It is the rare

game system, in other words, that spends sufficient time on helping you as the player really understand your character. It is the rare game system that give you as the GM the tools you need to build believable, authentic cultures from which real, richly-realized characters might emerge. Characters devoid of a cultural framework are flat, uninteresting and incapable of responding in a way that makes sense to everything they interact with. These characters become what their game systems make them: hammers. GMs are then left with little choice but to give these characters nails to pound on. The result is game experiences that are much flatter than they could or should be.

My goal in this book is to give you the reader a set of tools that will help you overcome these challenges. Written for **HARP** but usable to flesh out any game setting (*high fantasy, low fantasy, cyberpunk, sci-fi, furries, western, vampires... doesn’t matter*), this book means to give you all of the tools you would need to build complex cultures from which your characters originate and in which your game can operate. The framework for understanding culture works for both players doing a deep dive into their own characters’ backgrounds or for the GM who wants to ensure that the societies that dot her game world have clarity and sufficient integrity to generate real characters who have real problems.

In chapter 2, I will describe what anthropologists who study culture do and how they go about it so that you might have a skill set to inform your reading of fantasy and science fiction literature. This will give you the ability to mine these settings, not for content, but to understand how great authors go about the process of world building. Then I use the tools of the anthropologist to analyze the cultures of Tolkien’s “*Middle Earth*,” Gene Wolfe’s “*Book of the New Sun*,” Robin Hobb’s “*Farseer Trilogies*,” George R.R. Martin’s “*A Song of Ice and Fire*,” Stephen R. Donaldson’s “*Thomas Covenant*” series, Blizzard Entertainment’s “*World of Warcraft*” universe and **HARP** itself.

In chapter 3, I will unpack “*twenty questions*,” based on twenty folkways or cultural traditions which, when answered, will give you as a GM or a player the depth and richness you would need in order to generate a living society that makes sense and clearly articulates what people in that society value, disvalue and worry about. These questions are based on a variety of “*folkways*” that the great historian David Hackett Fisher uses in his classic of anthropological history *Albion’s Seed*. That book analyses an assortment of folk traditions in colonial America to understand American culture. The folkways I will discuss in this book are:

- ✦ Environment Ways: how does your culture respond to, shape, get shaped by, understand, anthropomorphize and live in the physical environment?
- ✦ Urban Ways: how does your culture build villages, towns and cities? What does the built environment look like?
- ✦ Family Ways: how does your culture structure and support families and households, and what is the difference between the reality and the ideal?

- ✦ Marriage Ways: how does your culture define the courtship ritual, the marriage-bond and divorce?
- ✦ Lifespan Ways: how does your culture treat children, adolescents, adults and the aged? What does the culture say about the birth process? Dying? Death and the dead?
- ✦ Gender and Sexuality Ways: how does your culture define gender and maintain gender roles? How do men and women relate to each other? What sexual practices are normative?
- ✦ Association Ways: how does your culture govern patterns of friendship, kinship, clan, fraternal organization, affiliation and settlement?
- ✦ Rank Ways: how does your culture assign rank between members of the society, what do the different roles entitle the holder to and what are the relationships between the ranks?
- ✦ Order Ways: how does your culture define orderly and disorderly? How does it maintain orderliness and punish disorderliness? What are the ordering institutions within that society?
- ✦ Authority Ways: how does your culture define power, authority and political participation?
- ✦ Freedom Ways: how does your culture define liberty, freedom, restraint and libertarian customs and institutions.
- ✦ Wealth Ways: how does your culture feel about wealthy, the wealthy and the poor and how does it distribute its wealth?
- ✦ Work Ways: what does your culture value about work and its nature? What is its work ethic?
- ✦ Leisure Ways: how does your culture define leisure? Does it value it? What do people do to kick back, provided they have the means to? Do they like individual or group sports or more learned pursuits?
- ✦ Dress Ways: how do members of your culture dress and adorn themselves?
- ✦ Food Ways: what do members of your culture eat and how do they cook?
- ✦ Language Ways: how does your culture use language and naming?
- ✦ Magic Ways: How does your culture understand, shape, control, teach and use magic? Does it have a positive or negative relationship with magic?
- ✦ Supernatural Ways: How does your culture understand the relationship between that which cannot be seen and that which can? Does the culture engage in religious practices? If so, how and what are they?
- ✦ Self-reflection Ways: about what does your culture refuse to be honest with itself? What are its secrets? Shames?

In chapter 4, I will use the twenty questions from chapter 3 and create two new **HARP** cultures, one Gryx and one Gnome.

In chapter 5, I will use the twenty questions to create a eleven new **HARP** races and and six new culture packages.

In chapters 6 and 7, I will present an assortment of new professions, talents and training packages informed by the twenty questions.

In chapter 8, I will use the twenty questions to detail two cultures within campaign settings associated with **HARP**: Cyradon and Shadow World.

I would take this opportunity to share my thanks to two people: First, to Nicholas Caldwell, for the hero's work of bringing **HARP** and Rolemaster (*my favorite of all fantasy systems*) into the 21st century. I am looking forward to an ongoing partnership! And second to Ken Agress, my oldest friend, who joined a game I was running while we were both students at PCC, a summer program for high school age kids at Bridgewater State College in Massachusetts and within minutes had transformed that game into something extraordinary. Years on, great gaming continues. Many thanks, my friend.

2 Field Notes from 20th and 21st Century Fantasy



Anthropology, quite literally the study of humanity, is a field of inquiry that dates from the great post-Enlightenment explosion of interest in the scientific study of the human condition that emerged in the West in the 19th century. A fertile mixture of interest in prehistorical humanity, prehistorical language, human social systems (*like marriage and kinship*) and human cultural practices (*like gift-giving and music*), the field of Anthropology has used an assortment of scholarly tools to understand and explain the world. For our purposes in this book, I will be encouraging you to think like an American cultural anthropologist. American cultural anthropology has long been interested in how cultures compose themselves and how they differ from other cultures. The American school uses the tools of participant observation or fieldwork, in which the scientist spends a great deal of time embedded with the culture being observed in order to better understand it, as the basis of its theoretical claims. It is this tool, as you will see in the rest of this chapter and in chapter 3, that is the most powerful one for you as a world builder and culture creator. One of the great practitioners of 20th century cultural anthropology was a man named Clifford Geertz. He wrote: *"Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning."* I have come across no greater or more powerful notion of what our shared human condition is than this idea. *"Man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun...."* What will be the webs of significance that make your player's characters come fully to life? What are the details that will make your world seem truly alive and breathing? In order to understand how to do this in your own game, it seems prudent to me that we take our field notebook, pencil and keen observational skills and have an anthropological look at some of the most compelling examples of *"webs of significance"* spun by the authors whose works defined and continue to define the boundaries of our hobby.

J.R.R. Tolkien's "Middle Earth"

It isn't just because it was one of the first examples of 20th century high fantasy that an analysis of Tolkien's work deserves pride of place in this book. As a world and culture builder, Tolkien is peerless; even without the work of anthropologists and historians, one could use the world building that Tolkien undertakes in bringing Middle Earth to life as a model for one's own work. For the purposes of this book, I acknowledge that one of the qualities that makes Tolkien's work



extraordinary is its very deep and internally consistent history. History is a valuable addition to the work you'll be doing as you engage in world building, but it is not the most important work. Rather, it is the lived reality of Tolkien's characters that concerns us.

Why do we identify so strongly with Frodo and Sam? Merry and Pippin? Bilbo? Because the culture Tolkien constructs in which the hobbits live is the most *"human."* It is the culture that we can most resonate with and understand. Think of all the ways that Tolkien, in discussing the common, the conventional, the around-the-house and the ordinary paints a picture that is so believable, so real, that we are almost immediately seduced by it. We can't help but see it as *"us."* For example, hobbits live in villages in gently rolling hills with small, freehold farms dotting the landscape. So do (*or did*) many of us. And those of us who don't can nevertheless imagine it (*and romanticize it*). Some live in single-family homes. Others live in holes in the ground. But Tolkien goes to elaborate length, when describing Bag End, to normalize it. It isn't just a hole in the ground, *"it was a hobbit-hole, and that meant comfort."* And for pages, he goes on with detail after detail to ensure that we do not confuse this hole with other, nasty sorts. So, hobbits might live in holes, but, really, they're just homes like what you or I would live in. Hobbits eat bread with jam and drink tea and smoke tobacco in pipes. All conventional, comfortable things. Nothing outlandish there. They have birthday parties and share them with families and friends, with whom they sometimes don't get along. They eat

a lot and take enormous pleasure in meals. They spend time with friends at pubs, drinking ale and telling stories. They are not especially given to travel, preferring the comforts of home, family, friends and food to the perils and otherwise disagreeable realities of being on the road or in another town. If the author were to change any of these qualities, the fundamental essence of “hobbit-ness” would be transformed. Change too many of them, and you don’t have hobbits anymore—you’ve got something else. At what point would this process of change eliminate the feeling of connection we have as readers with that fundamental hobbit-ness? Tolkien’s hobbits are deeply and richly described by their “urban ways,” their “food ways” and especially by their “leisure ways.” If ever there was a culture best described by their relationship with leisure, it would be the hobbits. But seeing the hobbits as creatures of leisure only or even mostly would miss an aspect of their unique truth. It would miss the ways in which hobbit society is structured by its “rank ways.”

It is, arguably, the hobbit understanding of rank that gives hobbit behavior so much of that ineffable quality that readers resonate with. The relationship between Frodo and Sam is one based fundamentally, powerfully and from start-to-finish on the notion of rank. Sam is Frodo’s gardener. He has an important, but subordinate, place in hobbit society. This is, of course, never explicitly named in any of Tolkien’s works, but it is a core and abiding truth. Sam sees Frodo as his social superior and acts that way throughout their adventures. Sam’s devotion to Frodo, his addressing Frodo as “Mister Frodo,” and the sacrifices he makes for Frodo’s benefit on their long journey to Mordor all derive from this understanding of how rank works between hobbits. If hobbit culture were governed by an egalitarian spirit of social equality and classlessness, Sam’s relationship to Frodo would either be totally different or, as written, completely bewildering and unbelievable. It would make no sense. As it is, it makes perfect sense. Anything else, in fact, would be puzzling. Hobbit culture is at the center of the reader’s ability to commit to and engage with Tolkien’s universe because it is so accessible.

If one thinks about the other races in Tolkien’s universe, there’s an equivalent richness of development but without the same ability for the reader to access these cultures on an emotional level. In gaming terms, hobbits make the easiest to understand player characters. Dwarves, Elves and Dunedain, less so and all for reasons that, from the perspective of the twenty questions, make that inaccessibility easier to fathom.

When considering how dwarves answer questions related to “environment ways,” for instance, the answers are internally consistent (for dwarves), but don’t give us 21st century game players much to hang onto. Dwarves live underground in massive cities which have as their single-minded purpose the extraction of wealth from mines that stretch deep into the bowels of the Earth. Their “gender ways” are confusing to us, as we don’t see dwarf women, and therefore can’t draw the conclusions about dwarf life we draw easily about hobbit life.

I would argue that if hobbit life is governed most by its “leisure ways,” dwarf life is controlled most by “wealth ways.”

Elves in Tolkien’s universe are even harder for regular folks like you and me to understand. First off, they have a unique answer to the “lifespan ways” question. They are, after all, immortal. Their entire story in *The Lord of the Rings* is governed by this single question. While the action of the story is being undertaken by our viewpoint characters, the hobbits, they are either leaving the site of the action, Middle Earth, for their place of eternal habitation, the Undying Lands, or they are obsessively considering the question of their immortality.

Which brings us to the world of “men,” but in reality, not the world of regular men (like *Barliman Butterbur*) but the world of the Dunedain—humans whose story has been inexorably linked with the story of the elves since they emerged as a separate race in Tolkien’s world. These men are not humans like us. They are outsized... meant to be seen by us as the noble personification of what the human race might be perfected into. Or worse, what happens when our perfectibility is corrupted and laid low. There’s a reason why the Nazgul aren’t the dwarves whose rings were perverted by the corruption of Sauron. We are meant to see the race of men the way Elrond sees them. Dangerous, weak and when corrupted capable of world-scale menace. All of these races “make sense.” Why? Because Tolkien’s work is sufficiently detailed and is well thought out culturally. These races act the way their cultures expect them to act. It is reductionist to say that Tolkien “answered the twenty questions.” Rather, it is illustrative for your work as a world builder to note that as a reader, you can look to Tolkien’s creation and see that its cultures give rise to living, breathing “people” whose cares you can see as yours and whose concerns are legitimately worth living and dying for. This is nowhere more true than with his cultural masterpiece—the hobbits.

Gene Wolfe’s “The Book of the New Sun”

A masterwork to some, an overwrought and confusing mess to others, the four books that comprise Gene Wolfe’s now thirty-five year old “*The Book of the New Sun*,” present the world builder with mighty challenges that pay rich rewards. For the purposes of this book, I have argued and will continue to argue that culture is built by the people who live in it and not by some omniscient writer making it up out of whole cloth. If the story works, it is because the characters work. The characters only work if they exist in a framework of culture that is internally logical, making its own sense...even if we might find it difficult at times to understand that sense. Surely we have all had the experience of finding ourselves dropped into a cultural milieu that was mystifying at first. Much the same can be said for the reader first encountering Wolfe’s tetralogy. But careful attention pays off. Using the twenty questions, what might we discern about the world of Severian the Torturer, Urth?

If we take the very first folkway “*environment ways*” we see a great deal. Urth falls squarely in the sci-fi/fantasy corner that is the “*Dying Earth*” genre. This Urth is our own Earth but transformed to such a degree that it is scarcely recognizable. The moon is green and terraformed. The sun is ancient, red and dying. Everything has been done and done and done again. There’s a weariness that’s in everyone and in everything. The culture of the Commonwealth, of which Severian is a part, reflects this ennui and “*it’s all been done*” quality. Everyone is shaped by this reality. I would argue that Severian’s decision-making is deeply informed by the environment he grows up in. This is further seen if we consider the “*urban ways*” of the story. Severian first encounters his home city, Nessus, only after he’s been cast out of the one true home he knows (*which I will come to shortly*). Nessus is unimaginably old, enormous, corrupted and corrupting. It is a city on an unknowable scale. This unknowability, along with Severian’s backstory, leads him to be deeply lost when engaging with it. It is simply beyond his ability to make sense of. The realities of this city shape Severian’s life and destiny.

While I do believe that environment and urbanity shape Severian and our understanding of this milieu, it is Wolfe’s answers to “*association ways*,” “*language ways*” and “*magic ways*” that, to me, give the series its merit to the potential world builder (*if you haven’t read it, in other words, do so!*). When we meet him, Severian, our viewpoint character, is an apprentice in a guild called the Seekers for Truth and Penitence. Fashioned like a medieval guild (*with ranks within it, rules by which the lower ranked are to order their lives and objectives it is uniquely permitted and required to undertake*), the Seekers for Truth and Penitence serve a critical role in the social and political order of the Commonwealth. These Seekers, in actuality, are the guild of torturers, entrusted with using their unique position in society to gather information from the most egregious enemies of the state and to maintain discipline and terror throughout the land. Equipped with lavish swords, austere and frightening costumes and malevolent machinery, they are to be taken very seriously. The structure and nature of this guild gives the reader a thorough understanding of how other guilds must work in their own ways. In so doing, Wolfe gives us a window through which we might understand the whole of society. Severian’s crime against the guild, showing mercy to a condemned aristocrat, further illuminates how order works in the Commonwealth’s society. When Severian is not put to death but rather dispatched to a far-away city in need of an executioner, he is let out into the world I described above.

Wolfe’s characters speak in a language that feels both accessible and inaccessible at the same time. He uses words deliberately, choosing Latinate words when more common words are available, preferring to use language itself to shape the reader’s engagement with the characters and the text. This is something Tolkien does as well, but in his case through the creation of entire fictional languages. Wolfe’s conceit is that he is merely the narrator and translator of Severian’s story and that he did his best to translate the story’s difficult language by picking words that convey the sense, if not the meaning, of what was in the original text. As a designer of culture, I would suggest that the development of a specific language for your characters to engage with can go a long way towards reinforcing the cultural decisions you’ve made as you



create your world. Wolfe’s language certainly does this, reinforcing the strange alienness of Nessus and the rest of Urth and denying us the opportunity to merely see it as another version of Earth.

And that brings us to one of the most alien qualities of the story, what I am grouping under magic ways, only because Wolfe’s story conforms to Arthur C. Clarke’s third law: “*any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic*.” “*The Book of the New Sun*” is chock full of hyper-advanced technology...or is it magic? Could it be both? Certainly it is possible to travel between the stars in “*The Book of the New Sun*.” Tools exist that the characters in the book have a hard time distinguishing as either technology or magic. It is the juxtaposition of these outlandish tools alongside the

basest realities of daily life for regular people in disorientingly massive cities like Nessus that give Wolfe's work so much of its resonance.

Wolfe's books are, moreover, a reminder that while I am giving you twenty folkways to help you create your own cultures, you don't need to have answers to all twenty of them (*or at least not answers at the same level of depth*) in order to create a living and breathing culture. Wolfe doesn't really delve into "marriage ways," for instance and gives very little attention to "family ways." By showing us a traveling team of actors, for instance, we get a glimpse into the deeper answer to "leisure ways." Severian's personal journey reveals, in the end, some significant truths (*at least as Severian understands them*) about how authority works in the Commonwealth. And one might argue that any society that creates an organization like the Seekers for Truth and Penitence has given itself the only answer it needs about ordering institutions. For the purposes Wolfe has, his answers are more than sufficient. The same would be true for you in your work if your answers are sufficient and sufficiently rich.

Robin Hobb's "Farseer Trilogies"

From the potentially bewildering, I turn now to a series of books that are much more accessible, but no less rich. Robin Hobb's "Farseer Trilogies" comprises six books detailing the lives and adventures of FitzChivalry Farseer, a character we meet in childhood and whose life we share through his difficult adolescence and then a deeply complex adulthood. The action of the story takes place in the "Six Duchies," a region of the larger world inhabited by a human culture with strongly European and early modern characterizations and tone. Hobb achieves a cultural coherence in her works by not only reinforcing these early modern and European notes but by making clear the differences between that cultural framework and that of the Six Duchies. One of the first embodiments of this difference can be seen in the main character's name: FitzChivalry—son of Chivalry. In the world of the Six Duchies, royal and noble figures have names that reflect something true about their character and personality. They become embodiments of the qualities that their name evokes. This is true both in the positive framing and in the negative framing. A character embodying Chivalry is going to take a particular approach to his relationships with family, friends, romantic partners and with society as a whole. The same is true for a character named Regal. Regality is not just a quality of romanticized nobility in the Farseer books. Rather, it combines that noble quality with the most sublimely expressed arrogance I have ever come across in fantasy literature. These names give structure to a very particular appreciation for and understanding of order ways and rank ways. The names are emblematic of the deeper cultural work Hobb did in creating the society of the Six Duchies. They give the character's who have these names a rigid, anguish-making framework in which they have to live their lives. It is a reminder that very straightforward decisions on your part as a gamemaster can

have dramatic and interesting ramifications within your game world.

Another example of Hobb doing intriguing cultural development and world building lies outside of the Six Duchies. On the western frontier of the Six Duchies lies a loose confederation of hill and mountain tribesmen who are called the "Mountain Kingdom" by the people of the Six Duchies. Where the Six Duchies (*despite its name*) actually has a king and a queen and a royal court and all of those trappings of the European and the early modern I alluded to above, the Mountain Kingdom is much simpler, reflecting its lower level of centralization (*freedom ways and authority ways*) and its more tenuous ecosystem and wealth. Moreover, while the Mountain Kingdom has a single leader, that leader isn't a conventional monarch. Rather, the monarch is called the "Sacrifice." The Sacrifice of the Mountain Kingdom functions very much like a king or queen, but the Sacrifice's life is essentially forfeit to the needs of the Mountain Kingdom's people. This is a way of understanding social order that profoundly shapes the way the people of the Mountain Kingdom see their leaders, understand what leadership is and understand how each person in the Mountain Kingdom is bound to service in a way that the people of the Six Duchies simply don't understand themselves. It's a simple quality, but a deeply meaningful one for both the Six Duchies and the Mountain Kingdom when their royal families come together through marriage. Again, this is a reminder that something seemingly small can have a really dramatic impact on the narrative of your game and the world in which your characters live.

It is typical in fantasy settings for there to be some kind of magic at work in the world and the world of the Farseer Trilogies is no exception. Hobb's answer to the question of magic ways, though, is fascinating not only on its own terms, but also for the ways in which it reinforces other aspects of



the broader culture of the Six Duchies. Her magic system does more work, in other words, than just explicating what magic is. While it does that, it does so in ways that bring profound richness to an already rich culture. In the world of the Six Duchies there are two kinds of magic. One is called The Skill. The other is called The Wit. The Skill functions as a kind of telepathic linking, generally between royals and always between one human and another human. The Wit, by contrast, is a telepathic linking joining a human, not always of noble or royal blood, with an animal companion. The profound connection established by these bonds makes both challenging for their wielders, but The Skill is prized and given pride of place while The Wit is seen as barbarous and dehumanizing. In fact, possessors of The Wit are driven from society and at times put to death. In my reading, I have rarely encountered a magic system that leaves the possessor so exposed to what is essentially social death. That it is such a deeply personal form of magic makes its social and personal dimensions that much more resonant. The nature of it, and the nature of The Skill serve not only to provide



a fascinating window into how the world works in this narrative, but also reflects what this society values. It's a profoundly normative society with very little tolerance for social difference. Judgmental and sharp-edged, it creates disenfranchised, outcasts and criminals with ease and reinforces that social status through all of the other tools available to the culture. Family ways, authority ways, freedom ways, language ways, magic ways and self-reflection ways are all at work in Hobb's novels. And this is a reminder of the point I had made above when discussing the world of Tolkien's Middle Earth. Where Tolkien created his cultural framework on the most sublime expression of environment ways, Hobb explores that aspect of her world to a far lesser degree. Both are fully-realized world systems in which characters can live out lives of great interest and significance.

Stephen R. Donaldson's "Chronicles of Thomas Covenant"

There are few places in fantasy literature as vivid as Stephen R. Donaldson's *"The Land."* Vibrantly alive and pulsating with life when we first encounter it, the Land and the people of the Land undergo dramatic transformation over the course of the many thousands of years between visits of the titular character of the ten-novel sequence: Thomas Covenant. I will break this section of the chapter down into three smaller sections, each looking into the differences in the Land's cultures

over the course of these thousands-year gaps in Thomas Covenant's re-emergence into the Land from our world.

The Chronicles of Thomas Covenant the Unbeliever

In the first three books of Donaldson's magnum opus we encounter a Land imperiled by its ancient enemy, called Lord Foul by the people of the land and by the Lords, the masters of magic and mysticism who govern the Land from their fortress, Revelstone. The most dramatic folkways we encounter in these first three books are Environment, Urban, Association, Authority and Magic Ways. Our viewpoint character, Thomas Covenant, enters the Land as a leper but is restored to his physical health by virtue of the Land's inherent environmental healing powers, which are vast—indeed, capable of restoring a leper to full physical health. He is overawed by the physical powers of the Land itself. Arguably, the Land is the most important character with which Thomas Covenant regularly interacts. The physicality of the Land stands at the center of Donaldson's creation. Its vitality is what the Land's defenders are defending. They fight to retain their role as those whose stewardship of the Land will preserve the Land for all generations to come. Some of the very first places we encounter are examples of the built environment that reflect this physicality and the ways in which that physicality has shaped the people of the Land.

The Land's people can be divided into two basic types: stonedowners and woodhelvinnin. The people of Mithil

Stonedown, who we encounter first, are masters of stone-lore. They live in villages crafted of stone, with their single-family stone houses facing a central meeting circle. The most powerful master of the stone-lore has special power and authority and might be considered the leader of the community. Mastery of the stone-lore is passed from generation to generation and mastery of which is considered in-and-of-itself to be service to the Land. Mastery of the stone-lore means that you can use all of the powers inherent in the rock of the Land without destroying it or consuming it. The woodhelveinn are masters of the wood-lore. They live in majestic communities built from and amongst the living wood of enormous trees. Their social structure is similar to that of the stonedowners but centered on wood, rather than stone. Both peoples share a commitment to the ongoing preservation of the vitality of the land and a deep reverence for it.

The Land's rulers are called the Lords. The spiritual, temporal and mystical Lords possess magical knowledge hidden away by an ancient Lord who, despairing in his struggle against Lord Foul, undertook a ritual that caused the physical vitality of the Land to be undone, destroying on his own what Lord Foul hoped to destroy. His goal—causing Lord Foul's quest to destroy the Land to fail—failed utterly. His preparation for that failure gave the Lords that Thomas Covenant encountered access to a limited set of skills and lore and denied them access to other forms of lore until they had developed the moral, ethical framework and skill to use it wisely. The Lords have possession of magic and can do some surprisingly powerful things with their magic. But they know that their powers are limited. More lore exists, but they do not have the wisdom to use it. The Lords give us an example of an Authority Ways based not on physical or magical power (*though the Lords possess both*) but on the power of ideas and moral example. The Lords are themselves protected by a race of beings from a distant land who are called the Bloodguard. Undying, they swore to protect the Lords and the Land millennia previously and have stood watch ever since.

The Second Chronicles of Thomas Covenant

Thousands of years pass in the Land between the first appearance of Thomas Covenant and his second appearance. In that time, everything I described above had been changed and never for the better. The stonedowners and the woodhelveinn still existed, but they had lost command of their lore, forgetting everything that made them who they were. The Lords no longer existed. The Land was now ruled by a cabal in Revelstone called the Clave who used the literal blood of the people of the Land to manipulate an environmentally apocalyptic force called the Sunbane, inflicted on the Land by Lord Foul, once again, in an attempt to destroy the Land. Once again, the Land itself remains the most important character in these stories and Donaldson's Environment Ways the most compelling of all of the folkways we encounter. Knowing the Land as we do from "*Unbeliever*," the torture

that Lord Foul and the Clave subject the Land to under the Sunbane is both physically revolting and morally exhausting. Every three to four days, at sunrise, the environmental physicality of the Land is determined by the quality of the sun. A desert sun strips the Land of its fecundity in minutes, making everything a bone-dry, brutal desert. A sun of pestilence replaces vitality with illness and corruption. Swarming insects, pus-like running sores infect the Land and its people. And so forth. The "*Second Chronicles*" are a great example of what happens when you invert what was previously known. Inflection points in the history of the Land where the Lords got it flatly and fundamentally wrong demonstrate the power of in-story decision making and what happens when you get the integrity of your narrative ecosystem correct. This manifests itself again in the conclusion of the series.

The Final Chronicles of Thomas Covenant

Again, many thousands of years have passed since Thomas Covenant returned to the Land. This time, again, everything has changed. The Sunbane is gone, but in its place is another environmental catastrophe, this one called Kevin's Dirt (*Kevin being the name of the great ancient Lord who used the desecration ritual*). Kevin's Dirt is a tool used by the Bloodguard, who now rule the Land with the same inflexibility, stifling sense of duty and autocratic indifference from Revelstone, to prevent the people of the Land from learning any of the Land's Lore or history. From the perspective of the cultural anthropologist the Bloodguard are fascinating because they have always manifested the same level of bloody-minded rigidity, whether in the service of their original vow to the Lords or the vow they made to honor Thomas Covenant's request at the end of the Second Chronicles to govern the land and protect its people.

George R.R. Martin's "A Song of Ice and Fire"

All consuming complexity is the order of the day when reflecting on the world building George R.R. Martin has done for his planned seven-volume series of novels "*A Song of Ice and Fire*," beginning in the late 1990s with the now legendary novel *A Game of Thrones*. Because Martin's universe is so complex, I will use all twenty of the folkways and go step-by-step to show how Martin has, in the telling of his story, also given his characters the deepest possible universe in which to reside. The depth of complexity in the narrative is staggering.

- Environment Ways: one need only reflect on the differences between the Wall, the Iron Islands, Dorne and the Dothraki Sea to understand how Martin views the relationship between environment and culture. He's nearly deterministic in this way, by which I mean, environment is not just a factor in culture—it's the one that makes the rest of the culture make sense.

- **Urban Ways:** The built environment likewise tells us a story. The nature of the Eyrie, essentially impregnable by land and featuring the horrifying Moon Door, is a good example of how story is conveyed by architecture and buildings.

- **Family Ways:** One could write an entire other book on the way Martin constructs families. Family is probably the most important social and cultural construct in Martin's books. Hence the importance of each House having its own words reflecting their values. House Stark's words, "*Winter is Coming*," with all that needs to be said about the core of Stark-ness. The words of House Greyjoy, "*We Do Not Sow*," gives us access to that family's austerity. The complexity of family relations, both within families and between families, inform nearly everything about the story.



- **Marriage Ways:** The importance of the marriage bond is reflected in the culture's obsession with the royal bloodlines as that notion speaks to succession. Who, exactly, is or should be heir to Robert Baratheon after his death? Another way to understand the way that these cultures put weight on the importance of marriage is the complex ways in which Westeros' families treat bastards. That fact that each of the Great Houses give specific surnames to their bastards speaks to this.

- **Lifespan Ways:** Careful thought is given to ensure that we understand how children are treated in Westeros. We see the care given to Bran Stark after he is paralyzed. We witness the ways in which Tommen Baratheon is babied. We note that Robb Stark, in his teens, is entrusted not only with the lordship of men but the command of armies. The threat he presented despite his age suggests that the threshold between boyhood and manhood comes much earlier in Westeros.

- **Gender and Sexuality Ways:** George R.R. Martin is certainly not afraid of asserting his characters' sexuality. The relationship that helps us best understand how Westeros' culture creates and maintains sexual norms is the incestuous

relationship between Jaime and Cersei Lannister. It is the source of the game of thrones itself.

- **Association Ways:** Each of the Great Houses has dozens and dozens of associate houses that support that Great House in its struggle to assert itself. These houses are filled with men sworn to that Great House. The "*calling of the banners*," is a powerful example of the role association plays in the culture of Westeros.

- **Rank Ways:** Any society with a king and a royal court is going to have strongly expressed Rank Ways. Certainly true in Westeros' society. What is perhaps more intriguing is how Rank Ways work among the Dothraki. Rather than positional rank, on the Dothraki Sea, rank is asserted by your ability to defend it. Robert Baratheon is the alpha male in Westeros because he wears a crown. Khal Drogo is the alpha male among the Dothraki only so long as he remains the baddest badass.

- **Order Ways:** Orderliness can be seen in the ways Martin builds relationships between Houses and within families. It can be seen particularly in the ways in which the Septas and Septons (*the religious figures in Westeros*) bring shame against powerful figures.

- **Authority Ways:** While not always or necessarily the case, Authority Ways in Westeros and on the Dothraki Sea is carried in the same vessel as Rank Ways are.
- **Freedom Ways:** The culture of the Seven Kingdoms is not one that places high value on personal liberty and individual freedom. The way Houses work speaks to a form of collective freedom. Moreover, the structure of the Night's Watch speaks to a different kind of collective freedom. Individual freedom? This is the defining quality of the wildlings—the folk who live beyond the wall. It isn't a Westeros tradition, but it is used strategically by Martin to draw a contrast between collective and individual obligation.
- **Wealth Ways:** A Lannister always pays his debts. Master of Coin Petyr Baelish. The corrupting role played in Westeros' society by the Iron Bank of Braavos. In this folkway, we can see how intertwined wealth is with the other ordering institutions.
- **Work Ways:** Work is not portrayed as the most important of the cultural folkways, but it is important enough that people's work sometimes gives characters their names... like Hot Pie.
- **Leisure Ways:** Leisure Ways is perhaps the least used of the twenty folkways in Martin's *"A Song of Ice and Fire."* Activities that might seem like they have a leisure function, like tournaments and jousting, really serve other traditions, like Association, Rank or Order.
- **Dress Ways:** The Dress Ways in *"A Song of Ice and Fire"* seem to reflect the Environment Ways.
- **Food Ways:** Extensive description throughout *"A Song of Ice and Fire"* of all sorts of foods help us as readers connect to these characters who have lives that are quite frankly governed by alien and oppressive social standards.
- **Language Ways:** While not as extensive as one sometimes sees in other world building efforts, Martin uses ancient languages and phrases as well as snippets of Dothraki and other languages to help create the flavor of Westeros and Essos. Language can go a long way to create a tone or flavor that can take your game to an entirely new level.
- **Magic Ways:** Subtly used by Martin, perhaps at its most brutal in the ritual of blood that Mirri Maz Duur used to slay Rhaego Targaryen, Daenerys' son, in the womb.
- **Supernatural Ways:** Religion is not a core obsession of Martin's work, but it is everywhere within it nonetheless. The ways in which the Old Gods inform not just the Starks but also all of the people of the North stand in intriguing contrast to the rigid formalities of the worship of the Seven Gods. Westeros' cultures engage in meaningful religious practices. Taken together with everything else that gives meaning to the culture of the Seven Kingdoms, their Supernatural Ways provide a deepening, a rich shading.
- **Self-reflection Ways:** there are a great many things about which the cultures of Westeros deceive themselves. The

simple fact of the coming of Winter and what that always means. The value of loyalty and observance of old customs. The importance of tradition. The meaning of kingship. What order itself means when the principle ordering institution, the monarchy, lies in ruins.

World of Warcraft

Moving now from the world of fiction, where the author is fully and completely in control of narrative, character and intention, into the world of gaming, where authorship is shared between the gamemaster and the player, I turn to the most subscribed to massively-multiplayer online role-playing game in history: World of Warcraft (WOW). First released in 2004, WOW is based on more than a decade's development of the pre-existing Warcraft universe which features at its core a struggle between two cultures, Human and Orc, in conflict with each other over dominance of the world of Azeroth. This conflict manifests itself in WOW as a fundamental worldview conflict (*and hence a cultural conflict*) between two factions: the Human-led Alliance and the Orc-led Horde.

The Alliance faction is composed of races that are human or human-like and share what might be called "*western values.*" The core races in the Alliance, the humans, dwarves and night elves (*forest-dwelling elves*), manifest all of the traditions that we would expect of them from a reading of our own culture. Humans live in agreeable small towns and cities, all neatly laid-out and maintained in an orderly fashion. The architecture is what you might expect in rural England. Hewn white stone, clapboard, pastoral farmland...that sort of thing. The dwarves, no surprise, live within a mountain and are deeply concerned with mining, wealth and drinking. Night elves are the sort of elves who live in-and-amongst the trees. Tall and graceful, they have the overweening confidence one comes to expect from elves in fantasy settings. Three other races, two of them essentially human-like, round out the Alliance. Gnomes, essentially miniature dwarves, are obsessed with gadgets and tinkering. Worgen, lycanthropic humans from a border region previously cut off from the rest of human society, are the most "*monstrous*" of all of the Alliance members (*a factor which, within the storyline of the game, made many members of the Alliance anxious about welcoming the Worgen to the fold*). The last Alliance race, the Draenei, are not from Azeroth. Driven from their own planet (*the planet they shared contentiously with the Orcs*) by a galaxy-spanning war they were losing, the Draenei evacuation ship crash landed on Azeroth. In short order, they joined the Alliance. Why? Because despite their only vaguely human physical appearance, their cultural values were more closely aligned with the humans than with the orcs. There is a quasi-religious force sacred to the Alliance called "*the Light*" that is also sacred to the Draenei. Draenei notions of kingship, orderliness, service, the relationship of the individual to the collective, justice and so forth closely match those of the other Alliance races. These cultural values form the core of the Alliance and manifest themselves in the ways NPCs speak to PCs in game and in

the ways in which players engage with WOW as a role-playing game (*many don't, as the game gives players lots of differing ways to play*).

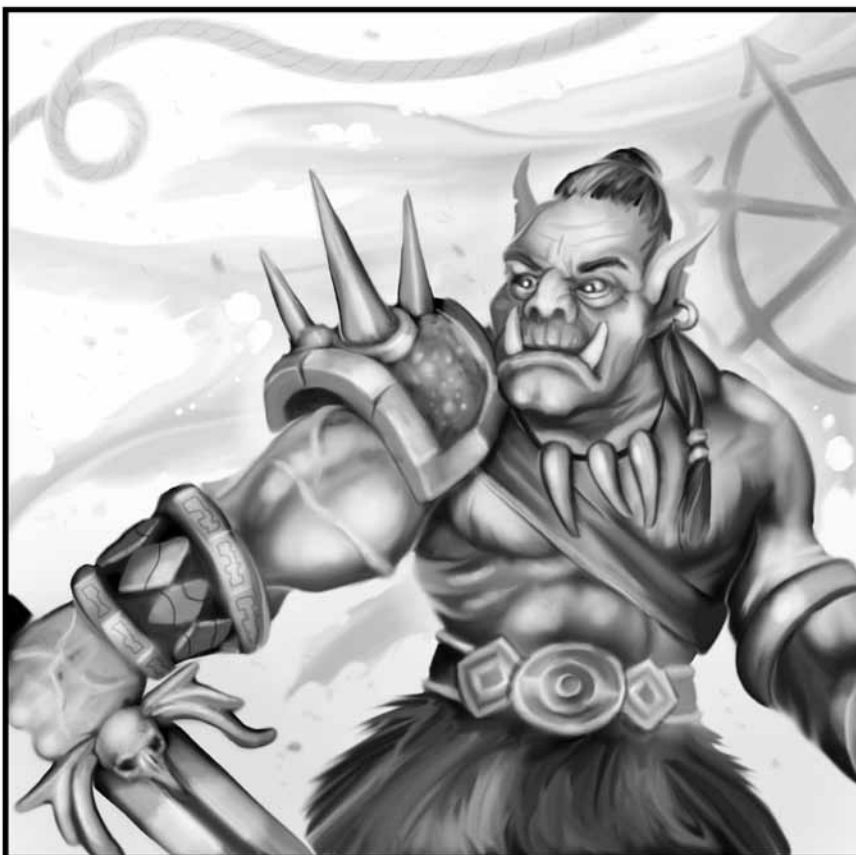
The Horde, by contrast, is comprised of races that do not have western values or whose mythologies are derived from non-western sources. These races are all monstrous in some way and, with one exception, are not human-like in appearance. The three core races of the Horde, the orcs, the tauren and the trolls, all share these traits. The orcs, the equivalent of the human race in the Alliance, created the Horde to resist humans and the Alliance and to assert the rights of the races of the Horde to control the lands they dominated. Formerly from the same planet as the Alliance-aligned Draenei, the orcs were enslaved for a portion of their history by humans. This shapes the relationships between the two races (*and the two factions*) to this day. The orcs are proud, fearsome warriors who are prone to overreach and bluster. They take insults to their honor very seriously and respond to such insults with great determination. Their settlements and cities are instantly recognizable for their spikiness, iron and harsh geometries. The tauren, sentient minotaurs whose settlements are instantly recognizable for their totem poles, are a people of peaceful engagement with the natural world. The trolls, who in the distant history of Azeroth possessed continent-spanning empires, are now uncertain of their future and direction, riven between different empires and factions. The faction aligned with the Horde, the Darkspear, are considered by other trolls to be almost pathetically irrelevant. All of these races derive their fundamental qualities from cultures that are alien to the West. The orcs are a kind of Mongolian terror from the steppes. The tauren, wise and proud nature-loving Native Americans. The trolls speak in a Caribbean patois and dance hip-hop style. These three races taken together manifest the clearest expression of the non-Western values core to the Horde. Three other races join them in the Horde. The undead Forsaken are a race of once-dead humans who were raised from death into the service of the Lich King (*a potentially world-annihilating dark lord*) but who broke the mental conditioning that rendered them zombies. While seeing themselves as essentially human, because they are undead and were formerly under the thrall of the Lich King, human society shuns and fears them. The goblins, a race of industrialists, capitalists and merchants, can be found across Azeroth in their own cities. A faction of goblins joined the Horde some years ago. The last Horde race, the Blood Elves, are lithe and beautiful in the tradition of elves. Possessed of a dependency on certain kinds of magics and willing to delve more deeply into magics viewed as evil than other elves (*or indeed most other races*), they nevertheless

live in cities that, with their wild, mystical architecture, speak mostly to the distance between their values and the values of the rest of the Horde. This distance manifests itself in gameplay over and over as the Blood Elves, who before the game's debut had actually been allied to the Alliance, seek to rejoin it or are enticed to rejoin.

The races in World of Warcraft all give the player a different aesthetic, a "look" that is completely appropriate for a video game. These aesthetic qualities help an interested player understand the tone of their character's culture. Because the gameplay of WOW and other games like it is based on achieving objectives within the game, the game developers have the ability to embed culturally significant information within the objectives themselves. The actions characters take in game, therefore, can help the player better understand what their culture is like and what is expected of them. While a tabletop role-playing game does not have the same capacity to generate a visual aesthetic, using the tools outlined in this book, it does have the ability to provide the rich storytelling that brings a character to life. That's our goal for **HARP**, which we turn to now.

HARP

Like World of Warcraft, many other role-playing video games and many tabletop role-playing games, in character creation, **HARP** uses a "matrix" that intersects a player's decision about race with a player's decision about a very broad cultural framing. This intersection gives the player and the



gamemaster the basic tools needed in order to begin fleshing out a character's background. What happens at that point is up to the players and the gamemaster. Giving each of them more detail to work with is the goal of this book, in fact!

HARP uses six races: Humans, Dwarves, Elves, Gnomes, Halflings and Gryx. Each of these races (*with the exception of the Gryx*) have qualities that connect them with our cultural inventory. For instance, the Dwarves are described as "*lovers of precious stones, metals and gems.*" Elves, long-lived, are thought to be "*aloof*" and "*haughty.*" Gnomes adore "*unraveling puzzles and solving enigmas,*" and so forth. These ideas are recognizable in dozens of other movies and books in our culture. They're tropes, practically. These archetypes give players and gamemasters a place to start from that's comfortable and not too intimidating.

Where **HARP** gets more interesting (*and goes to places that many other fantasy RPGs don't go*) is that it requires players to not select only a race but also a "*culture that best suits their character's background.*" **HARP** features seven cultures: Deep Warrens, Shallow Warrens, Sylvan, Underhill, Nomadic, Rural and Urban. Like with the six races, these cultures are written broadly, serving as archetypes for players. There are, of course, natural meldings. Dwarves meld with the Deep Warrens in a way that reinforces the qualities of both race and culture. Elves are traditionally drawn to the Sylvan culture. Humans tend towards the Rural and the Urban, but like their racial descriptor indicates, they are the most adaptable of all of the **HARP** races and can be found in any of these seven cultures. In chapter 4, I will use these principles of **HARP**'s rules, along with the twenty cultural folkways, to create two entirely new cultures for players in **HARP**.

Moreover, **HARP** uses the seven cultural frameworks to provide newly created characters with an assortment of skills based on the adolescence they would have experienced as members of this culture. This gives players and gamemasters

an ingenious window into the values and expectations, the challenges and advantages of each culture. The Deep Warrens culture, for example, places great value on Endurance, granting 3 skill ranks in it. This is not at all surprising, given the environmental demands placed on a character who comes from such a place. Its valuation of Crafts might speak to why Dwarves are described as being craft-oriented. It's the effect of the culture, not the effect of the race that causes it. The Shallow Warrens culture gives its maximum skill ranks in Stalking & Hiding, a highly valuable skill when the culture values being unseen and undisturbed. The reasons for which Stalking & Hiding is important to Sylvan and Underhill cultures speaks to the ways that they are similar to the Shallow Warrens culture. Having said this, in your own world building efforts, it is critical that you know why these three cultures value Stalking & Hiding differently that matters the most. Because they definitely do. When investigating these adolescent skills more deeply, it isn't that great a surprise that the two cultures valued most by Humans—Rural and Urban—present a particularly broad range of skills. This would be expected from and for Humans. Perhaps the greatest strength of **HARP** is its flexibility. We will make use of that flexibility in the rest of this book.

The most important takeaway from this chapter should be a reminder that as you build a world for the players of your game (*and for your own imagination!*) you do not need to know everything there is to know about your world in order for your place to feel authentic, real, richly detailed and complete. Players who want the richest possible role-playing environment will be grateful for the detail you have provided and will no doubt partner with you on the development of those details that matter to them that you did not already give them answers to. If the level of development Tolkien, Donaldson and Blizzard Entertainment did was sufficient to develop their work, it is likely to be sufficient for you and me!

3 Twenty Folkways



The task of building a living, breathing culture for your players to enjoy starts here—with twenty key questions that emerge from twenty folkways that I believe will best help the game developer do the cultural work that deep role-playing requires. As I indicated in chapter 1, I did not invent these folkways or come up with them out of whole cloth. A deep intellectual debt is owed by me to the historian David Hackett Fischer, whose book *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in Colonial America* is not only the most important book of history I have ever read, but a seminal work, richly deserving the accolades that it has earned.

Each of the twenty folkways begins with the essential question that folkway raises about your culture. I will go on to unpack that folkway, investigating it in as many different ways I can think of before alighting on some real world examples of cultures and how their cultures reveal their answers to this particular question/folkway. Each section will end with a checklist of additional questions you might want to consider as you reflect on your world from the lens of this specific question/folkway.

Environment Ways

This chapter begins with consideration of environment because, in my judgment, it is often the single greatest determining factor in the a culture's internal organization. The environment is the one thing about which most cultures can do nothing about (*except move or, in a high-tech context, shape the environment to suit the culture rather than the other way around*). The environment is an ever-present reality, oppressive or nurturing, swarming with insects and teeming with millions of examples of life or a barren waste. The importance of environment to understanding culture is the reason why **HARP** (*and many other game systems*) more or less equate cultural questions with environmental ones. This is why **HARP**'s cultures read as environment tropes first and cultural frameworks second. This is not a critique! Rather, it is a reminder of the importance of the environment to culture. When considering the essential question, give careful consideration to: topography, water, ecosystem and weather.

⊗ **ESSENTIAL QUESTION:** How do your cultures respond to, shape, get shaped by, understand, anthropomorphize and live in their physical environment?

Topography: Under this rubric, I include all of the physical qualities of the shape, dimensions, altitude, latitude of the land itself that has a bearing on how the culture inhabits the land. This is the critical first step in understanding the broadest, most intense shaping forces at work on your culture. Think about all of the different factors that might be in play just considering this one notion. How might a culture develop differently if the land they inhabit is mountainous as opposed to just hilly? A mountainous terrain is much more difficult to traverse. Mountains might (*but might not*) be less

fertile than a hilly terrain. They afford an entirely different kind of protection than hills do. If the mountain is volcanic, it presents a serious threat to a culture that depends on or lives in vicinity of that mountain. Is the mountain part of a chain? How long does that chain stretch? What heights does it achieve? And if it separates different topographies, what are they? Hilly terrain might afford more natural protection against enemies than flatlands but at what cost? Is the terrain gently hilly—rolling and easy? Or might it be foothills—a mountainous terrain in all but altitude? If not a mountainous terrain, perhaps an expansive grassland or a deciduous forest with plenty of fertile land for settled agriculture. Simply making this decision, in short, dramatically shapes part of your culture's reality.

Water: What access to water does your culture have? All ancient human civilizations began their existence in river valleys that were astoundingly productive and fertile. Egypt formed along the Nile. The Mesopotamian cultures sprang up between the Tigris and Euphrates. Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa emerged in the Indus Valley. When considering your own culture, keep this in mind—everything upon which your civilization relies depends itself on access to water. What is the nature of your culture's access to water? Does it draw its wellspring from calm, orderly and dependable rivers, like Egypt and the Indus Valley did? If so, society and social organization will reflect this dependable ordinariness. Perhaps it draws water from productive, but regularly disorderly and violent rivers, like the Tigris and Euphrates (*whose destructive capacity was so high it could lay waste to entire civilizations*). Rivers are about transportation too—they connect peoples along them. If your culture draws its water from regularly renewed inland ponds and lakes, how outward-looking might it be? If your culture develops in a place that is dependent on glacial runoff from towering mountains, what happens if there's a very warm winter? Cultures might develop near a water source that dries up or becomes unproductive, requiring them to bring water in day-by-day or give up their lifestyle. Settled cultures depend on their water source. Nomadic cultures don't. They, rather, travel from place to place moving from one water source to another in a pattern that is well known to the culture's leaders.

Ecosystem: In addition to your culture, what other life exists in their territory? How fertile is the land they occupy? In essence, everyone in your culture needs to eat—where are those calories coming from? Consider this question from equatorial through temperate and then into arctic contexts and you'll see what I mean. Equatorial cultures might have access to a bewildering array of food sources. Why? Because these ecosystems generally support the most complex webs of life. There's a reason why insectivorous food traditions don't develop generally in temperate or arctic contexts—there's just not enough insects to make it worth it. Equatorial cultures that emerge in well-watered places are going to be living in rain forests and thick jungle, making most kinds of agriculture difficult. These same cultures in water-scarce

environments are going to naturally be nomadic, perhaps even scavenging. Think very carefully about what flora and fauna your culture shares its environment with. This will potentially point to sacred totems, tribally-oriented animals and magical fetishes and to obsessive tendencies in your culture. Temperate ecosystems are where many examples of mega-fauna might be found. Mastodons and lions and bears and dinosaurs—all findable within different temperate contexts. What are the hunting traditions of your culture? Do they hunt? If so, what do they hunt? Temperate climate systems afford ease of access to farming techniques. If your culture is settled and farm-oriented, how wealthy does this make them? Consider now the difficulties facing residents of an arctic ecosystem. Not devoid of life by any stretch, but certainly not amenable to farming or settled life. Arctic ecosystems do not have much place for pastoral vegetarians. Rather, the work of hunting is likely to shape the culture profoundly.

Weather: Weather isn't really about the ecosystem but is embedded within it. Weather speaks to the patterns of warmth and rain and wind that governs many of the decisions a culture makes that shape their success in inhabiting the land. Cultures living in a place where the weather is completely dependable and scarcely changing will have a very different outlook on life than those cultures whose existence is tenuous and weather-dependent. How does it change a culture if it receives its rainfall for a year in nearly-equal day-by-day gentle showers versus a culture that gets all of its rainfall in a pounding month-long monsoon? Does your culture have any experience with violent weather? Tornadoes? Hurricanes? These dramatically shape a culture's sense of confidence and anxiety. Do its water sources sometimes cause catastrophe? Does your culture have to cope with regular El Nino events? Have they ever experienced an earthquake or a volcanic eruption? How near to the ocean does your culture live? Proximity to the ocean tends to moderate weather extremes, for instance.

In Our World

Human history is replete with examples of environmental factors shaping cultures. The regularity of the Nile's flood shaped the way Ancient Egyptians viewed the world and profoundly influenced their commitment to strong government and the relationship between that government and the forces of the cosmos. The failures of the flood inevitably synchronize with the collapse of Egyptian dynasties. The fertility of the Indus River gave rise to multicultural, peaceful sophisticated cities with so much surplus that their granaries are the most salient features of their cities. The profoundly fickle Tigris and Euphrates rivers, which flooded once a generation in catastrophic fashion, gave rise to a much more anxious and mistrustful assortment of cultures with gods who were much less nurturing than Egypt's. Consider the question of ecosystem for a moment and how it shaped the relationship between Europe and Africa. I mentioned above the role insects might play in cultural development. Insects are an important vector for infectious disease. This reality dictated those parts of Africa where Europeans might directly colonize and those

that wouldn't be suitable because of the insect-borne illnesses that Europeans had limited or no resistance to. Look at a map of where endemic malaria existed or where the tsetse fly existed in large numbers and you'll see where Europeans did not have a strong colonial presence until they had developed medicines sufficient to overcome the natural disadvantage. Europeans and their interactions with the Americas shows the opposite of this, but again, still from the perspective of ecosystem. North and South Americans had very limited immunological resistance to the diseases (*like smallpox*) that were endemic in Europe. When Europeans arrived in the Americas, it set off centuries of disease-mediated population collapse which, when coupled with Europeans' warfare against the native cultures, amounts to a genocide. Give the peoples of the Americas resistance to smallpox and everything changes. Think about this when you are building your environments. Particularly consider the borderlands between cultures—why is a borderland a borderland? Is it because of its height? The nature of its water? Because of some other ecosystem factor?

Ask Yourself...

- What are your culture's topographical realities? Do they live high in the mountains? In hills? Grasslands? Temperate forests? A polar climate? On a continent? An island? What forces have shaped their land?
- Where's the water? If you situate a culture far from a source of water, you should have a good explanation for how that culture sustains itself. Be mindful also that many human conflicts center on access to water. This is going to be true no matter how fantastical your culture is.
- How complex is its ecosystem? What animals and plants exist in easy access to your culture? What do they think about these animals and plants? Do they manifest themselves in religious or social practices? What do your people eat? What's plentiful? What's scarce? Scarcity can lead to equating objects with transportable wealth. Is there anything in your culture's ecosystem that might function as a medium of exchange?
- What's the weather like? A simple question like "*how humid is it generally*" would help you understand whether the local tavern is going to serve a hearty stout, a crisp lager or an ice wine, for instance. Cultures accustomed to wildly unpredictable weather will not tolerate people who are rigid and inflexible. Cultures accustomed to regular flooding are going to build their homes on stilts. Those that have tornados will have storm cellars. And so forth.



Urban Ways

From the earliest days of human history until today, one of the defining characteristics of civilization has been the settlements we build. Temporary villages made from materials that are easy to move are the response of some civilizations to the demands imposed on them from their environments. Small towns clustered near the banks of rivers feature in the origins of many national stories. The emergence of large cities and even larger urban areas is a quality not just of our industrial and post-industrial present but also something that the ancients achieved, with Rome as a particularly fitting example of city building on a grand scale two thousand years ago. When considering this essential question, give careful consideration to: permanence, configuration, aesthetics and stratification.

⊗ **ESSENTIAL QUESTION:** How does your culture build villages, towns and cities? What does the built environment look like? How do people move through it?

Permanence: Building from your understanding of a culture's Environment Ways, you have to decide whether the people of your culture resides in fixed villages and towns that, by design, are not meant to be moved or whether your culture's villages are partially movable or fully movable. Any of these choices is reasonable in any potential environment. The important thing for you is to be sure you have an answer to this basic question, because it impacts many other realities that your people will deal with. A civilization with fully movable settlements is going to be accustomed to regular migration (*following water or food sources*) and will expect to move with the seasons. Attempts to not migrate would be seen as troubling deviations from the norm. Think about the kind of work people who have to pack up with limited notice might

have to do. Think about the way they might think about the lifecycle. These are likely to be rather different from people living in settled communities. When your society is confident enough in its access to water and food, it might choose to build permanent settlements. The environment in which these settlements are built doesn't much matter—any might do. Cities on alluvial plains or vast settlements like bee hives carved into immense glaciers are really looking for the same things—security, access to water and access to food. And don't neglect those civilizations that build semi-permanent settlements. These have settlements that are meant to endure year-to-year, but are inhabited only part-time or by only part of the culture. Elements of these societies live in temporary structures they carry with them while away from the settlements and return to home when their business is concluded. Permanence also speaks to roadways, rivers and other forms of transportation. How do people get around in your city? Are there roads? Alleyways? Does everyone use the water to move about? Is there some kind of primitive (*or indeed, sophisticated*) railroad system, perhaps? The degree of permanence suggests the degree of care given to transportation. Last of all, notions of permanence speak to defensibility. Does your culture have enemies who covet what your civilization owns or makes? If so, that will have an impact on how your culture views its safety and the wisdom of building settlements. A mobile culture under threat can simply move. A settled community is going to need defenses, however. Walls or the like. Or indeed geography, as in the Acoma Pueblo Sky City, can provide much by way of defensibility.

Configuration: This is the simple question of “what goes where?” How did your culture organize the residential, commercial and industrial sectors of the city? Are these separated in some way? Do they overlap? How much land does your settlement take up? Settlements can be spread out over a wide area or clustered together very tightly, whether they have a lot of population or really not so much. It all depends on how the culture sees fit to organize the work of a city. So, again, where's the water? If your culture doesn't have access to post-industrial technology, it is very likely that what passes for an industrial sector in your civilization's cities is going to be built where the water is...because that's where the energy of the water is. What your culture's industry is making will certainly shape how the commercial sector is configured. Does your culture's industry make objects that are sold in the city to the civilization's residents? That would tend to a commercial sector near the industrial sector. If your city is cosmopolitan in nature and there are foreigners, the commercial sector might be near the city's gates (*if it has walls*) or indeed outside of those walls. It could be partially up the river with barges carrying goods in from the city, if your city's residents wanted strangers' money without having to deal with the strangers themselves. Last of all is the consideration you need to give to where people live. Is your culture's social order the sort that creates demand for single-family dwellings or multi-family dwellings? How many people who consider themselves linked are going to be sheltered in one dwelling? What is your

culture's tolerance of single people? Do you have apartments for that kind of household?

Aesthetics: Architecture is a subject that divides people. Where one might find the English country cottage or quaint Provencal village charming and beautiful, another might find it cloying and old-fashioned, preferring the stark concrete and glass of a modern city. This question is asking you to think about building materials and beauty. What do your culture's people find charming and beautiful? From a role-playing perspective, there's nothing quite like being able to describe a new place in vivid enough detail that it resonates with your players' characters' sense of the sublime. There is much that a civilized people's ingenuity can do with wood, stone and brick. Indeed even with adobe, concrete and other composite materials. And this is to say nothing of civilizations that build their settlements inside of ice or hills or mountains. In these places, architecture becomes more akin to sculpture, the deliberate and careful manipulation of the environment, rather than the fabrication of it.

Stratification: The last point for your consideration in Urban Ways is how the settlement is divided socially. How do people use the village's places on a daily basis? What parts of the city are reserved for the upper classes? Is there a middle class? What makes it so and where does it live as a result of what made it middle class? Is there a sector for the lower classes? Well-reasoned answers to questions here will help you down the road when you are considering social factors at play in your society. Keep in mind that it is entirely customary to set aside very large portions of a settlement for the private use of members of a royal class or a priestly class. Take a careful look at the footprint of the Forbidden City in Beijing or the Imperial Palace in Tokyo to get a sense of what I mean here. Do upper class people get a special aesthetic that they reserve for their buildings? Do they reside near the royal/priestly quarter or separately? This probably depends on their relationship with the royal than anything else. Do they care for or want access to the countryside? Every settlement has some degree of social stratification, no matter how small. Give serious thought to how it is divided.

In Our World

The built environment goes back in a viewable form in our world many millennia. The walls of the city of Jericho in the Middle East date to 6800 BCE, for example. Modern cities like London were founded nearly two thousand years ago. Even more modern cities like Los Angeles have within them small neighborhoods that are centuries old. All of these cities answer the questions that I outlined above and would be worthy of deeper study on your part. Thinking about our species' Urban Ways is a reminder of our staggering ingenuity. Our modern cities are marvels of efficiency and order while also exerting a rapacious demand on the produce of their surroundings. Think for a moment about what is required to keep New York running. The electricity, the daily food requirements for the people, the social order required to keep

everything running. And then consider that, by world standards in the early 21st century, New York's kind of small. It's less than half as populous as Sao Paulo, for instance. Then think about the pueblo dwellers in the North American Southwest and the ways that their dwellings, built atop one another and often accessible through the roof, reflect their social values. Now consider the cleverness of the Anasazi peoples, who built cliff dwellings in what is now southwestern Colorado or the Tellem, who did likewise in Mali. And this is merely to discuss those who chose to settle! Nomadism, while in the decline in the 21st century, remains an active way of life for hundreds of millions of people and was a dominant way of relating to the land for the majority of North Americans until the coming of Europeans.

Ask Yourself...

- Does my culture live a settled, semi-nomadic or nomadic existence? What are the forces at work to sustain those values? To challenge them?
- What would a member of my culture consider to be a beautiful building and why?
- How does my culture think about transportation? What are their methods of movement, and how do they organize their settlements to suit these needs?
- How would my culture defend its holdings from an enemy? Would it move on? Has it built walls? Moats? Can it *"pull up the ladders?"*
- What do the people in my culture do for a living? How does that shape the way they design their settlements?
- Is there a lot of social stratification in my culture or a little? How does that social order get reflected in the cities and settlements built?

Family Ways

There are no human cultures without some concept of family. I would elaborate by saying that any of the pre-existing races in HARP will also have some form of family concept. You are certainly not obligated to have one, but be mindful that if you answer this question by saying *"there are no families,"* you have many other root questions you'll have to untangle that are probably beyond the scope of this book! Having said that, one culture's definition of what constitutes family might be so radically different from another's that these separate cultures might have a difficult time recognizing each other's definitions. For my purposes in this section, I am going to speak about affiliation by means of blood ties. For all of those very important connections that people make that aren't mediated by a blood relationship, I will wait until discussing Association Ways to elaborate on. When considering this essential question, give careful consideration to: reach, relationship, authority and idealization.



⊗ **ESSENTIAL QUESTION:** How does your culture structure and support families and households, and what is the difference between the reality and the ideal?

Reach: A conventional understanding of family in the 20th and 21st century West would center on two notions: the nuclear family and the extended family. Neither of these is normative across the great span of human history; don't feel bound by our narrow experiences! Likewise, don't feel a need to turn away from them. Consider them in the larger perspective of your culture's values. Each individual in a society draws circles around himself to understand how to relate to others. At what point does the circle "family" end? (*I am mindful here that there are many contexts in which someone might describe a non-blood relative as family, and I am not denigrating that relationship by discussing it in Association Ways.*) What is the "reach" of the idea of family? It could certainly end at the nuclear family—placing grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins at a distance. If the definition included the extended family, that would bring grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins closer and bring them into "relationship" with the individual (*I'll discuss relationship next*). But it doesn't need to end there. Perhaps certain kinds of nuclear families in your culture band together into larger units? In human society, this is where the notion of clan might emerge—a collection of like-minded families acting together to defend and assert their interests. It could extend even further than that, of course. If everyone in a particular area believes themselves to be of the same blood, tribal connections and obligations might emerge. Once we have a sense of how far the boundary of family lies from the individual...

Relationship: ...we have to consider what that boundary circumscribes. That's relationship. It describes who you, as a

member of what you've described to yourself as family (*and what you feel deeply in your heart is family*) feel obligated to in some way. In sociology, this might be called kinship, but I mean this from a role-playing perspective to be a reminder that you have to know who you are bound to because your culture defines them as family. These obligations aren't just personal or affective. They are economic as well. These are the people who you believe you can turn to in your darkest hour and get help. These are the people who you expect to turn to you in their times of troubles. You owe something to them and they owe something back to you. You are bound by obligations to them that are defined by how your culture understands the family tie. These obligations might change based on how old, young, wealthy, poor, powerful, weak, well-educated or connected you are. Consider how differently you relate to the members of your family now as compared to ten years ago or twenty and you'll see what these shifting sands mean. The broader the boundary, the more complex the systems of obligation and duty imposed upon the individual. Remember that families have as a core duty the raising of children. Who carries the burden of that responsibility within the reach of the family? Who takes that burden over in the event the primary caregiver is dead or incapacitated?

Authority: This notion speaks to the fact that in any family context, no matter how broadly conceived, there are power dynamics at play. How do they work? Whence does the power to compel action in your family systems lie? Here's where the complexity of family becomes difficult to map. Some families center authority and power in the old. Others with men. But it doesn't have to be this way. Some families give more power to whomever is physically strongest. Others give authority to women. Perhaps it is a combination of some kind. Suffice it to say that somewhere amongst these people bound by the same stories and history resides the power to compel, to act, to coerce or to destroy. In short, there's some form of hierarchy in all families. Be mindful that you need to know this going into role-playing, because your players need to know it as well.

Idealization: Almost every culture is aware of the ways in which their definitions of family just don't work in some contexts or for some people. Families are messy, evolving, organic things. It's not for nothing that Leo Tolstoy wrote in *Anna Karenina* that "all happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way." When your culture idealizes family, what are the qualities it prizes? Order? Joy? Obligation? Love? Imagine the same group of people motivated by a sense of duty as opposed to a sense of joy and you can see what I mean here. What happens to your family when it isn't working as it wants to or when certain members use their energy to pull the family away from someone else's ideal? What would a family work towards if it wasn't dysfunctional? These can be powerful motivating factors for a character and adds a rich complexity to stories that involve the character's obligations.

Ask Yourself...

- What is the limit of the definition of family in my culture?
- To what purposes do families direct themselves? What is the family's job? What isn't?
- Does your culture have a working or useful definition of clan, tribe or nation?
- What are the norms in your culture's definition of family? Who in your culture is pushing at the boundaries of these norms?
- What is the role hierarchy plays in the maintenance of family structures?

In Our World

In our world, family is the defining social construct that gives shape to our culture. Its meaning is fiercely defended and sometimes contested. New definitions of family infuriate and frighten elements of society that want family to mean either what it has conventionally meant or to what it meant when they were young. Violence is not uncommon against those whose behavior violates an aspect of what family is defined to mean. There's a reason why Hillary Clinton's book *It Takes A Village* struck such a nerve in the United States of the 1990s... it posits that the raising of children might be an obligation of people outside of the family (*and not occupying the teacher/elder role*). Remember that family isn't a Western concept—it's a human concept that asserts control over all of those notions I detailed above.

Marriage Ways

Marriage Ways and Family Ways go together like hand-and-glove. They reify one another. Each has the capacity to strengthen the other's claims or to weaken the other's claims to organizing the culture and society. Historically speaking, the marriage-bond has been the principal means by which distinct (*and blood-separate*) families have transformed each other into relatives (*binding them, therefore, according to the rules of a culture's Family Ways*) and kinsmen. It is also the primary economic partnership in society, depending on the division of labor in your culture. When considering this question, give careful attention to authority, inheritance, legitimacy and love.

✦ **ESSENTIAL QUESTION:** How does your culture define and understand the courtship ritual, the marriage-bond and divorce?

Authority: As marriages create households and expand the definition of family, they become the smallest locus of authority in your culture. There are four inflections of power that can define marital traditions in your culture. First, marriage authority can be invested in the husband. This gives him power over his wife and his children. The degree of this power



depends on the culture itself. Sometimes it is little more than nominal; other times it is absolute. Second, marriage authority can be invested in the wife. This gives her power over her husband and her children. Much less common in historical human cultures, it nevertheless does exist in some forms in which the wife's authority is partially dependent on her male relatives. Still, there are examples. Third, power in marriage might be shared between the two parties equally. Fourth, in marriages that are not one woman, one man, power may be wielded by a single individual over all others with whom that individual is joined through the marriage bond. Once you have determined what the marriage bond is and what function it plays, this is the next question you have to answer.

Inheritance: When a parent dies, who inherits the wealth? Who is a legitimate heir? These questions matter a great deal! There are four patterns here as well. It might be that descent is patrilineal, which is to say, wealth passes from father to son and heirs are legitimate in the male line but not the female. Descent might be matrilineal, in which case wealth passes from mother to daughter and heirs are legitimate only in the female line. Descent might be bilateral. In bilateral descent, wealth would pass from parent to child along a path and according to legal procedure that was customary in that culture. The rules would be clearly spelled out. Heirs would be legitimate in both lines, again, requiring that some authority outside the family has made clear what the patterns that are legal are. Fourth, in a marriage composed of multiple individuals, the rules of descent would be more complicated still. It is even possible that in these kinds of corporate marriages, there would be no rules of descent that passed wealth from individual to individual. Rather, it would pass into the hands of the collective.

Legitimacy: The questions of legitimacy center on three questions. Who are you allowed to marry? How many spouses

are you allowed to have? Under what conditions are you allowed to terminate a marriage? These questions are culturally complicated even in human society. The question of who are you allowed to marry refracts along two lines. First, are you allowed to marry a person of either your own gender or the opposite gender or not? If so, what are the forces at work in society sustaining this? If not, why not? Second, are you obligated to marry someone with whom you share a cultural tie (*like a religion, caste or race*) or are you allowed to choose a partner outside of such constraints? The question of number has three answers. In monogamist cultures, one is never allowed more than one spouse at a time. Death or divorce would be the only ways by which you might take a new spouse. There is also the concept of serial monogamy, in which marriage is a contractual relationship that has both a beginning and an end. When it ends, the partners are free to move on from it and into another marriage, if they are so inclined. Last of all is the concept of plural marriages in which a person might have more than one spouse at a time. The culture might stipulate that only men or only women are allowed to have multiple spouses or it might not stipulate this, only allowing anyone to have as many partners as they want or as many as they might like up to a specified number. The question of divorce figures prominently in the legitimacy or illegitimacy of noble and royal couples and children throughout history as well as for regular people. Cultures might forbid divorce. Cultures might allow it, but under certain conditions that would be adjudicated by an authority of some kind like a church, judge or clan leader. Cultures might allow it, but only when initiated by one member of the partnership. Some cultures allow only men to initiate divorce. Some allow only women. Some allow either. It is possible that a culture would allow divorce at will and at the whim of either partner. How property and other economic realities of the divorced couple, to say nothing of the obligations and responsibilities of children produced by the marriage, sort out would likewise be determined by the culture and its ordering institutions.

Love: An eighteenth-century reader would probably be surprised to see love in this list at all. A twenty-first century reader has been wondering why it's taken me so long to get here! The simple point is that marriage based on one individual's love for another is a modern construct, largely but not entirely absent from the marriage bond in the past. It isn't

Ask Yourself...

- What is the relationship between marriage and family?
- What rules are fixed and inviolate?
- What rules are in the process of being rethought?
- How do marriage rules give power to men or women or both?
- To what extent do the rules about divorce speak more about the economic role of marriage or the nature of a loving partnership?

that marriages were unloving in the past. Rather, the love that formed between spouses formed in marriage, not before marriage. An important distinction. From a gamemaster's perspective, a critical one. Characters can easily find themselves in love with characters who are promised to others. Or indeed, they might themselves be obligated to a spouse-to-be at home, when at last they return from their adventures.

In Our World

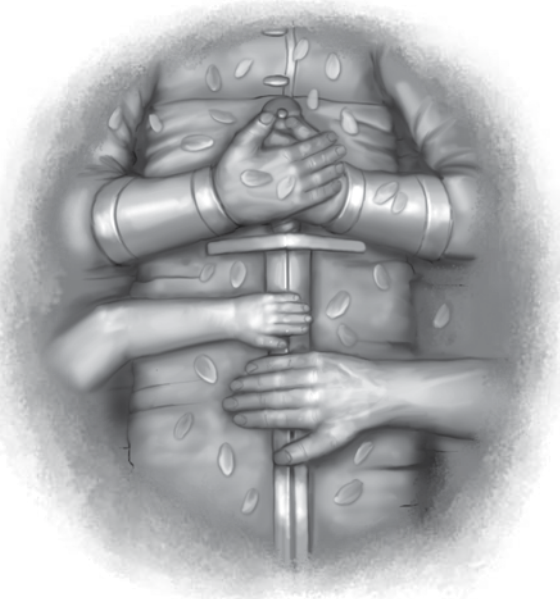
All of the marriage protocols described above have been practiced at one time or another in human history. While patriarchal marriage is quite common, matriarchal marriage is not unheard of. Marriage based first and foremost on love is commonly practiced. Same-sex marriages are solemnized in dozens of countries. The Oneida Community practiced a complex form of group marriage for decades in the 1800s. With regard to marriage, then, it is fair to say that all societies have their rules, but these rules can change over time. But there are rules. It is important that you know what they are in your own culture.

Lifespan Ways

We are all born. In fantasy roleplaying settings, there are races that are immortal, of course. But everyone is, at some point, born. What does that mean? Once born, what does it mean to grow up? To be an adult? To be old? Every culture assigns different rules and responsibilities within society to people at different points along their life journey. Some give pride of place to young people; others to elders. To whom your culture assigns these roles matters a great deal in understanding your culture's core values. As important is knowing when your culture transitions individuals from one status to another. When considering this essential question, give careful consideration to: infancy and childhood, adolescence, adulthood, elderhood and transitions.

✧ **ESSENTIAL QUESTION:** How does your culture treat children, adolescents, adults and the aged? What does it say about birth, dying, death and the dead?

Infancy and Childhood: Despite the natural parental instinct, there are cultural factors in play that determine how parents relate to their newborn child in the earliest days of its life and going on through its childhood. Some cultures tend to pamper and "baby" the infant, giving the child almost indirect control of how the family operates. Other cultures do no such thing, recognizing the importance of proper care, but in no way organizing the family around the needs of the youngest member of the family. To what extent are other relatives allowed to care for the infant? Is that a job reserved exclusively to the parents or to one parent? Does your culture view the infant child as a precocious bundle of love and promise or a dangerously empty vessel into which much malevolence might enter? How much education does the child require to



become a productive member of your culture? What sort of education? Is the education process for boys and girls similar or different? What are children allowed to do? What does play look like? At what age might children be put to work and in what contexts do they do this work? When does childhood end?

Adolescence: The exact moment when the child transitions into adolescence varies culture by culture, but it certainly coincides with puberty. The adolescent transition speaks not to the physical changes that are the hallmark of puberty. Rather, it speaks to the cultural changes that transform the young person from whatever their culture said childhood was into what adulthood is. The complexity of adolescence gives a world builder a lot of room to work. Many cultures have ritual practices to admit the child into adulthood, like the bar mitzvah process for Jewish boys. Does yours? Does it have one for all children or one for girls and one for boys? What sort of behavior is tolerated in the adolescent that would not be tolerated in the adult? To what extent is the sexuality of your culture's adolescents controlled and regulated? Do adolescents continue to receive a formal education and if so under what circumstances and to what end? At what age might an adolescent marry? Own property? Command others? Participate in warfare? Adolescence is to a very large extent about challenging limits and pushing at the social and cultural boundaries established by your society. How far will your culture allow an adolescent to push and how does it push back against the unruly? What marks the end of adolescence? Becoming a parent? Is there a ritual that ends it and transforms the individual into a full adult?

Adulthood: Once the transition is achieved, what are the expectations imposed by your culture on adults? What does it mean to work, parent, educate, lead and guide in your culture? Where adolescents are often allowed to act in outlandish

ways and push the envelope, adults are often disallowed from this kind of behavior. Is this so in your culture? How strictly does your culture regulate the behavior of adults? Are adults allowed to live by themselves or must they be attached in some way to other people? Are adults allowed to travel as they desire or are there restrictions? Does your culture regulate the sexuality of adults the same way it regulates that of adolescents? Most importantly, what responsibilities are expected of adults and why? Are adults ever allowed a sabbatical or time off from their responsibilities?

Elderhood: At some point in life, one transitions from "rank-and-file" adulthood into elderhood. Perhaps it is at that time when the individual becomes a grandparent, or at some fixed point defined by the culture. It might simply be that a person becomes an elder when all of the other people around her decide that she's an elder. There's hardly a culture that doesn't assign some kind of value, either positive or negative, to being old. Is the culture aligned so that older people are accorded magical powers and greater wisdom? Does the culture value the elderly or scorn them? Does it allow them the same rights as adults or does it re-assign them the status of children in some way? Could it be that your culture assigns the rearing and educating of young people exclusively to old people? Or indeed does it give them an even more powerful status than adults? Does it give them some kind of access to a mystical or magical other? Think carefully about your culture's Supernatural Ways. A culture that places a high value on ancestor worship is going to think about the elderly in a very careful way—certainly differently than a culture that doesn't care about ancestor worship.

Transitions: For those who die, the end of life has many meanings. How does your culture mark the transition from living to not? What are your culture's death rituals? How is the transition marked? Is it a cause for celebration of the life of the now deceased person? Are there prescribed expectations for the closest relatives of the deceased to show grief in a particular way? Does your culture have a tradition of grief? What are the mechanical practices associated with the remains? Does your culture believe in cremation of remains or stigmatize this practice? Is your culture one that engages in burial? If so, is the dead person's wealth buried with them? What are your culture's thoughts on grave robbing? There are cultures that expose the dead to be consumed by carrion animals—does that speak to your culture's values? Once disposed of, do the remains become inviolate? Might a burial site be moved? What happens if it is disturbed in some way? Last of all, and this intersects with Supernatural Ways, what does your culture think happens to the person after their body dies? Do they go on to another life—a supernatural reward? Does life end at that moment and that's that?

In Our World

The study of lifespan development is so expansive that there is simply no way to do it any kind of justice in a book like this. Suffice it to say that this is a critical topic for a world builder,

Ask Yourself...

- What transitional celebrations or experiences does a person have as they move from childhood through adolescence and into adulthood?
- How do these transitions shape the next phase of life?
- What behaviors are allowed and what are restricted by culture depending on age?
- What is the age of majority in your culture?
- What does it mean to be an orderly or disorderly child? Adolescent? Adult? Elder?

because if you get the details here rich and right, you'll give your players extraordinary opportunity to develop their backstory. Moreover, you'll give yourself deep storytelling possibilities with that character's family. Don't feel proscribed when thinking about these questions! If you can think it, I bet that there's a culture somewhere on Earth that practices what you just thought. Puritan New Englanders, for instance, used to rap the heads of disorderly children with thimbles to encourage proper behavior...and that was just the start of their coercive practices. Adolescents in the Trobriand Islands are not only encouraged but expected to engage in sexual practices once adolescence begins. Adulthood responsibilities can begin as early as the mid-teens or be delayed a very long time indeed. The cultural obsessions with youth and age in the West places cultural power in the hands of young people rather than elders. In many cultures, that is reversed. Do elders connect the generations to ancestors now long deceased? Does the lifespan of the individual end at their death or does it endure? Among the Ancient Romans, the family cult would not explicitly recognize the death of the individual as their permanent disconnection from the world of the family.

Gender and Sexuality Ways

The most important consideration in this section is to keep the distinction between biological sex, sexuality and socially-constructed gender clear at all times. By biological sex, I am referring to the anatomical morphology of the body, in essence, what role has your genetics assigned you in the process of reproduction? Sexuality refers not to reproduction but rather to your affectional orientation—with whom do you want to form loving relationships? Gender is neither of these things. Rather, it is the complex collection of rules, norms and practices that define what society expects of its members that appear to have the characteristics of a particular biological sex. This is complicated enough when dealing with races that have only two biological sexes. It is a well-established trope in science fiction and fantasy to have races with more than one biological sex—the gender complication in such societies would be fascinating to consider. When considering this essential question, give careful consideration to: definitions, norms, non-normative patterns and relations.

Definitions: It may seem obvious, but you should know going into the creation of your culture if the beings who build it have two or more biological sexes. When you think about how powerfully influential the human binary is, it isn't too difficult to realize that the absence of that binary would also have a powerful influence. If you have a race with three genders, that's totally fine, but you do need to know this as it might dramatically shape your answers to the other questions at hand.

✧ **ESSENTIAL QUESTION:** How does your culture define gender and maintain gender roles? How do women and men relate to each other? What sexual practices are normative?

Norms: This refers to all of those qualities of biological sex, sexuality and gender that are considered socially acceptable by your culture. The ordering institutions in your society would bend themselves towards supporting or reinforcing whatever your culture decides is a norm. The corollary here is that they would also take vigorous effort to suppress non-normative patterns and practices (*discussed below*). Considering each notion in turn, it may be that your culture is expecting individuals' bodies to look a certain way at birth or during their lives. These ways reinforce the society's foundational understanding of these questions. "If you look like a girl, you're a girl. If you look like a boy, you're a boy," in other words. But what happens if you don't quite look like a girl or a boy? This happens much more frequently than one might realize. What will your society do with the individual



who doesn't quite have all the characteristics one associates with a particular biological sex? Will it take some kind of corrective action? Will it condemn that child to death? Will it bring shame of some kind onto the family? Moreover, what if your society's sex/gender rules are so rigid that losing or not having some characteristic of the adult biological sex means that the person is not thought to have that biological sex anymore? Is a biological male without the capacity to grow a beard still male in your culture? What about a woman who loses a breast for some reason? In a highly rigid society, these are problematic questions. In a less rigid society, they aren't. Cultures that are less rigid are just not going to establish these norms with the same vigor. Norms are also established about sexuality. To whom is one allowed to direct their affections and under what contexts and in what circumstances? Is sexuality allowed outside of marriage? Only within marriage? Who is allowed to be married? Answers to all of these questions shape fundamental practices of your culture because they give weight to deeply held identity-shaping qualities of the individual. If the individual has a sexuality that is suppressed in his/her society, that profoundly shapes the way he/she relates to the culture and to him/her self. The question of gender is also one that cultures pay significant attention to. Societies almost invariably have created a set of rules about what is expected of one biological sex or the other—these rules create the socially-normed notion of gender. The critical thing to keep in mind here is that the norms of the liberal, industrialized West are not the only norms there are. Indeed, your culture might have many categories of acceptable gender behaviors that would have no analogue in the West (*or indeed in human culture*). The hijra in the subcontinent, the fa'afafine in Samoan culture and the burrneshia in Albania are examples of culturally-normed third genders in human society. In the first two cases, a person born biologically male carries out roles in society that are conventionally assigned to women. The hijra and fa'afafine are allowed to act within the framework assigned to women without punishment. The burrneshia or "sworn virgins" are women who have taken an oath of celibacy which allows them to act as though they were men in their society.

Non-Normative Patterns: After you've considered the norms of your culture, you have to give thought to how people who are non-normative live in your culture and what your culture does to suppress, eliminate or punish these non-normative individuals. Do non-normative people find themselves exiled? Do they exile themselves into small ghettos in the cities or do they reside in small villages where the ordering institutions of society tolerate them? Consider the history of gay and lesbian Americans in the 20th century. When gays and lesbians were actively and violently suppressed by society, they built institutions within the culture that were secret hideaways and congregating places, sometimes with passwords, to gather. A half-dozen resort areas in the United States became associated with gays and lesbians (*like Provincetown, Massachusetts or Fire Island, New York*). In time, whole neighborhoods in large cities became gay-associated (*like the Castro in San*

Francisco or West Hollywood in Los Angeles). These are all examples of how a non-normative subculture operates within a repressing majority culture. Likewise, it is critical to think about how the majority works to limit the influence, power and spread of the non-normative pattern. Does the majority use violence? If so, what kind? Physical? Magical? Spiritual?

Relations: Last of all is consideration given to the ways in which the sexes, sexualities and genders in your culture interact with each other. Are there specific rules by which they relate? Is there an enshrined order or "super-norm" that determines how they get along? Once you've sorted out the rules and norms of the society, consider the ways in which these norms act on the individual. What is it like to be in a normed relationship in all respects except for one?

In Our World

In human society, gender and sexuality roles are among the most heavily policed of all roles. Many societies have extremely rigid expectations of men and women and maintain these roles with both the threat and practice of violence. Even in cultures that are moving in the direction of relaxing some of this rigidity (*like the United States*), hundreds of people

Ask Yourself...

- Do I understand the differences between biological sex, sexuality and gender expression in my culture?
- Have I been clear about what my society will enthusiastically embrace as a norm, what it will tolerate as an emerging norm and what it will suppress?
- One of the key factors in gender is how the roles that exist relate to each other—do I have clarity about the relations between the genders?

each year are murdered for appearing to not conform to one or another norm of gender expression or sexual expression. Ordering institutions in human society, like schools, government and churches, all have something to say about this question, in one direction or another, and apply all of the tools at their disposal to accomplish their goals and reinforce their expectations. For a skilled role-player, clarity about these questions might make all the difference.

Association Ways

Other than family, there are no bonds stronger than friendship. Different societies place different weights on different kinds of association, but friendship, fraternal engagement, clan commitment or other forms of non-familial engagement exist in every culture in some form. The critical idea when considering association is this—what are the ways that are different from family relationships that people in your society form socially-recognized bonds that bring meaning to their lives? This connects in some important ways to the notion of distance I discussed above in Family Ways. At some point,

the connection between individuals becomes so far removed from a family context that it isn't mediated by the rules of family—these are associations. When considering this essential question, give careful consideration to: distance, fraternity, guild and obligation.

⊛ **ESSENTIAL QUESTION:** How does your culture govern patterns of friendship, kinship, clan, fraternal organization, affiliation and settlement?

Distance: This is the corollary to family distance, but now in two different frameworks. First, is the association you are building constructed in any way along a family tie? At some point, it might be that a clan of clans would be an example of a culture's Association Ways rather than Family Ways because there's so much distance between individuals. Having said that, there will still be people further removed than those in the clan of clans. This might matter to individuals in conflict. How distant can a tie be before it doesn't function

anymore? Second is the idea of social distance. There are many kinds of social association that place two individuals with nothing else in common closer to each other than to any others in a social context. Two holders of a noble title in a room full of commoners, for instance, are going to gravitate to one another, even if there are realities that might otherwise push them apart.



Two professors in a tavern full of the unlettered will want to spend time with each other in that setting. Two members of a foreign society at a royal wedding will find each other without question. The ways in which social distance plays with cultural cohesion or cultural dissonance are really fun role-playing contexts. It speaks not only to familial distance but also distance from a society's norms. What do the criminal elements in your society look like and how do they relate to each other? Every society has organizations that are both criminal from a social perspective and life-shaping from a personal perspective. How does that work?

Fraternity: By which I mean, what do people who become friends do together? What makes them friends? And once they are friends, do they develop special subcultural behaviors that make them obviously different from others? Do they acquire a tendency to wear particular kinds of clothes or jewelry? Speak in a particular way? These answers show that the intersection here is powerful with Leisure Ways (*discussed below*). If your culture has weak Leisure Ways, it will likely have poor fraternity. People who have an Association, in other

words, are less likely to have it in regard to something fun and are more likely to have it with something related to profession or other socially-mediated way (*like education or rank*).

Guild: How tightly does your society bind those in association together? The notion of guild speaks to this. In societies with strong binding forces, the tendency of people is to form organizations that allow them to pursue their interests collectively. This is intended to bring their power and commitment together, allowing them to speak and act with one voice and enhance their influence in society. Not all societies have strong guild-like forces and not all associations are subject to them even if they are strong. Again, the question of what is at stake factors here. Economic guilds that regulate the behaviors of workers in a particular industry are an example of associations that are going to exert (*or are going to at least try to assert*) power and control over that sector or industry. A character crossing the interests of a powerful guild is fodder for ongoing interesting role-playing. Notions of guild also speak to notions of Rank Ways (*discussed below*) as certain guilds might be accorded a greater status than others by those at the top of the pecking order.

Obligation: So, you're a member of an association...what does that mean, exactly? What does your membership obligate you to do? Is your association public or private? Do you wear insignia that identifies you as a member of your association? Would anyone outside of your association realize your affiliation? Does your association require that you speak up on behalf of your fellow traveler in a criminal trial? Perhaps it requires that you stand with your associate when they are in a duel during an honor challenge? Does it obligate you to commit violence on behalf of an associate under certain circumstances? Would anything require you to kill on behalf of the association? Do you have to become a member of the association? What is required of a member to sustain membership in the association? Are there dues of some kind? An obligation to work or act in some way for the organization? One rarely gets anything for free in this life—this is particularly true in this regard.

In Our World

Different human societies really do place dramatically different weight on friendship and association. Americans form associations at the drop of a hat and are willing to bring people at greater distance into association with one another than most other cultures. How like your own society is the society

Ask Yourself...

- About what do members of my society gather together for purposes of fellowship, friendship, safety and collective action?
- What is the line between family and friendship?
- What makes an association legitimate in my culture?
- What makes an association criminal?

you're building? Americans make friends with ease and have an informality that beggars belief from members of other cultures. From an American perspective, the formality of other cultures is equally perplexing, as are the rules of engagement between people who, at least "on paper" appear to be friends or equals. The relationship between Association Ways and Rank Ways is interesting for this very reason. A member of a trade guild or union is going to feel especially bound to other members of his guild, certainly, but would that extend to members of all guilds? Hard to say (*and doubtful in many cases*). Would it extend to people who were problematic in some other way but also members of their guild? Labor unions have a long history of the most virulent racism against members of their own trade, for example. And what about associations that are criminal in nature? These "non-normative" guilds have extraordinary power and control over their members. Criminal associations like gangs or organized crime might be the most powerful of all associations in a culture.

Rank Ways

No matter how stridently a culture asserts that it is classless, there is simply no such thing as a classless society in human culture. They don't exist. It is certainly true that different societies place different weights on the classes they allow and perpetuate through their education, religion and other forms of ordering. But if your goal is to build a truly egalitarian society for your characters to operate in, be mindful that you have no human analogues to base your society upon. Rank is simply this writ large. How do different groups in society come to understand their role in the culture and how do those roles get maintained? How does culture work on all ranks in society to ensure that subordination is effective? When considering this essential question, give careful consideration to: nobility, mobility, exclusivity and coercion.



Nobility: This notion refers to the myriad ways in which your society might define and police its ranks. Ancient sociologies frequently saw cultures divided in broadly similar, tripartite ways. At the top of the social pecking order was a noble class, born to that status and reinforcing it through marriage, wealth and other forms of power sharing. Below it was a class of priests or bureaucrats who supported the highest class in exchange for a better-than-average standard of living. Below them were the 98% of the society that had limited wealth or influence. These commons, of course, stood above foreigners and slaves in the social pecking order. But for all practical purposes, they had limited wealth and negligible influence on the direction of society. Modern societies are often organized along similar lines, regardless of how they choose to govern themselves. Post-Enlightenment liberal democracies, which have either eliminated their hereditary classes and monarchs or so neutered them as to render them powerless, nevertheless have a class structure that reflects this ancient notion of nobility. These societies base access to the levers of power on accidents of wealth, rather than accidents of birth. What "accidents" give rise to your society's Rank Ways? Birth? Wealth? Education? Skin Color?

⊗ **ESSENTIAL QUESTION:** How does your culture assign rank between members of the society? What do the different roles entitle the holder to and what are the relationships between the ranks?

Mobility: Every culture, no matter how rigid in its nobility, has mechanisms for special talent in the lower classes to find a way to be promoted to the higher classes. This is also universal. Especially precocious members of the commons might find themselves recruited to positions of leadership in the secondary class. Perhaps a system of education exists whose purpose is to give clever commoners a shot at rising above their station. In systems where a religious class occupies that support role, that religious class will have its own way of replenishing itself. It is not at all unheard of for that class to find its next generation in the commons. It is even possible that a society might find special, honored places in its society for slaves, former slaves or foreigners. Furthermore, while upward mobility is important to understand, so is downward. Are there any procedures by which a member of an upper class might find himself stripped of that power?

Exclusivity: This speaks to the special privileges and statuses of the different ranks in your society. It might be that in your society, marriages are only allowed between people who hold a particular status. Perhaps certain kinds of work are reserved for those at a certain rank (*be that a high-ranked or low-ranked reality*). It also might speak to the limits to the members of a certain rank. Perhaps in an Imperial court there might only be three jesters at any given time and each of them has a specific function. In a monarchy with widely-distributed land holding and a feudal tradition, perhaps there are never more than 5 dukes, 20 counts and 100 barons at any

given time and the distribution of these ranks is determined not by the king, but by some other entity? Perhaps your society makes claims to being egalitarian, but in fact has “unwritten rules” about status that make membership in a particular class easy to see for members of that class (*by virtue of their clothing, for example*) but not for others.

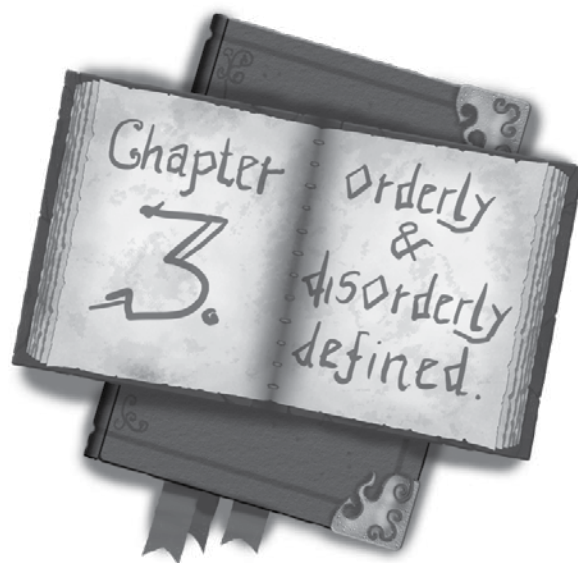
Coercion: What are the mechanisms by which the society compels holders of a particular rank to act a particular way? Do these elements of coercion act via Family Ways? Marriage Ways? How do they manifest in Lifespan Ways? Are there ways in which rank might be lost? What would someone in your society have to do in order to be struck from an honor’s list or driven from their land? What qualities of your culture are expected to be enforced by holders of a high rank? Are they related to class solidarity? Marriage customs? Dress Ways or Food Ways? Do certain members of your culture wield magic but others don’t? Under what circumstances will a higher rank violently enforce its will on a lower rank?

In Our World

Human societies are always, in some way, hierarchical. This quality ranges from exceptionally rigid hierarchies like the caste system in effect in India until independence in 1947 (*but which still exerts tremendous influence*) through moderately rigid ones like the United Kingdom’s still very powerful class system onward to those that have weak hierarchies (*and place more value on social cohesion as a result*). Sociologists and anthropologists have looked to hunter-gatherer societies as particularly notable examples of weakly hierarchical societies. Societies are often founded on a narrative of egalitarian classlessness. The United States is an excellent example. Social rank in the United States is mediated by the accident of wealth and not birth. Despite this, and the manifest evidence of the trappings and consequences of class, the culture maintains that it is class free or nearly so in its internal discussion. Moreover, keep also in mind that human societies have regularly divided themselves along economic, ethnic, racial and other lines as well as economic ones. Rank is not just an economic consideration. Rather, it is all encompassing.

Ask Yourself...

- How would a member of my culture know her position in the pecking order?
- What mechanisms does the society use in order to reinforce the Rank Ways that the society uses?
- To what extent is there mobility in your society? What might allow someone to move from one Rank to another?
- What privileges are afforded to those at a certain rank and how does that rank maintain these privileges against other ranks?



Order Ways

Every culture has unwritten (*but clearly understood to its members*) rules that determine the limits of outlandishness. Furthermore, every culture will have members who push at those limits in every imaginable way. Think about the way Madonna pushed the boundaries in the 1980s. Or the way Lady Gaga carries on that tradition of boundary expansion in the 2010s. Both are at work in a similar part of the culture... encouraging it to expand its notions of what womanhood looks like and what the definitions of equality must include. These boundaries, like physical boundaries between nations, are always policed by someone or something. This makes potentially interesting connections between Order Ways and Rank Ways, Association Ways, Family Ways and Authority Ways, among others. When considering this essential question, give careful consideration to: sphere, joining, tenacity and presence.

✧ **ESSENTIAL QUESTION:** How does your culture define orderly and disorderly? How does it maintain orderliness and punish disorderliness? What are the ordering institutions within that society?

Sphere: Sphere refers to those behaviors of the members of the culture over which the culture exerts social control. It speaks to those qualities of the society that are given the most weight or that seem to mean, for those in control of the society, the most in terms of defining the culture. If, for example, arranged marriage were defined by the culture as a hallmark quality of the culture, then anyone resisting arranged marriage would be subjected to what I would call an “ordering penalty.” It might be that they would be disallowed from attending school or holding a particular job. It might mean that they are subjected to violence. It might also mean that they

are given an opportunity to bring themselves back into right relation to the society or they would be exiled or put to death. It depends on the weight the society places in that particular notion. Keep in mind that there are many examples of societies with very extensive spheres that are exceptionally repressive and others that have very limited or weak spheres.

Joining: The notion of joining speaks to the rules by which the ordering institutions in society enforce the rules. About what and to what degree will an ordering institution enforce its will? This is a measure used within society for its members to determine how close they are to the edge. It's a reading of history and the current state of society. What might have been allowed to pass last year might not be tolerated this year for reasons that no foreigner could discern, but that the society's members would be able to figure out or guess at. It marks the boundary between the match, the spark and the flame. It speaks to what is liminal. One year's protest might be ignored. The same people protesting the next year in the same place might be met with life-ending violence. Why? What caused the enforcer to change practice?

Tenacity: Once committed to maintaining order, who can bring an ordering institution to heel? What causes that institution to start its work and continue at that work? How determined is that institution in maintaining order and who does it take its orders from? The same questions, of course, apply to those organizations that sow disorder or push against the social rules. How hard are they willing to work to accomplish their goals? Do they have the ability to influence other organizations in society to do their work? Will they engage in violence, for example, to accomplish their goals? Do they have the capacity to shame a member of society so strongly that they can enforce their will on them? And what happens when an ordering institution loses its nerve or its will to continue? What "gets through" when such an organization's capacity to perform its role in society weakens?

Presence: What forces and organizations are at work in your society that do the day-to-day business of keeping everything working as it should? And what is the nature of these organizations? Whence do they draw their authority? At their simplest, these organizations are militias and police forces that draw their powers from who they represent, either the monarchy or the people or a specific group of people who share common traits. At their most basic, they might control travel, trade or association within their domain. More complex ordering institutions focus their attention on cultural expressions that are meant to encourage conformity to the dominant paradigm in society. These might coerce particular dress practices or spiritual practices. They might regulate education, marriage, parent-child relationships or even language use. They might engage themselves with enforcing an entire system of moral laws handed to them by a greater authority or which they themselves came up with. It could be that the organizations at work restrict themselves to a particular kind of person (*like an organization that enforces specific kinds of male behaviors, but ignores women*) or particular

contexts (*like an organization that enforces the observance of civil holidays on specific calendar days, but doesn't care about religious holidays*). There are no anarchies in human experience; every society has some form of ordering institution.



In Our World

Human history is replete with ordering institutions and those who would claim the right to determine what someone else's behavior should be. Priesthoods in ancient times were all about ensuring that people gave obeisance to the gods and by extension the kings who ruled on Earth on their behalf. The Sanhedrin in ancient Judaism is an example of an ancient court making rulings on religious and Jewish civic matters. The early modern Catholic Inquisition struck terror in the hearts of Europeans for more than a century. The obsession in Puritan Massachusetts gave disproportionate power to witch hunting ordering institutions for a brief time. But even given its brevity, it still resulted in a score of murdered people and dozens with ruined reputations. Schools often serve as ordering institutions in societies complex enough to educate many of its people. Guilds and the armed forces do the same thing in economic or military contexts, though generally only to their own members. In contemporary human culture, there are societies that have moral police (*Iran*) or that use complex ideological tools to control all public expressions of its people (*North Korea*). Many regimes have used physical and/or mental torture in order to enforce their will on their people or a part of their people. The limits of these coercive behaviors speaks to the limits of the society's values. What will they tolerate?

Ask Yourself...

- What parts of your culture are so important, so integral, that your culture would kill to ensure they weren't violated?
- What cultural practices does your culture's most powerful forces ignore or miss? What venues are available for disorder or protest?
- Who has the power to give an ordering institution authority to enforce its will?
- What happens when ordering institutions within one society are at cross purposes?

Authority Ways

Tied intimately with notions of order and rank, but different from each, Authority Ways speak to the strategies your culture uses to legitimize the use of power to accomplish social goals. Moreover, it reveals the limits of power as your society understands those limits. Authority Ways covers all of the different kinds of authority that might exist in a culture. It suggests how far an ordering institution might go to enforce its will and who might be in a position to rein it in if it gets out of control. It intimates what the different ranks in your society might be permitted to do or not to do and in what contexts they might act. When considering this essential question, give careful consideration to: legitimacy, power, authority and participation.

⊗ **ESSENTIAL QUESTION:** How does your culture define power, authority and political participation?

Legitimacy: In every society without exception there are relationships between the different elements of the culture that are based on authority and power. How those relationships play out...how tenuous the authority of the more powerful element is...what happens when two people or institutions believe themselves to be equally powerful...all of these speak to legitimacy. Legitimacy is not just what the individual thinks about his or her own power, it is what others think of that person wielding power and how likely they are to support it. Legitimacy gives the legitimate the power and capacity to act, broadly and fully within the scope of society's mandate, to execute its will. Whence does a powerful person or institution derive its legitimacy? A king might derive his legitimacy from a mandate from a god. Another king, receiving his mandate from a different god, will certainly not view his legitimacy as less than his counterpart's. An emperor might derive his legitimacy from the will of the nobles who placed him in office or from the army that supported him when he conquered the capital. The collective legitimacy of a corporate entity to act might be conferred by age, a royal mandate or by the simple fact that as it acted previously, no one put a stop to it. Legitimacy might also be conferred by an electoral mandate or indeed by simple physical force.

Power: What does the wielding of power look like in your culture? No society wields only physical power, though that is sometimes the most dramatic example of power in use.

Ask Yourself...

- Who wields power in my culture and where does that person's mandate derive?
- Who exists in my culture that challenges the most powerful? What are the competing forces at work?
- About what do the members of my culture care about when it comes to power and authority? Where do they feel compelled to use their own authority?

In addition to its military forces (*which are commanded by someone who has the legitimacy to wield it, per above*), what else does your society possess that gives it power? Does it have highly skilled diplomats whose powerful words direct the actions of others? That is a form of power. Perhaps it has commercial power that allows it to act because it can make other nations poor with a single decision. Some cultures exert their power through their majestic cultures, demonstrating an ability to strike awe into the minds of lesser cultures. On a personal level, all of these notions work as well. Sometimes the most powerful person in the room is the oldest or wisest or best educated, not just the one possessing the most brawn. Does your culture respect wisdom or fisticuffs? Might it respect a wise voice in certain contexts but only the physical force of a powerful figure at other times? Perhaps your culture balances these forces against each other in some compelling way?

Authority: Where power speaks to the raw application of physical or mental force, authority encompasses all of those areas where a legitimate wielder of power might wield that power. Over what does a king have the right to "say so?" The use of the military, certainly. The levying of taxes? In many cases, yes, but not in all cases. Who appoints religious leaders? It might be that the king does—that would be considered in his legitimate authority. But if the religion itself believes it should appoint its leaders, and the king disagrees, you have a classic example of authority in conflict with each other. Who is legitimate? That will tell you how the society might break down in its support for one over the other. What are the limits that are imposed on the legitimate? Authority is your answer.

Participation: How broadly conceived is authority in your society? Does the metaphor of a "home is a castle" work with your people? Does a father or mother in their home have the power of a king or queen in a monarchy? When does a young person acquire the capacity to participate? At a particular age? Once married? Upon owning a certain amount of land? Having undergone a ritual of maturity? Does your society have any form of electoral process? Are the people consulted about anything in your culture, or does a single or collective authority act without regard to their concerns? Do people



in your society feel claimed by anything particular in their political process? For what would they willingly lay down their life?

In Our World

In human history we have so many great examples of legitimacy and power and authority in conflict with each other. These conflicts have given rise to behavior that is among the most cautionary we have in our collective memories. The collapse of any regularized form of legitimacy in the Roman Empire in the third century CE led to the army replacing emperors almost at their whim. Magna Carta is at its heart a document meant to rein in the authority of a legitimate ruler who believed his authority stretched beyond where its actual limits were. The orgiastic violence of the French Revolution reveals the degree to which legitimacy, having been comprehensively lost, gives way to widespread disorder and mayhem. Society looks towards its legitimate leaders for stability. Once that is lost, all bets are off. Liberal democracies use their election rules and procedures to regularly re-infuse its leaders with legitimacy precisely for this reason. The radically different ways one might constitute a liberal democracy is a reminder that it is political participation itself that matters, not the exact mode of how the democracy functions. If it is perceived by its participants to be legitimate, it is.

Freedom Ways

This complex folkway takes into itself notions of limits, boundaries, capacities and deeply personal beliefs about the individual and self. The most difficult part of understanding this folkway, from a Westerner's perspective, is the idea that liberty, freedom and restraint might work not just on the individual, or on behalf of the individual, but also to serve the interests of powerful or meaningful collectives in your society. What are the limits of the rights of the individual? Does your society even care about the individual? The collective? It might be that your society makes no particular claims or sets no particular guidance here. Nevertheless, when considering this essential question, give careful consideration to: freedom, liberty, binding and directionality.

⊛ **ESSENTIAL QUESTION:** How does your culture define liberty, freedom, restraint and libertarian customs and institutions?

Freedom: I am using freedom here to speak to all of those qualities in your society that allow an individual person to act, believe, speak, associate and feel as she wishes without coercion from any outsiders. Freedom in many societies is intimately bound up with notions that derive from Rank Ways and Authority Ways. In some societies, they are bound to Lifespan Ways or to Marriage Ways. It's important that you give thought not just to how free people are in your society, but what the limits of those freedoms might be (*or where the limits of their capacity is*). It might be that women have a great

deal of social freedom in the broader society, for instance, but have more constrained freedom within the context of marriage and family. In that case, what marriage means for a woman would be quite different than in a culture where the custom was reversed and the woman in marriage has great freedom at home but is limited outside of home. This is the personal sphere.

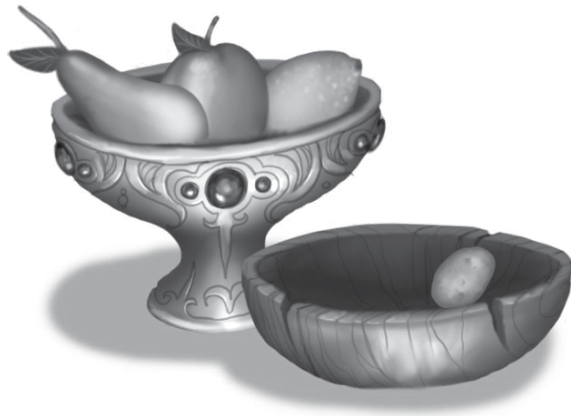
Liberty: With liberty, I am speaking not to the personal, but rather to collective obligations and limits. Again, this notion is completely bound up with ideas of Rank and Authority, Marriage, Family and Lifespan. The ways these ideas interact with each other create this perspective. It might be, for instance, that your society would never allow an individual to make a sacrifice to the gods, but that individual, in a group of worshippers at a temple, would be totally at their liberty to make sacrifice. Your society might give individuals almost no freedoms as we would understand them, but the individual would have enormous liberty within a family setting. The critical notion to keep in mind here is that individual freedoms are not the only freedoms; collectives have (*or are denied*) freedoms as well.

Binding: The idea of binding is tied metaphysically with Order Ways. How does your culture enforce its limits onto individuals and groups that are compliant as compared to those entities that are disorderly? How tightly does your society restrain the disorderly? What will your society tolerate (*or even quietly embrace*) and what will prompt a significant response? When thinking about this idea, it's useful to think about the ordering institutions in your society and then give them some teeth. When would they act? About what would they be reflective? What would they let go? What are the acknowledged limits of these organizations and people? At what point, if they acted, would they generate a backlash from society? The idea of binding asks you to reflect on these boundaries.

Directionality: One person wants the freedom to do something. Someone else wants the freedom to not do the same thing. This is what directionality means. Does your society give people the same freedoms to do or not do? A person who wants the freedom to worship as their conscience dictates might also want the society to deny that freedom to someone

Ask Yourself...

- What is the relationship between individualism and collectivism in my society?
- About what is the individual both entitled and encouraged to act on?
- Where do expectations about the broader society impinge on the rights of the individual?
- What are the correctives that your society uses against individuals that do not behave themselves?
- What are the correctives that your culture uses to limit the power of collectives to act?



whose faith tradition is radically at odds with theirs. Does your society give each person in society equal freedom? Or does freedom only work in one direction? Liberty is much the same. Consider now the concept of binding. What is bound? There's a significant to/from dichotomy here. How does your society manage what it allows, disallows or doesn't speak to? For example, in the United States Constitution, the First Amendment denies the government the ability to interfere with an individual's freedom to practice whatever religion they are inclined to practice while the Fourth Amendment gives the individual freedom from warrantless searches of their person and property. It is possible to make these rights or restrictions work in either direction. Moreover, it is possible to envision a society where the people want the freedom from having to make choices about big picture questions or policy. It is possible to frame all of the conventional freedoms offered in a liberal democracy "on their heads" such that the people have the freedom to be free from warrantless searches, for example.

In Our World

To my way of thinking, Freedom Ways speaks to the great conflict in our 21st century human society between individualism and collectivism. Writing from my vantage point in the United States, I cannot help but be aware that I live in one of the most individualistic societies ever formed by the imagination of human beings. The founders of many of the Thirteen Colonies were to greater or lesser extent informed by a desire for freedom from something and a desire for a freedom to do something. The founders of the Pennsylvania colony were fleeing anti-Quaker religious persecution. The founders of Massachusetts Bay were Puritans seeking relief from a Church of England that had little patience for their stridency. These Puritans wanted to create a colony without religious liberty—a place to build a City on a Hill. The capacity of Americans to act in their collective potential through their government is much weaker than in nearly any other form of liberal democracy precisely because Americans have always placed more value on the individual actor than a collective actor. American institutions are meant to slow down the

collective, to weaken its resolve, to prevent dramatic change. By contrast, highly collective cultures, like China's culture, are barely understandable from an American vantage point. The limits that Chinese people seem to enthusiastically accept over a wide range of behavior that an American would be aghast about baffles people in the United States. But these are not viewed as restrictive so much as fundamental to the maintenance of society as it has been and will always be. The value is placed on social order and conformity and discipline...and that is both completely legitimate and defensible.

Wealth Ways

One person's treasure is another person's trash. Or perhaps it's more accurate to say that what one culture values another might not even recognize as having value. How your society understands wealth and wealthiness will have a lot to say about how it manages social relationships. Moreover, what it decides is treasure is a useful way of understanding its deepest values and perspectives. When considering this essential question, give careful consideration to: objectification, status, gift-giving and reciprocity.

✧ **ESSENTIAL QUESTION:** How does your culture feel about wealth, wealthiness, the wealthy themselves and the impoverished? How does your society distribute its wealth?

Objectification: Every culture assigns trade value to objects of some kind. The Trobriand Islanders mentioned above use banana leaves as a medium of exchange. In our industrialized world we use pieces of base metal and slips of specially printed paper as our mode of exchange. What is rare in your culture? What is recognized, by its scarcity, as having value? Oftentimes, but not always, media of exchange are things that don't otherwise have value. I discussed in my book *Loot for HARP* (published in 2005) the case of the Yap Islanders in Polynesia, who use gigantic donut-shaped stones as currency. These stones are generally so large that they are impossible to move. Nevertheless, everyone on the island knows who owns what and the recognized value of the currency comes from the fact that everyone assigns it currency value and that everyone knows who owns what. To what does your culture assign wealth value, provided it uses a medium of exchange at all? Perhaps your culture engages only in barter? Using only trade goods as currency is likely to make your culture quite inward looking. It's hard to engage in trade when you don't have some kind of medium of exchange. Not impossible—just harder.

Status: To what extent does having a lot of money (or a lot of whatever your culture considers to be money) confer a particular status? Does being wealthy make you powerful or not? Does it give someone access to the levers of power in any way? Does wealth shape the Order Ways, Authority Ways or Rank Ways in your culture? Plenty of cultures exist where wealth grants these powers. In fact, in some cultures, wealth is the

primary means by which status is established. In others, status derives not from wealth but from Rank Ways, Association Ways, Family Ways or from some even rarer place. Let this serve as a reminder that Rank does not equal wealth and wealth does not equal Authority, unless you construct your society to work along those lines. Be mindful, it is not at all uncommon for the wealthy to be recognized as wealthy without it conferring any additional benefit, power or standing. In some cultures, showing one's wealth might even be regarded as vulgar and inappropriate. Does your culture give special consideration to the wealthy or to the poor? Does it regard the status "wealthy" or the status "poor" as meaning anything more than its most basic definition? Does being wealthy make one "noble?" Does being poor mean you're "ungodly?" Important definitions to be clear about!

Gift-Giving: What does it mean to have anything in your culture? Provided the concept of private property exists in your society (*it might not—plenty of societies have no notion of privately-held land or buildings*), what obligations are imposed on the person who owns something when someone else visits? Societies are full of mutual obligations imposed by the culture's values on the wealthy, the semi-wealthy and the poor. These traditions are especially powerful when it comes to greeting guests and gift-giving. Another way to think



about this is to examine the guest-host relationship, one of the most salient of all relationships in society. Does your society obligate a guest to behave in a certain way or a host? What are the social factors in play that punish a disorderly guest or host? A misbehavior?

Reciprocity: At the limits of the definitions of wealth in a society comes the notion of reciprocity or obligation. Does having or not having wealth impose on a person any expectations? Is the wealthy person expected to give alms to the poor? Does a wealthy person have the obligation to take poor relations under his wing and give them an education and protection? Do the poor in your society cluster (*a la Association Ways*) into clan-like societies that serve rich individuals in whatever ways that individual needs? What is the back-and-forth here? Do the poor in your culture accept their lot? Is there opportunity? A potential for acquiring more wealth? Is there a culture of rich patronage of the poor? Does wealth engender jealousy from any segment of society? Does wealth create a separate rank or series of ranks within an already stratified society? How does that shape the society?

In Our World

In human society we have an unbelievably wide range of beliefs, behaviors and practices regarding this folkway. The first

inflection point might be regarding the question of private property. If your culture doesn't believe in private property, why not? And how is land held, used and managed? Who is responsible for improvements? Perhaps your culture only recognizes one person as a land holder or one class of people as being able to own land. This would in all likelihood impose a lot on that class from the perspective of reciprocity. Or it would allow and reinforce a culture of exploitation. If your culture allows private property, why does it? This is no more a natural state than not allowing ownership of property—so it needs to be explained. Who is allowed to own land? How does titling work? How is land transferred from one person to another? Are men allowed to own land? Women? Children? What are the circumstances under which an authority might take away your private land? Another inflection point in understanding wealth is understanding the relationship between government and currency. In order for currency to work, for it to have and to hold its value, the government (*or other entity*) issuing it must be trusted to not be in the business of skimming. Anything that entity does that suggests the coin they've issued isn't as pure as they say it is induces mistrust and inflation. At a certain level of inflation, the currency becomes worthless. Humans are quite ingenious about finding things to represent wealth. Precious metals, of course, but also shells, beads and all manner of other objects. Anything's money if the person you're trying to buy something from will take what you're offering! The last inflection point I would mention here is that some cultures use wealth as a marker for something other than itself. There has been a centuries-long tendency in the United States for instance to blame the poor for their own poverty. Our Calvinist religious heritage from the Puritans writ large means that in this country, the poor regularly hear the monied classes complaining about how difficult they have it while also reminding the poor that the reason they're poor is because they're lazy, or shiftless or indolent. Unique among the liberal democracies, the middle-classes in the United States never find common cause with the lower classes or the poor—always they look towards the rich for class solidarity. The consequence is the absence of any kind of communitarian party, be in socialistic or communist, having the soil to successfully put down roots in the United States.

Work Ways

Work Ways, and the Leisure Ways discussion which come next, are to me a bit problematic on their face. Why? Because they presuppose an industrial age (*or near industrial age at least*) social order that has developed an economy that allows some people to escape from the reality of work from the dawn of human civilization until industrialization. For more than half of the people on Earth, work isn't something that happens when one isn't playing croquet. It is the backbreaking, day-on-day labor required to keep one's self and one's family alive. Subsistence agriculture, husbandry and hunting sustain many billions of people, but if one tries to assign it to the category "work" the way that it is understood in an

industrialized world, confusion is going to set in. Still, once we've acknowledged this reality, there is a world of work that we can explore, an attitude or orientation to labor that speaks to how some societies organize themselves. These notions are useful for you as you go about building your cultures. When considering this essential question, give careful consideration to: subsistence, feudality, ethic and slavery.

⊗ **ESSENTIAL QUESTION:** What does your culture value about work? What is its work ethic?

Subsistence: Picking up my argument above, to what extent do workers in your society work merely to stave off starvation? Is there any slack in your culture's economy that allows for the accumulation of any sort of wealth? Moreover, what in your culture's work economy is regarded as generating the most wealth? Is it an agricultural product like a grain or fruit? A product of husbandry like eggs? Perhaps the animals themselves are the source of wealth? What might help a subsistence farmer in your society alter his station and put a bit of distance between the Grim Reaper and his family? How many of a farmer's children have to work to keep everyone alive? And at what age do they have to start earning their keep? The more people a single farm might feed, the greater complexity there will be in the world of work in your society. How many cities does your civilization have and what is their produce? This will no doubt interact with your society's Association Ways and Wealth Ways and probably with its Freedom and Authority Ways. Is work activity in your cities controlled by powerful guilds or weak ones? Can anyone do anything they want, or are certain industries and trades self-policed and restricted? What does your culture specialize in? Is there manufacturing and is their craftsmanship any good?

Feudality: In feudal societies, those peasants who worked the land were bound to service to a local lord who offered protection and safety in return for taxes based (*ostensibly at least*) on the agricultural output of the land worked by the peasant. This is a reminder that work is quite often a social construct that takes place in relationship to other people and other needs. In essence, feudality is reminding you that you need to situate people in an economic context of obligation to people more powerful, wealthier or better connected than they are. Or not—but that has to be decided. What does it mean to have people who owe you taxes? What does it mean to pay them? This notion applies also to industrial or near-industrial settings as well. Do you labor in order to pay off a master or journeyman for a certain amount of time? In addition to acting in ways that support your lord or trade's master, what do you do in your work to support your community? Is there such a thing as volunteering and in what context would it be appropriate? Does your society have a culture, like the Amish, of collaborative barn raising? Or would taking that sort of help be viewed as demeaning and unseemly?

Ethic: What value do individual persons doing their daily work assign to that work? Do they enjoy it or not? Do they

view their work as serving an individual purpose? A group purpose? Just family or perhaps as broad as society? How hard do they work? Different societies value the meaning of work in and of itself differently than others. The value assigned to an individual's identity based on the work they do will have an effect on the way that individual (*and hence, the broader culture*) values and understands not just themselves and others, but notions of leisure. Keep in mind that work ethic is a problematic concept if your society has members whose livelihood doesn't require that they work at all!

Slavery: Does your society keep slaves as a general practice, only a practice in certain lines of work or not at all? Leaving aside the moral arguments against slavery temporarily (*we'll return to them in Self-reflection Ways*), slave-owning and sustaining societies have valued labor differently than those that do not keep slaves. What does it mean to be a free laborer doing work that is otherwise done by slaves? That has to be ascertained if your society keeps slaves. Additional questions include: where does your society get these slaves? Can they ever earn manumission? In what industries do they work?

In Our World

As I alluded to above, in our world in the early 21st century we have three different fundamental social organizations in operation at the same time. These, which I will call pre-industrial, industrial and post-industrial, shape our understanding of what work means on the deepest level. Pre-industrial work contexts are the subsistence farming realities that are the lot of billions of our fellow men, women and children on this planet. They divide their labor as well between the biological sexes and sometimes between children as well. The transformation of society into an industrial framework changes everything (*and I mean everything*), but it also changes the meaning of work. Now one works for pay. By working for pay, the worker is enmeshed in a market that dictates much of what will constitute the worker's standard of living. Market forces over which the worker has no control will shape his life much like the weather might for the pre-industrial worker. The post-industrial society, like the industrial one before it, changes everything again. Workers who make their living on what they know, rather than what they can manufacture or what they can harvest are a new phenomenon. "Services-based" economies require there to be people requiring services after all.

Leisure Ways

Like Work Ways, a culture's Leisure Ways is partly shaped by its economic and social sophistication. However, unlike Work Ways, even in cultures where work is a subsistence phenomenon, there have always been games, sports and other diversions during those times when work isn't required, allowed or possible. During those times, a culture's notions of fun and diversion emerge. Every society has some form of play or fun. Every society has invented sporting activities; games have been found in burials dating back ten millennia. When

considering this essential question, give careful consideration to: leisureliness, competitiveness, athletics and diversions.

⊗ **ESSENTIAL QUESTION:** How does your culture define leisure? Does it value it? What do people do to kick back, provided they have the means to? Do they like individual sports? Team sports? Learned pursuits?

Leisureliness: Under this rubric, I am asking you to consider just how important leisure is to your culture. While all cultures have sports, games and diversions of all sorts, how tolerated these diversions are is always contested in society. Who is “allowed” to play? Just children? Just infants, perhaps? Is everyone allowed to engage in play behavior? What if your society allowed only the very old and the very young, but no one else to play? Moreover, what kinds of leisure are tolerated, embraced or enjoyed? Is your culture an active, sporty culture...possessing the sort of people who might invent kite-surfing or cliff diving as run of the mill activities? Or is your society more laid back—just some light croquet for us, thank you very much. Think about how much your people value their leisure time. Do they work for the sake of work or do they love to work? Contrast this relationship to work with their relationship to leisure. There are lots of ways that this might play out. It speaks to the intensity level at which your culture’s identity burns. An important point here is not to confuse something that might look like a game or sporting event done for leisure with the same kind of event done for another cultural purpose. A simulated war fought on an athletic field that ends with one side being ritually shamed and having to give up their marital partners for a year to the other side is a very different phenomenon than a high-spirited contest between musicians in a tavern one evening with a gold piece as the reward. The first is a feature of a culture’s Marriage Ways. The second is leisure.

Competitiveness: Often running hand-in-hand with the notions that follow (*athletics and games*) is the idea of competitiveness. Do people in your culture engaging in leisure do it for fun or for its own sake, or do they do it because there is a competitive framework they’re engaging in or with? It is possible to play almost any kind of sporting game for its own sake. Likewise, it is easy to take any kind of athletic contest or other game or contest and make it competitive. Mindful that these competitions could be for bragging rights, don’t forget that they could also be for much higher stakes, including life itself. The higher the stakes, the less likely the activity is leisure, remember. What other folkways are being engaged by the supposedly leisure contest?

Athletics: Some cultures are much more physically minded than others. What kind of sports would a physically-oriented culture develop and why? When being creative here, start with something simple—like a ball or puck or racquet or stick—and then riff from there. I will give two examples of sports in Chapter IV developed by two radically different cultures...

Ask Yourself...

- About what do members of your culture feel competitive? How do they manage these feelings?
- Is your culture vigorous or more languid?
- What would a typical member of your culture prefer to do—engage in mixed martial arts or gardening?
- Are men and women allowed to engage in leisure together?
- Are there leisure activities reserved for those who hold particular rank?

one sporty, the other not so much. One of the most important considerations you need to reflect on here is whether your culture values individual sports or team sports. Cultures valuing the individual over the collective would seem to be likely to value the individual sportsman’s achievements over team achievements. Or do they? This is something you need to sort out. What do team sports look like? What does loyalty to teams look like? Is there such a thing as fandom in your culture?

Diversions: This is a broad rubric for all of those leisure activities that aren’t sports. This includes all of the board, dice and card games one might imagine as well as anything that might just be called an activity, like quilting, playing a musical instrument, flower gardening or reading. Even “visiting,” the practice of moving from home to home on a circuit to chit-chat and share gossip might be classified as a diversion. Diversions are individual and group as well. To those not inclined to sports there will always be a draw of some kind to some sort of diversion.

In Our World

In human cultures, there are so many different kinds of sports, athletics and games that it is probably impossible to count all of them. Balls of a thousand sorts meet as many sticks on countless different courts and fields. Some of these sports, be they individual or team take on the quality of ritual warfare. Surely sumo has this quality as much as American Football does! And this is to say nothing of the full range of the martial arts that are learned and mastered by individuals but can be practiced collectively as well. Think about capoeira, for instance. It develops as a dance form for repressed people and evolves into a complex martial art over time. In all human cultures, the engagement of a team’s fans with the team can reach almost toxic levels. This engagement is capable of stimulating murderous violence and mayhem. Clearly I think it’s important that you give deep thought to your culture’s sporting traditions. It’s such an important part of human tradition! But it isn’t the only part. Just think about our own hobby for a moment. There are literally thousands of role-playing systems in existence, nearly all of which are supported by a small community of passionate followers. Every other hobby, be it painting or needlework or orchid breeding

has similar internal divisions and even smaller communities dedicated to the particulars of that field of interest. The depth you bring to this folkway will add a lot of color and texture to your people.

Dress Ways

In his book *Love, Sex and Tragedy*: How The Ancient World Shapes Our Lives, its author Simon Goldhill writes: “nudity is often thought to be the natural condition where we are most simply ourselves, but it is also the state when we can least well tell the social, intellectual and moral condition of the person in front of us. Roman culture, even more than modern society, was obsessed with visible signs of status, honor and position, strongly and clearly marked out. Nudity hides the clothes, jewels and other badges of office which let the world know who this citizen is. A shared space where nakedness in fact concealed a man’s status might well have produced anxiety. Clothes do make the man.” This is the thrust of this section. It isn’t just a matter of deciding whether your culture prefers popped collars, stripes or togas. Rather, the way the people of your culture choose to dress, or choose to modify their bodies, can tell other members of the culture a great deal and can serve as a way of differentiating status, class or other valuable qualities. When considering this essential question, give careful consideration to: practicality, status, jewelry and body modification.

⊗ **ESSENTIAL QUESTION:** How do members of your culture dress and adorn themselves?

Practicality: As you begin to reflect on this folkway, give pride of place always to questions of reality and practicality. What a person is doing with their day, first and foremost, is going to have a dramatic effect on what he or she wears. A person engaged in mining is unlikely to have much need for chiffon. An agricultural labor will not be dressed in taffeta. Similarly, a member of a royal or noble house attempting to impress will not be dressed in the same clothing that a fisherman might wear. Questions of practicality speak very strongly to a culture’s Environment Ways. You can not ignore simple reality. If your culture exists in a polar environment without agriculture or significant plant life, the people who live there aren’t going to be dressed in cotton or jute. They’re going to be clothed in animal skins or some other artificial material. Keep your culture’s realities firmly in your mind as they are going to be powerfully shaping here.

Status: How does your culture determine social status? You have already thought about this in Rank Ways. Those ranks might be marked in social settings by different clothing or other adornments. Perhaps head coverings have different heights based on one’s status, with high ranked people wearing exceptionally tall hats like top hats but the poor wearing simple head coverings without height at all? Are certain fabrics, materials or patterns reserved for certain members of society? What about other statuses like childhood/



adulthood, married/unmarried/widowed, male/female? It is not a stretch to think about gendered clothing or adornment being a quality of your culture. Keeping in mind the Simon Goldhill quote above, be acutely aware that clothing is a powerful marker of many different kinds of statuses and societies work hard to develop these markers and when they exist, they are reinforced with vigor. Also, do not lose sight of the potential interaction of Association Ways with Dress Ways. Do members of a trade guild all dress a certain way or have a particular accessory that would indicate to others membership in a guild? Perhaps members of a religious order all cut their hair in a particular way or shave their heads? Are certain men required to wear mustaches?

Jewelry: Every culture takes a different perspective on the question of jewelry, yours will be no exception. What is precious in your society that isn’t money? Is it particular, beautiful stones, perhaps? Pieces of specially-made glass? The baby teeth of one’s children? Preserved bodily trophies carved from one’s enemies? Any of these things might represent a culture’s sense of jewelry. It might be that jewelry is simply worn for the sake of its beauty. More likely, it is being worn to

Ask Yourself...

- What are the materials that your culture uses to clothe its members?
- What about the accessories, like hats, shoes, gloves and the like? How are they used?
- Does your culture engage in body modification of any kind?

reinforce the social messaging of other parts of the clothing being worn.

Body Modification: The customs of body modification vary widely between cultures in our world and would be just as varied in yours. Provided your society tolerates body modification (*many don't*), three kinds of modification come to mind for your consideration. The first, piercing, intersects with the notion of jewelry above. Is there a tradition of body piercing in your society? If so, what body parts are generally adorned with jewelry and what message does that jewelry send to others in the culture? Remember that dress is about status; this is true for body modification as well. It is meant to say something; it is meant to be “read” by others in the culture in a particular way. Cryptic-piercings, those that your culture places under typically clothed parts of the body, serve the same purpose, but in a private rather than public sphere. The second modification is tattooing, the practice of using a stylus or needle to draw patterns and pictures on skin with ink inserted deep into the dermis. It serves the same purposes as clothing or jewelry—to claim a social status or identity. The third form of modification is scarification or branding, in which the skin is irritated to make a scar more rather than less prominent, again, for the same purposes for which one might wear jewelry or be tattooed.

In Our World

Just think of the hundreds of different fabrics in use in our contemporary world and you will have a sense of how expansive this one expression of culture is. Desire for certain kinds of fabrics, like silk, drove the foreign policies of nations and caused wars. Likewise, that desire stimulated trade in other goods and generated energy for exploration of our world. And that's just interest in silk! Cultures throughout the world assign social values to different materials, akin to my chiffon and taffeta example above. What one wears tells people who know something a great deal. This is why cultures make certain fabrics very expensive (*even if they aren't all that expensive to make*) and restrict the wearing of these fabrics to certain kinds of people. As clothing is something people read and judge very quickly, allowing a commoner to look like a swell can disrupt the social order. For the same reason, an upper-class person dressed as a commoner can use that dress, sometimes, as though it were a disguise. Think about the way Rank Ways and Work Ways inform Dress Ways. In the United States, for instance, our Rank Ways are comparatively flattened. This means that it isn't at all unusual to see the President of the United States dressed in blue-dyed denim jeans, a garment designed for hard, manual labor. Were the Emperor of Japan to be seen in public dressed in such a way would cause an incident. And this is to say nothing about those cultures that have created garments that completely cover the physical body and mandate their wear for certain members of society or at certain times. Ritual clothing is prominent in many world religions. Don't ignore notions of body modification when you do this work. It might seem to be

a relatively new phenomenon, but it is ancient in origin. The only thing that is different now is its ubiquity.

Food and Drink Ways

There's nothing like food and drink traditions to bring people together or to drive them apart. It seems like something so simple, so straightforward. But one person's tasty treats is another person's horror. When thinking about the sheer role-playing fuel that Food and Drink Ways generates, I can think of nothing more likely to generate fun game play opportunities than conflicts over food and beverages. When considering this essential question, give careful consideration to: locavore, status, embellishment and technique.

✧ **ESSENTIAL QUESTION:** What do members of your culture eat and drink? How do they cook?

Locavore: This term, in current use in the United States to describe the practice of eating whatever is typically found locally, is a great idea to shape your thinking about your culture's Food Ways. At the core of its traditions are going to be those animals, plants and aquaculture that happen to be well adapted to the territory occupied by your culture. This connects Environment Ways to Food Ways very powerfully. It also asks you to keep attention on Work Ways. A culture without agriculture is likely to get less of its calories from plant sources than a culture that has a farming tradition. So, what's local? And if your society lives in an environment with great seasonal differences, how does it hold over calories from the harvest through the winter? What are its preservation techniques? Does it engage in preservation? Perhaps its hunting traditions can sustain the community over the winter? Does it have the capacity to grow things indoors or underground? Locavore traditions are what causes people in Canada to make rich and varied use of maple syrup but cause that ingredient to be entirely absent from other traditions. What is your culture's thinking on veganism? Vegetarianism? Are there cultural factors at work against the eating of a particular thing? What does your culture consider disgusting (*even if what it thinks is disgusting is edible*)? What would someone in your culture struggle to eat? What are its delicacies? Does it eat insects? Shellfish? Animals? And that's before even thinking about its beverage culture. What is a culture without access to grain going to brew? Is it capable of making wine? Not without grapes! Every culture has some kind of fermented beverage that has the advantage of being inhospitable to the growth of harmful bacteria. Don't forget that reliable access to clean drinking water is a 20th century



phenomenon. The reason pre-industrial people drank a lot of alcohol isn't because they were lushes...it's because they wanted to avoid a painful death.

Status: Are some beverages, foods or preparation techniques reserved for certain classes? It would be entirely typical for a class at the height of a society's Rank Ways to reserve certain beverages, livestock or game for its exclusive use. Do only the rich have access to wine or mead? Or do the rich alone have access to beer? Moreover, there is a long and rich tradition of certain foods being considered so base that they are considered only fit for those occupying the lowest rungs of a culture's ranks. For the longest time, lobster was considered a food only fit for consumption by the basest members of society; now it is a delicacy. Samuel Johnson described oats, a healthy grain, as "a grain, which in England is generally given to horses, but in Scotland appears to support the people." Let it never be said that food is beyond the grasp of racism. Don't forget this as you do your work.

Embellishment: Under this rubric, I am encouraging you to think not so much about the ingredients themselves, but rather the complexity of preparation and the use of spices, herbs and other flavoring ingredients. Cultures vary widely on their use of such ingredients. This is partly a function of access to the ingredients themselves, but is also based on other cultural factors that have nothing to do with accessibility. Of course a culture without access to sugar cane isn't going to use it. But what might it use to enhance sweetness? Beets? Honey? Or perhaps there is a cultural injunction from some other place in the culture against sweetness?

Technique: A great source of role-playing conflict might be centered right here in cooking technique. Different cultures have a tendency to gravitate to one or another method that becomes a standard associated with that culture. These methods generate all sorts of realities as a result. Different layouts for kitchens, different tools, different needs for embellishing spices and so forth. Some techniques to think about include: baking, boiling, frying, grilling, poaching, roasting and stewing. Another factor to think about is what additional or specialized ingredients your culture might have access to. A culture with access to citrus would be able to marinate foods with the citrus juice, like ceviche.

Ask Yourself...

- What do members of your culture eat routinely? Would eat in a pinch? Would eat only under famine conditions?
- What brewing techniques have emerged in your culture? What do they like to drink? Is there a culture of drinking to excess?
- What techniques are customary in your culture's practices?
- How far would a member of your culture go to get access to a delicacy?

In Our World

Food and drink is one of the markers of cultural difference in our world. If you want to have a fully fleshed out game world, don't stint here! It might seem frivolous, but it isn't. Just think for a moment about the differences in the food traditions between the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Italy. There are some pretty big gaps between these countries and cultures represented in the ingredients they select, the way they prepare those ingredients and the embellishments they use with those ingredients. These differences matter a great deal to the members of those cultures. Be mindful that local traditions have a great deal to do with Environment Ways (*there's a reason why Icelanders have so many uses for fish*) and local history and experience with plenty and scarcity (*there's a reason why Icelanders, who have experience with famine, use parts of animals others discard*). Moreover, don't neglect the fact that one culture will view the staples of another as disgusting. I am an American and eat peanut butter probably five times a week. I love it! But so many of my friends who aren't Americans recoil in horror at the thought of it. As an American, insect-eating traditions are traditions I have a hard time with. Chacun a son gout.

Language Ways

Every culture has traditions related to the use of language that help give it shape and context and to give it distance from other cultures. Like Food Ways, Language Ways help give subtle shading within a culture and to mark the boundary line between one nation and another. In a very real way, language helps give the individual a capacity for thinking. Language shapes how and in what ways a person thinks... consider for a moment how you are supposed to form the thought "snow" without the word "snow." In a fantasy role-playing context, Language Ways are often given a place as one of the carriers of "flavor," which is to say, difference that isn't necessarily all that different. It doesn't have to be this way! In fact, careful attention to language, naming and the relationships between language groups can bring a lot of diversity to your player's role-playing experiences. When considering this essential question, give careful consideration to: dialect, majority, pidgins and naming.

✧ **ESSENTIAL QUESTION:** How does your culture use language and naming?

Dialect: By dialect, I mean for you to consider all of the different ways that speakers of a mutually-intelligible language use that language differently within their own daily lives and contexts. Does your language have words, phrases or mannerisms that are reserved only for people with high rank or status? Is there a way of speaking or a closed vocabulary that people would describe as "snooty" or "affected?" What words are associated only with particular places in your culture and are rarely used anywhere else? How do these words serve as markers for people who use them? Are there grammatical



patterns that reflect an ancient conquest or the presence of another language's deepest syntax or grammar somewhere in your language? Do your people have sign languages?

Majority: The tendency of an ethnic or linguistic majority in a country to want to suppress the languages of ethnic or linguistic minorities is a commonplace. It happens on every inhabited continent and was unquestioned practice in many places even into the 2000s. It is critical, therefore, to consider the question of linguistic minority status when thinking about your people. Cultures that speak a minority language are either going to occupy a position of power and authority or will be assigned to the lowest ranks in a culture. It is very rare indeed for them to be seen as "just like everyone else." How rigorously do minority cultures defend their language traditions? How do members of these minority cultures interact with the majority culture? What do these languages uniquely preserve in their way of thinking? The March-lands between one language and another are likely to be places of great cultural and perhaps even physical conflict. What languages, and by extension cultures, is your culture trying to eliminate?

Pidgins: Guild chat. Trade languages. Thieves' Cants. These are all examples of pidgin languages, languages that develop between two peoples who have a relationship but who don't share a common language. The classic example of pidgins are trade languages, simplified versions of both languages that are used to facilitate commerce. The degree to which these pidgins develop in your culture is up to you. It might be that your culture has such a powerful influence on the rest of the world that it doesn't need a pidgin to get along. Everyone just speaks your language. While trade languages are the most common form of pidgin, don't devalue their use in conjunction with Association Ways or Rank Ways. I have even

created languages for games that have only a written form just to make things harder on my players.

Naming: To my way of thinking, nothing imparts a sense of character more than a name does. What your culture's naming traditions look like, therefore, matters a lot in helping your players inhabit the minds and spirits of their characters. There are lots of different ways one might go in this area. Perhaps, like in the Robin Hobb "Farseer" books I discussed in chapter 2, people are given names that describe personality traits and these personality traits shade the way the individual is raised and praised. It is a very common naming convention to use the names of parents or grandparents when naming a newborn. If not using the name, certainly references to it in patronymic or matronymic fashion is well known. Think about the conventions your culture would use and why they would use them—it will go a long way towards establishing the right tone and spirit for your game.

In Our World

There are thousands of languages, but only a few dozen that are spoken by tens or hundreds of millions. Many, many human languages are in decline or nearing extinction. These languages represent a huge part of the human cultural patrimony. Moreover, their decline represents a decline in the very capacity of our species to think. Language diversity has long been a hallmark of the human experience, hence our ability to form pidgin languages as we need. While language diversity has been a commonplace, the suppression of minority languages has been a factor in cultural dialogue in nearly every country. English has driven Gaelic, Scots Gaelic and Welsh towards extinction. French has done the same to Breton. American policy towards Native Americans has done exceptional cultural violence to hundreds of Indian languages, even when one of them, Navajo, arguably, was a major factor in the winning of World War II.

Ask Yourself...

- What words or expressions demarcate different speakers of the same language in your culture?
- Do these different words and expressions impart a class or rank tone to them? Would only the rich or the poor use these words?
- What are your culture's naming conventions? Do your characters conform to these conventions?

Magic Ways

Magic is a staple of fantasy role-playing of all sorts and this is certainly true for **HARP** as well. Whether your culture has a strong or weak magic tradition doesn't ultimately matter. Every culture has a sense of the conventional and the outlandish. Every culture has elements that worry about the work of witches, sorcerers and warlocks. Even if witches and conjurers don't really exist (*or don't really have any powers*), the belief

that they exist is something most cultures have endorsed or struggled with. Magic Ways, therefore, overlaps in many cultures with Supernatural Ways (*discussed below*). Magic Ways are not the systemic methods by which your culture manipulates the natural world. It isn't HARP's magic system. Rather, it is how your culture responds to and understands the value of the practice of magic and magic itself. Provided magic exists, when considering this essential question, give careful consideration to: value, occasion, constraint and instruction. If you are running a game world where magic does not really exist, it is still important to answer these questions and give consideration to them, at least so that you have some sense of how they relate to Supernatural Ways.

⊗ **ESSENTIAL QUESTION:** How does your culture understand, shape, control, teach and use magic? Does it have a positive or negative relationship with magic?

Value: Do the non-magical members of your culture consider magic to have positive, neutral or negative value? Is the manipulation of the natural world acceptable, acceptable under certain circumstances but not others or unacceptable? What are the magicians in your culture doing to generate these



values? Magic used primarily to facilitate the curing of disease and the maintenance of health is going to be viewed differently than magic meant to baffle, break up relationships or cause livestock to sicken. How much contact does a regular member of your society have with practitioners of magic? Is magic a routine, daily occurrence or is it something that demands astonishingly complicated rituals involving dozens of people? Is magic an innate quality? If so, is it viewed as something to be proud of or ashamed of? What would a person who learned they had magical talent do with that information?

Occasion: When would a typical member of your society see magic being practiced? When would a magician feel compelled to act magically? In what spheres of life would that magician feel empowered to act? Is magic under the control of a guild? Are different kinds of magic under the control of different guilds? Can magic be used by anyone because its intuitive rather than learned? Occasion speaks to all of these questions. Under what circumstances would magic be acceptably practiced? What are the ordering institutions that allow it or forbid it? How powerful are they? Who controls them? What people in your society have access to permission to act magically? Anyone? Does it connect in some manner to Association Ways or Rank Ways? Is there a connection between magic practice and some other part of your culture? For example, a magic practice that required certain plants, animals or minerals would surely generate a greater trade in those items than if it weren't the case. If magic is discouraged, it would stimulate a black market rather than a legitimate one. Are there items that are necessary for magic practice but that are contraband? How would a magician get a hold of them?

Constraint: Outside of the formal systems described above, are there qualities that are part of how magic users in the culture think about themselves that would cause them to restrict the way they use magic? How would a sorcerer in your culture restrain himself? Why would he do so? What are the personal limits that an individual would impose on herself?

Instruction: Does your culture have any method for the formal training of magic users? Is education in magic handed down from parent to child or are there institutions? Do these institutions have official sanction or do they work outside of the limits of the rest of the culture? Differences in the training of magicians could have dramatic effects on how your culture understands the practice of magic. Magic handed down from parent to child has the capacity to be unruly and disorderly. Difficult to manage as it isn't part of a broader system of control. Institutional magic, by contrast, can be brought to heel in some ways by other ordering institutions. It has some kind of sanction.

In Our World

Clearly, Earth is not a place of high magic where archmages are flinging around lightning bolts from the tips of their fingers. Magic is a fiction for those of us who live in the West—it is part of our stories. But for others with whom we share this planet, magic isn't a fantasy—it is a reality of daily life.

Ask Yourself...

- How hostile is the majority of your culture's population to users of magic?
- Does your culture view magic as something part of the natural world or the supernatural one?
- Would the practice of magic frighten a child in your culture, or delight her?
- Does the practice of magic have any influence on other sectors of your culture?

Granted, its function would be more appropriately described under Supernatural Ways, but that is perhaps little more than an academic distinction. They believe what they are doing is magic and they have evolved social and cultural definitions that fit what they're doing. To them, their behavior isn't a reflection of Supernatural Ways. In ancient cultures, there was a rich and lively tradition of spell casting attempting to influence all manner of behaviors. Hellenistic Greeks were especially vigorous in their uses of magic against enemies, to encourage romantic partnerships and to get rich. This is to say nothing of other forms of "common magic" like magical thinking or astrology that are a commonplace in 21st century society.

Supernatural Ways

If your culture has gods and goddesses that do their work in the world and can be seen at all times, Supernatural Ways is not the correct place to reflect on that. Rather, the gods become active players in the day-by-day social life of your civilization. In this case, it's more appropriate to think about them in the perspective of Rank Ways or Authority Ways, rather than supernaturally. However, if the gods of your society do not show themselves, act in ways that might be described as fickle or self-serving or if they encourage through their agents certain kinds of behavior and discourage other kinds, then Supernatural Ways is probably the right place to consider these ideas. If you can understand what a culture thinks about what can not be understood through the tools of science or reason, you can get tremendous insight into that culture's core values. How much weight does your culture place on reason and science? How much weight does it give to supernatural explanations? What causes earthquakes? An angry god or goddess or geologic phenomena? Can relations between people be understood scientifically or are they only understandable on a different, more intuitive level? The spiritual dimensions of cultures are among the most complex factors we have to consider in world building. Even in their absence, they deeply shape the way a culture understands itself, its people and its relationship with the wider world. When considering this essential question, give careful consideration to: reason, reflection, ritual and soul.

⊗ **ESSENTIAL QUESTION:** How does your culture understand the relationship between that which cannot be seen and that which can? Does the culture engage in religious practices? If so, how and what are they?

Reason: Every society will have elements in it that respond more enthusiastically to answers to fundamental questions based on reason, scientific method or sensory evidence. To what extent is this true in your society? Does your society even have gods? If so, are they gods that support the society's orientation towards reason? How does your society organize the way that it tries to understand the world. Are there academies? Universities? Does everyone get an education? If not, who does and why? When a person rejects a supernatural answer to a question about natural phenomena, is there an ordering institution in society that supports that rejection and protects the individual? Or could there be an ordering institution that would use its resources to suppress that point of view? Do these organizations oppose each other forcefully or not?

Reflection: The difficulties in understanding natural phenomena pale in comparison to understanding human-scale forces like love, friendship, grief, birth, death and the "Seven Deadly Sins." Everyone in society is going to need some help in understanding their relationship to these fundamental



characteristics of society. And these are really hard to understand and work through! What are the forces at work here in your culture? What is it really good at? What does it squash down or suppress? Is your culture one that simply doesn't talk about death? Perhaps it is obsessive about guilt or about gluttony. Think about all of the factors in play that support personal relationships and how complex they are—that's what reflection is about.

Ritual: In some respects, this is the opposite of reflection. Where that is looking at right relations between people in society, this notion is looking at a person's right relationship with the gods or with what can't be seen or understood. How do your people worship? Do they build structures, permanent or temporary? Do they use natural phenomena to support their worship? Is there an institutional presence that builds and maintains suitable buildings and support? What is the structure and complexity of the liturgical practices? Does the religion of your society impose certain performance expectations on its members or just let people do as they will? What is the relationship between different religions in your society? Is your society tolerant of this? Polytheistic or Monotheistic?

Soul: Where ritual asks you to think about practice, soul is asking you to consider the internal experience of a practitioner of your society's religion. Is your religion one that generates a rich interior life or is it really about the external practice of liturgical forms? About what would practitioners of your religion worry about or obsess about? To what extent does your culture's religious systems encourage the formation of "personal relationships" with its god or gods? What behaviors, beliefs or practices are shunned in the tradition and how do characters feel about this?

In Our World

In human cultures, religion is spectacularly complex. Two of the three largest religious traditions, Christianity and Islam, are monotheistic, for example. But Hinduism is polytheistic. How these religions understand the human condition, human relationships and human obligations to each other are surprisingly similar. But they are not the same traditions and their differences are salient in understanding fundamentally different views of the religious obligations of the faithful person. When looking at these three traditions from the perspectives I outline above, it is easy to see the ways they construct radically different understandings of spiritual practice, social obligation and what happens upon death. To the degree that you can make your own religious traditions in your game cultures sing like this, the better.

Self-reflection Ways

Unlike the other nineteen questions, for this question there is really only one thing to reflect on. Every society lies to itself, hiding aspects of itself from itself and, it hopes, from others. Each of the other nineteen folkways might give you an interesting seed to develop here at the end of the culture creation process. Keep in mind that what your culture feels shame about isn't necessarily what you might feel shameful about. A culture that keeps slaves doesn't necessarily have the moral framework that we have in the 21st century, so that culture may not feel any tension about that, may not feel it is something shameful. In fact, it might be proud of its slave-keeping. Indeed, one doesn't need to dig very deeply in the literature of the American South before the Civil War to find all manner of literature in support of slavery as a Christian, humane practice. Self-reflection ways is looking for emergent attitudes and patterns of thought on the margins of your culture's other folkways. For example, perhaps your culture builds cities in such a way that a certain class of people are restricted to ghettos. Perhaps your society believes that when a marriage ends in divorce, both parties bring shame to society and so the reputation of both the couple's parents and children is damaged. Every culture has something that it keeps under wraps. What is it, and how might that shape your characters?

✧ **ESSENTIAL QUESTION:** About what does your culture refuse to be honest with itself? What are its secrets? Tensions? Shames?



4 Two Case Studies



In chapter 3, I detailed twenty different folkways that you can and should use to create nuanced cultures in your role-playing setting. As I discussed in chapter 2, great fantasy literature doesn't necessarily make use of all twenty of the folkways. The best examples of these created worlds, however, go very deep in some of the folkways and skim the surface of others. None are consciously ignored. In order to help you see how they might be used, in this chapter, I will create two cultures into which you might place characters of any HARP race, though in the first instance, I will be creating a Gryx culture and in the second, a Gnome culture.

Gryx: The Commonwealth of Enryyx

In HARP Fantasy, the Gryx are described as being an “*unsightly race*” with a “*fearsome appearance*.” This conflicts with their inner lives, which are by nature “*peaceful*.” The Gryx, who “*provide a generic semi-bestial race that easily replaces the Half-Orc that is present in many systems*,” are so oriented to peaceful pursuits that HARP Fantasy describes them as “*preferring to tend to their gardens and crafts*.” So...a nation of semi-bestial florists and whittlers who would prefer an afternoon of kite-flying to one spent in martial arts training or archery. They'd be happy to fletch the arrows...just not shoot them. Let's see what we can do with this.

A Brief History

The Commonwealth of Enryyx, a confederation of two dozen majority-Gryx settlements, was consolidated four generations ago through the creative leadership of Coursing River Ice, a Gryx who led his people after they were exiled from the Landover Imperium during one of the Empire's periodic anti-Gryx (and indeed, anti-anyone-who-isn't-human) racial pogroms. Rather than accept his people's fate (which was to be enslaved and put to work mining silver), he led more than five thousand Gryx over the Cloudsplitter Mountains (an endeavor previously thought impossible, due to the heights and generally treacherous nature of the Cloudsplitters), along pathways that have never since been mapped. Once on the other side, Coursing River Ice and his people discovered an assortment of settlements, predominantly Gryx (but with substantial halfling and human populations as well), on the other side of the Cloudsplitters. Coursing River Ice led his people to the mouth of a river which he named the Placid for its gentleness and they built there on both sides of the river the town they called Expansive Freedom. Ten years after Expansive was founded, it was attacked and sacked by a previously unknown race of piratical marauders who the Enryyx named the Shadows of the Sea. From that moment until the end of his life, Coursing River Ice worked to band the Enryyx together to resist the Shadows of the Sea. By the end of Coursing River Ice's life, they had successfully created a shared sense of purpose and built up their will to resist. The Enryyx defeated the Shadows of the Sea once and for all when the marauders attempted to sack the rebuilt Expansive

Freedom as they had done the old settlement. The Shadows were defeated by the clever ingenuity and bravery of the Gryx, led by Coursing River Ice. A year later, he was dead. The Commonwealth which his efforts forged, however, remains as strong as it ever was while he was alive.

The Folkways of the Commonwealth of Enryyx

Self-reflection Ways

The Enryyx have three things about which they lie to themselves. First, they struggle mightily with the legacy of Coursing River Ice because his pre-flight identity doesn't reconcile with that of a triumphant founding father. Reflecting on this as the elders would, they should consider the role his own community played in is upbringing, but they haven't done so, because to reflect on these elders might challenge their own self-assessment. Second, they take great cultural shame in having been (at least in part) enslaved by the Landover Imperium. This is something they don't talk about but drives their self-determination in ways that are both positive and negative. The last and most important is their practice of expelling Gryx from the Commonwealth if they hold unpopular opinions or want to act in ways that might be disruptive of the social order. The Enryyx elders will sometimes speak with each other about this practice and how it might be weakening the Commonwealth, but there's no inclination to stop it.



Environment Ways Enryx

Topography	<p>The territory of the Commonwealth is narrow, no more than 75 miles wide from the shores of the ocean to the foothills of the Cloudsplitters, mountains whose peaks are pushing 20,000 feet. The land of the Commonwealth is divided by two rivers (<i>the Golden and the Placid</i>) into three parcels. The northernmost parcel, roughly triangular in shape, is home to 7 of the Commonwealth's settlements. It is bounded on the north and east by the Cloudsplitters. The central parcel, which encompasses the widest part of the Enryx's civilization, stretches from the sea to Cloudsplitters. It is host to 12 of the Commonwealth's settlements, including its capital, Expansive Freedom. The southernmost parcel is the smallest, home to just 5 settlements. Generally poorer than the north or center, the hilliest terrain is in the south. The elevation change between the Cloudsplitters in the north and the fertile land of the Commonwealth is dramatic, with sheer mountain faces sometimes dropping thousands of feet at near right angles to the plains.</p>
Water	<p>The Commonwealth's territory is exceptionally well watered. The Golden River and the Placid River are regularly refreshed from the snowcap of the Cloudsplitters each spring. Their flow is rarely energetic—in the eighty years of the Commonwealth, there has been only one flood on the Golden (<i>but it was quite damaging</i>). The Placid has never flooded in the history of the Commonwealth. The ocean along the Commonwealth's shore is also tame. There has never been a tidal wave in the memory of the Commonwealth.</p>
Ecosystem	<p>The Commonwealth is blessed with an exceptionally forgiving and temperate climate. The fertility of their land is significant and throughout the country, with the far north and the inland areas of the south being the only real exceptions. The central portion of the Enryx's lands are most fertile near the shore, becoming marshier inland. There are no endemic diseases. The Commonwealth's farmers are among the most skilled anywhere. The southern parts of the Commonwealth are famous for their excellent wines. Hunting land animals is uncommon, except during certain ritual seasons. Great herds of dimetrodon roam the central region of the Commonwealth. The hunting of seals, sea lions and whales is common, especially in the waters off the northern triangle. Fishing is extensive throughout the Commonwealth.</p>
Weather	<p>Temperatures in the Commonwealth rarely rise above 80 degrees in the summer. Precipitation is common throughout the Commonwealth, with consecutive days of full sunlight being rare. The south gets the least rain. Precipitation comes throughout the year, rather than in a monsoon. Snow is possible in winter, but precipitation might just as easily be rain, with the likelihood of snow rising as one moves north. The northern triangle sometimes gets significant snowfall.</p>

Urban Ways Enryrx

Permanence	As settled farmers, the Enryrx build permanent settlements. There are no migrating settlements in the Commonwealth. All but six of communities of the Enryrx are located on the Golden or Placid rivers. Of these other six, four are in the south and cluster around Moon Lake (<i>so named for the beauty of its waters under the light of the full moon</i>). The other two are in the north and are fishing villages near the northernmost border of the Commonwealth.
Configuration	Enryrx communities are built around a common hearth. In or near the center of each settlement is an enormous oven for the baking of bread. This oven is owned by the community and is next door (<i>usually</i>) to the community owned water mill, which processes grain into flour. Each settlement on a river or at the shore maintains docks for visiting boats and ships. Commercial districts are generally set up near these docks; Enryrx do not trade commercially in staple foods within their own settlement (<i>but they will with other settlements</i>).
Aesthetics	Enryrx settlements partially reflect an aesthetic brought to the Commonwealth by Coursing Water Ice, who was raised in the Landover Imperium. Modern settlements reflect this by using much more wood in their building than the oldest settlements, which were primarily built in rough-hewn stone. There is no brickwork, other than for the ovens, in the Commonwealth. The contrast between these older and newer communities is a matter of continual, spirited debate between the Gryx of the Commonwealth. No surprise that the small number of humans who make the Commonwealth home choose to live in the more modern settlements.
Stratification	There is little social stratification within Gryx settlements as the accumulation of material wealth is a low priority for the Gryx. Nevertheless, there are some markers and qualities that one could look for to differentiate status. First, families that have resided in the community longer have their homes nearer to the mill and the oven, making their lives just that much easier. Once a home has been built, it is named and once named, that name never changes, no matter who moves into it later. Second is in the nature of the settlements themselves. There is only one settlement large enough to be called a city in the Commonwealth—Expansive Freedom—and even that’s little more than a big town by the standards of the Landover Imperium. But its status as a capital gives it an assortment of special buildings. Commonwealth Hall, where the Grandmother’s Council and other communal decision making bodies meet, is found here. The Shrine of Coursing River Ice is here. Expansive Freedom has three community hearths (<i>but still only one mill</i>). Its docks are more extensive than all of the rest of the Commonwealth’s combined.



Family Ways Enryrx

Reach	An Enryrx looks back two generations in his or her family to determine the boundary of who is considered family and who isn't. All of the offspring of an Enryrx's grandparents (<i>the grandparents, their siblings, children of that grandparent and that grandparent's siblings and all of their issue</i>) are considered family by an Enryrx.
Relationship	The relationships between the three generations of Enryrx are (<i>at least as far as they are concerned</i>) easily mapped. The obligation of the youngest generation is to honor the elder generations through their crafting (<i>be it wood-working, weaving or kite-making</i>) and to work hard at whatever their parents have made their work, be it learning the alphabet or how to rotate crops. The middle generation is responsible for the economic well-being of the entire unit. They do the productive work of farming and baking and fishing. The elder generation provides guidance and wisdom to the whole. They manage the family's ritual calendar and regulate social friction. They venerate the dead and carry on the spiritual work of the family.
Authority	If the family needs to make a collective decision, it is made by the elders. On a very practical level, the entire Commonwealth, to a limited degree, views itself as one big family. Hence, the highest decision making body in the Commonwealth is the Grandmother's Council, which meets yearly in Expansive Freedom to deliberate on the state of the Commonwealth. The eldest grandmother in each settlement travels to Expansive Freedom each year (<i>with a retinue of young people</i>) to take part in this work.
Idealization	The Enryrx highly value their families and have very little patience or tolerance of unruliness. Their families are not based on love and joy. They are based on obligation and discipline. Unruly young people are vigorously re-educated by their elders. At maturity, when a young person would be assigned their marriage partner, if that young adult is seen as too unruly, he or she would not be given a marriage partner and would instead be expelled from the community. This is why there are still Gryx in the Landover Imperium and elsewhere. Gryx who leave their communities willingly are rare, but driven by a spirit that the Gryx nevertheless understand and respect.

Marriage Ways Enryrx

Authority	Due to the nature of the Enryrx family, marital authority is divided more or less equally in the nuclear family. This particular nexus of power is less important in the Commonwealth, because this society places more authority in the elder generation. An important consideration here is that even though the grandmothers are the most powerful force in the culture, when marriages take place, women become a part of their husband's family. Mirroring Coursing River Ice's family in this regard, this means that ultimately families will be governed by women who joined the family in marriage, not who were born into it. This, to the Enryrx, maintains the strongest bonds at the community level, rather than the family level.
Inheritance	Bilateral inheritance is the norm among the Enryrx. All children of a marriage are entitled to inherit. What is inherited and by whom is determined by the elders of that family. As all of the elders were at one point in charge of the economic vitality of the family, they are acutely aware of how important maintaining the economic potential of the land is. They make decisions based on this.
Legitimacy	The only legitimate marriages in Enryrx society are those which have been sanctioned by the elders of a family. Because the Enryrx are not innovative, they follow the practices of previous generations very closely. This means that Enryrx marriages are between one man and one woman always and without exception. Marriage is for life. Gryx for whom this isn't going to be a good option often leave their community to become travelers and adventurers. In high-functioning families an elder will encourage a young person to take up the traveling life. In authoritarian ones, the youngster will be expelled. Divorce is the decision of an elder, not a member of the married couple. It is vanishingly rare.
Love	Love is formed in marriage, not before marriage. Emotional compatibility is assessed by elders before they match couples (<i>this is what grandmothers spend a great deal of time doing</i>), but it is the least weighty consideration. Because Coursing River Ice's marriage was one of obligation and mutual service, rather than love, love is seen as less important among the Gryx.

Lifespan Ways Enryrx

Infancy and Childhood	The Enryrx absolutely love infants and children and shower them with affection and indulgence. This is the time of life when all manner of irregular behavior is encouraged and tolerated. Enryrx in their childhood are watched very, very closely by their parents and elders who look for evidence of talent in one of the many crafts that are so important to the Gryx. If talent is seen, it is assiduously developed. Childhood ends at the child's fifteenth birthday, at which point they become eligible to be matched in marriage.
Adulthood	Adulthood doesn't begin until marriage. Unmarried adults (<i>generally fifteen, sixteen and seventeen year olds</i>) are encouraged to travel and seek out wisdom about their crafts and talents. They are heavily relied upon by their families for hard work in farming or fishing. They often run the mills. Once married, the Gryx of Enryrx are expected to adopt a sober and thoughtful attitude in alignment with their family and community standards, taking direction from elders and parenting their children in the manner of the people. Adults have the least flexibility in their behavior. Adults do not live alone. In the event of a death in marriage, the surviving partner would be quickly rematched in marriage with another widow or widower. If that was not possible, adults would move back into their parents' (<i>or another elders'</i>) home.
Elderhood	One becomes an elder in Enryrx culture the moment he or she becomes a grandparent. There is a short transition away from the life of toil and work (<i>generally about as long as the transition into adulthood, about 2 years</i>). New grandfathers learn about trade between settlements and bigger economic questions. New grandmothers are in charge of the community oven and helping to rear children. They begin to form the relationships with other families that will be the basis of their power going forward.
Transitions	Among the Enryrx, death is viewed as an inevitable outcome of life. Rituals are celebratory and meant to reflect and honor how the dead person helped shape and grow the community. At death, the body of the deceased is buried in the settlement's graveyard. No markers are used. Two days after death, the deceased's family gathers for a day-long funeral in which stories are told about the deceased and the deceased's favorite foods are eaten. These traditions are meant to cement the deceased's uniqueness into the ongoing narrative of the family. Elders regularly cite the behaviors, attitudes and thoughts of the long dead in making decisions and giving advice.

Rank Ways Enryrx

Nobility	The Enryrx's Family Ways profoundly shapes its Rank Ways. Elders come first in all things. Elders in different families would be deferred to by adults in other families if there were cause. This comes from adhering to the teachings and practices of Coursing River Ice, who believed very strongly in the place of family in society (because he was deprived of his own). Status is all about age and wisdom and nothing else among the Enryrx. Their social norms are strongly collectivist and leveling.
Mobiity	There is very slow "turn-over" in Enryrx society because of the pride of place given to elders. But there is generational transition, even if it is slow. Eventually, elders will die and give way to new elders who were raised by different parents in different contexts. Keep in mind that the status of women is strongest when they are elders as they form the governing council of the entire Commonwealth and grandmothers have more power than grandfathers in family life (grandfathers have more power in cultural life).
Exclusivity	Exclusive access to social and cultural power is held by the elders. Adults have very little real power over their own lives as they can be directed to do nearly anything by an elder. Children have more freedom but no power.
Coercion	The elders hold an extraordinary coercive rein over Enryrx society. With the power to decide marriages, grant divorces, shape family life and social life and, ultimately, expel someone from the Commonwealth, they are capable, if they wish, of inspiring awe and fear.

Gender and Sexuality Ways Enryrx

Definitions	The Gryx have two biological sexes.
Norms	An elder midwife Enryrx attends all births and makes pronouncements about the nature of the child at birth, including assigning that child to a biological sex. An Enryrx is expected to conform to the social norms of that sex throughout his or her life. Sexuality is allowed only within marriage, as children born outside of marriage are not embedded in a family context. Children born thus are sent to Expansive Freedom and “ <i>adopted</i> ” by travelers and traders from other cultures. An Enryrx responsible for creating such a child is expelled from the community. Crafting traditions are among the most important to a Gryx; among the Enryrx, there is no relationship between certain crafts and sex. Men are as likely to find meaning in needlepoint as in woodworking, for example. There are no examples of third genders in the Enryrx.
Non-Normative Patterns	The biggest non-normative patterns are those that disrupt the rigidity of family relations. These include unwillingness to marry, unsuitability for marriage (<i>as discerned by elders</i>), engaging in sexual practices outside of marriage or with non-Gryx. Behavior that is non-normative in a child will result in familial correction or correction by an elder. If the behavior continues, at the transition to adulthood, the child would be expelled.
Relations	The individual Gryx in the Commonwealth is under the management of elders from birth until such time as he or she becomes an elder. There is very little tolerance for deviance from the norms established by elders. A Gryx born in Expansive Freedom would have the most. Northern communities are quite conservative.

Association Ways Enryrx

Distance	At their core, most Enryrx experience associations in their culture as extensions of family and within a family context first. As I’ve described, the Enryrx place a high value on crafts. All of the weavers in a family would know each other and each others skills, strengths and weaknesses. But they would also know of the other Enryrx in other families, other settlements or indeed beyond the border of the Commonwealth and their skills. The finest craftsperson in each discipline is known to other practitioners of that discipline. That person is routinely sought out for wisdom. Travel in the Commonwealth is largely driven by these craft-centered associations.
Fraternity	The Gryx are not especially competitive in anything except their crafting. Each craft has, in essence, its own elders who can evaluate and judge the work of other practitioners. They can teach and shape a person’s skills and attitudes. There would be no particular way to tell if a Gryx is a brewer, a toymaker or a chandler other than watching them practice. Friendship is a notion tied to childhood. Adults are expected to focus their energies on their families. Having said that, friendships formed in childhood often endure into elderhood and sometimes shape the relations elders have with each other.
Guild	Guild-like forces among the Enryrx are quite weak except in crafting. Each craft has a widely-acknowledged expert who others would defer to as they would defer to any other elder.
Obligation	There are no formal obligations one has by virtue of having a crafting association. Informally, if one is recognized as being especially skillful, society expects that person to give of herself to others interested in the practice of that craft.

Order Ways Enryrx

Sphere	There are three areas of paramount concern to the elders of the Commonwealth: social harmony, successful families and peace. Social harmony is critical to the maintenance of order because the Enryrx are intolerant of innovation. Children are carefully educated and punished if they deviate from expectation. Children who won't come to heel are expelled. Successful families are the basis of the entire Commonwealth. The making of successful marriages is of critical importance to the long-term success of family and society. The Grandmother's Council in Expansive Freedom regulates the relationship of the Commonwealth to outsiders and takes a jaundiced view of most of these relationships.
Joining	Expulsion is seen by all as a terrible failure and is exercised with caution. It is exercised only by elders. They don't consult adults or children. They consult only other elders. Elders will try a great many strategies before believing there's no way forward with a recalcitrant child. Unruly adults are shown the door almost instantly, under the notion that they should know better. Elders who take their disagreements with other elders into the public arena are put to death. It has happened this way only twice in the history of the Commonwealth.
Tenacity	No one can bring an elder in a family to heel except another elder, and only then through persuasion. No one has ever appealed to the Grandmother's Council to adjudicate a family matter in the history of the Commonwealth.
Presence	Shaming is a powerful force in Enryrx society. Everyone knows that whatever you do that is contrary to the will of family and Commonwealth will be quickly known to everyone in your settlement. No one wants to be a pariah in this culture. Conforming to family expectations is of critical importance to most Gryx. Those for whom it isn't have been expelled or left on their own. There is no militia. There are no police. If the Commonwealth goes to war, it summons all unmarried adults and all sons who are third or later in birth order and places that army under the command of grandfathers selected by the Council.

Authority Ways Enryrx

Legitimacy	Power in the Commonwealth is held nominally by the Grandmothers' Council, but in reality, the family is such a powerful institution that that's where legitimacy really lies. A parent has primary responsibility for the raising of his children. A child's unruliness reflects badly on the parent. Elders serve to guide and advise until things start to get out of hand, at which point they might act more coercively. Legitimacy within the Enryrx comes largely from one's status in one's family. Being an elder, by itself, confers great legitimacy.
Power	The wielding of power in Enryrx society is at nearly all times subtle and nuanced. It is not a violent culture. Rather, elders know precisely how much pressure to put on someone whose behavior needs correcting. Elders who overpressure or insufficiently pressure someone are taught how to do it properly by other elders. Disagreements between elders are sorted out by the elders, who have no power over one another except the power of reason and shame, learned in childhood, refined in adulthood and given a razor's edge in elderhood.
Authority	The Grandmothers' Council speaks on behalf of the entire Commonwealth by virtue of being " <i>elder of elders.</i> " It is the only entity that can raise an army, for instance. It sets the yearly tithe, which determines how much wealth will be collected by each elder when she returns to her town or village. Otherwise, authority rests in the village or family. Elders in a family who can't resolve their differences do great harm to their family because there is no mechanism to make them behave and settle their problems.
Participation	Authority in Enryrx society is focused exclusively through the mechanism of elders. This is true in families, the village, the entire Enryrx polity and in the Enryrx crafting traditions.

Freedom Ways Enryrx

Freedom	Enryrx have broad freedom of conscience. Their spiritual traditions are ancestor-based and it will always be the case that one ancestor as opposed to another might be seen as a spiritual guide. No coercion is offered here by elders. Moreover, the choice of crafting traditions is not under the control of the elders or parents. Indeed, it is the purview of the child to make these choices, even if their elders and parents have pushed them in a particular direction. Freedom to speak is not an Enryrx notion. Only elders have this freedom.
Liberty	Families (<i>under the direction of their elders</i>) and villages (<i>likewise</i>) are at their liberty to do so without being coerced or directed by any other institutions in Enryrx society, with one exception. Elders in families in conflict (<i>the same applies to villages</i>) are expected to work together and make a decision preventing the conflict from becoming a problem for someone other than an elder. Elders who are unable to resolve these kinds of problems are not going to last long as elders. A family that decided to explore a new kind of fishing would be at their liberty to do so. A family that decided to take up mineral trading with merchants from over the sea would be at their liberty.
Binding	Enryrx society has very little tolerance for or patience with the disorderly. Many examples in the family setting have been cited above. Elders make decisions each according to his or her sense of the workings of the world and what strikes them as good judgment. Behaviors that undermine family, child-rearing, marriage and the meaning of these institutions is swiftly corrected or the offender expelled. Other, lesser irregular behaviors might be shunned or shamed without provoking expulsion.
Directionality	There is very little freedom for the individual Gryx to enact within the sphere of family. There is great freedom for that same person within the sphere of craft. Elders set the rules and guidelines in all things and some towns are governed more loosely than others (<i>looseness within the context of the Gryx, of course</i>).

Wealth Ways Enryrx

Objectification	Owing from the fact that the Commonwealth was founded, in part, by enslaved Gryx fleeing the Landover Imperium, the Commonwealth uses coined metal as a medium of exchange. Mines in the east of the Commonwealth generate significant amounts of copper and silver which are used to make coins for foreign trade and exchange primarily. Commonwealth coinage is highly valued outside the Commonwealth as its value is deeply trusted. Commonwealth coinage is instantly recognizable as it is diamond shaped. Copper coins feature a stylized kingfisher on the obverse. Silver coins are half the size of a copper and feature a stylized dimetrodon. Copper trades for silver at 50:1.
Status	Having a lot of wealth in Enryrx society conveys no social benefit. Elders from poor families have as much influence as those from wealth ones.
Gift-giving	Enryrx society is communitarian in nature. It is considered normal to give gifts when visiting others. Failure to do so would be viewed as a major breach of good order and would generate a visit from an elder. It is not appropriate in Gryx circles to give excessively. It is the notion of the gift that matters.
Reciprocity	As wealth is not a marker of great import in Enryrx society, the sharing of it is expected. The Enryrx are not interested in creating ever more and ever more. They are conservative and appreciate what they have.

Work Ways Enryrx

Subsistence	The Commonwealth's lands are quite fertile, as are its mines and its waters. It is this fertility that allows the Enryrx to spend the time they do on their crafting traditions, a core habit of the culture. Settlements are sufficient, but there is robust trade between them as they tend to specialize (<i>coastal cities in fish, southern cities in wine and so forth</i>). There are subsistence farmers, but they are few in number.
Feudality	Feudal relationships are entirely unknown in the Commonwealth. " <i>From each according to his ability, to each according to his need</i> " more closely approximates the beliefs of the Enryrx.
Ethic	Work is extraordinarily important to adults in Enryrx society. As they provide economic support for everyone in their family, it is a deeply consuming task to which everyone in society assigns great value. It is considered a mark of great honor to work hard and with discipline. Laziness is harmful not only to the self but also to the family and is corrected by elders.
Slavery	The Commonwealth was founded by escaped slaves and as such takes a very dim view indeed to slavery. It is absolutely forbidden in the Commonwealth. It is perhaps the only thing that the Commonwealth would undertake an offensive war to undo in another society. It is the bedrock upon which relationships with the Landover Imperium are founded.

Leisure Ways Enryx

Leisureliness	Leisureliness is something that elders pay close attention to in Enryx culture, both as a positive and as a negative. They expect to see infants and children <i>“hard at work at their play.”</i> They expect parents to be training children to be successful in their adulthood, but not only this. It is essential that the child is given the opportunity to find things he or she likes to do in order to give richer meaning to their lives. Adults who do not do this will be visited by an elder. <i>“Play”</i> on the part of adults is sharply discouraged, except in the context of crafting, in which case it is encouraged. Elders have broad freedom to do as they will—and if they want to play a bit in the manner of children, who is going to criticize?
Competitiveness	The Enryx are not especially competitive with people outside of their crafting disciplines and quite competitive with people who share their craft interests. A kite-maker who can make a kite that flies in poor wind will be sought out and emulated throughout the land. Each of the crafts has their own yearly <i>“games”</i> or display of talents to encourage learning and help establish hierarchy within the crafting tradition.
Athletics	The Enryx are not very athletically minded (<i>while being quite physically fit</i>). At the beginning of harvest, however, there is a game, called villaging, that marks the beginning of that season. Villaging involves each family in a particular town or village attempting to move a set of colored balls by any means necessary from a designated part of town to another. Villaging always takes a full day to play and is outside the regulation of elders.
Diversions	The Enryx are the masters of diversions. In some respects, their entire culture participates and reinforces this notion. The Enryx are master craftsmen in nearly every field of craft. They love spending time doing these crafts. They are second only to the elders in terms of organizing society. The ten most popular Enryx diversions are (<i>in no particular order</i>): poetry writing and reciting, flower gardening, beekeeping and honey making, kite-making, woodworking, brewing, dog breeding, fly making (<i>for fishing</i>), flower arranging and candle-making.

Dress Ways Enryx

Practicality	The Enryx are a deeply practical, conservative people. Their dress manifests this reality in daily life. Children are dressed to facilitate play. Adults to make their work easy. Elders dress plainly to reinforce the soberness of their responsibilities.
Status	Despite their practicality, every craft tradition has a dress tradition that is unique to it. Crafters will always wear their craft garb when engaging in their craft (<i>this is a function of practicality as well</i>). These clothes are very expensive and cherished. They help demarcate status among different crafters.
Jewelry	Jewelry is not worn by the Gryx. Non-Gryx members of the Commonwealth might choose to adorn themselves but it is uncommon.
Body Modification	As Coursing River Ice was himself tattooed, tattooing is considered an appropriate body modification among the Enryx. It isn't especially common, but isn't frowned on. Tattooing is one of the recognized crafts and is taught to the very young if they show an interest and talent.

Food and Drink Ways Enryx

Locavore	As there is little hunting, there is little meat eating. The rich bounty of the land and the seas, though, gives the Enryx a highly varied assortment of fruits and vegetables to draw from. Barley is the staple grain, consumed at most meals. Shellfish are especially prized as a delicacy. Lobster from the north even more so. Beer and wine is commonly served at meals, even to the very young. There is no citrus.
Status	The Enryx do not have a tradition of reserving certain foods for certain people, except the first meal served at the meeting of the Grandmothers' Council is always oysters.
Embellishment	Enryx meals are richly and heavily spiced. Riotously flavored, in fact, in dynamic contrast to their dress ways. They make extensive use of honey, pepper and other spices. Cinnamon is especially prized.
Technique	Enryx cooks make extensive use of hot oil frying and stewing. They boil rarely. They do not have an extensive baking tradition.

Language Ways Enryrx

Dialect	There is one language spoken in the Commonwealth, Enryysh. There are two dialects of the language. The oldest, spoken in the north, predates the Commonwealth. It is viewed by the rest of the Commonwealth as especially conservative. The other dialect was brought in with Coursing River Ice and is centered on Expansive Freedom. It is considered the “ <i>best</i> ” way to speak.
Majority	Humans and halflings who share the Commonwealth with the Enryrx (<i>but do not govern it, because they have no members on the Grandmothers’ Council</i>) are allowed to speak their own languages at home, but all public business is conducted in Enryysh.
Pidgins	Pidgins are not in use among the Enryrx Gryx.
Naming	Gryx naming conventions are based on two elements. I will use Coursing River Ice as an example. The first element of an Enryrx Gryx’s name is a natural land or sea feature (<i>River, Reef, Meadow...you get the picture</i>) with a modifying adjective that in some way describes the person. The first element, the natural feature, is given at birth. The second element, the adjective, is given at attainment of adulthood. The third element, “ <i>Ice</i> ” is a family descriptor. There are about 300 of these in Enryrx culture. “ <i>Ice</i> ” is the youngest of these descriptors, brought with Coursing River Ice when he led his people over the Cloudsplitters.

Magic Ways Enryrx

Value	Magic is not practiced universally among the Enryrx, but it elicits no cries of alarm when it is practiced. It is viewed as a skill, like any other skill. Perhaps more esoteric but no different from anything else. It is relatively rare in the Commonwealth because “ <i>higher education</i> ” is unheard of. It is practiced in certain families because there’s a pre-existing tradition of its practice. There is no Divine Magic among the Enryrx, only personal.
Occasion	Magic is used in the Commonwealth to enhance the land’s fertility, to predict the weather and other such things. It is not used in the management of family or relationships. This is viewed as abomination. An elder who used magic instead of her intuition to make a marriage match, for example, would be put to death. Magic generates about 50% of the trade in candles in the Commonwealth.
Constraint	A magic-user in the Commonwealth would not use magic to interfere with the social order.
Instruction	Magic is practiced in certain families more than others by virtue of their ancestors. Wisdom, therefore, is bound up with families and history. Marriages are often made to reinforce magical talent or to ensure that a very talented marriage partner finds a suitable partner. Enryrx Gryx have no biological impediment to becoming deeply skilled magicians. Their culture just doesn’t encourage it.

Supernatural Ways Enryrx

Reason	The Enryrx Gryx of the Commonwealth do not have gods in the way that the Landover Imperium or other societies might. The nearest thing they have are their ancestors. The Enryrx do not believe that these ancestors influence the day-to-day world directly. They do not believe that they continue to take part in family life. Rather, they turn to them and their memory to help solve problems in the contemporary world. How an honored grandmother who died 60 years ago successfully dealt with a recalcitrant child is deep wisdom. Spiritual wisdom, among the Enryrx. But they do not worship that grandmother.
Reflection	Enryrx society is fixated on honor, discipline and hierarchy. It is fixated on these things in the context of being highly collectivist. Enryrx culture has very little tolerance for disruptiveness in personal and family relations. It expels those who would push the culture in ways it can’t cope with.
Ritual	As the Enryrx do not have gods, they also do not have religious architecture. They keep the hearth as the symbol of their family and their ancestors, but that’s it.
Soul	Religious practice is nearly alien to the Enryrx. Elders speaking to each other will regularly reference their elders in conversation when trying to sort out problems. That would be about it.

Gnome: ElySION Mormoops

HARP Fantasy describes Gnomes as “*insatiably curious*” creatures who “*adore unravelling puzzles and solving enigmas.*” These masters of the arcane “*consider magic to be the pinnacle of all mysteries.*” As much as they love magic, they prize secrecy, according to **HARP Fantasy**. In fact “*they conceal entrances to their underground cities with such cunning that if a location is discovered, it is only because the Gnomes wished it so!*” In **HARP Fantasy**, the Gnomes are described as preferring the Shallow Warrens culture, reflecting rugged, hilly environments that make it easier to hide their cities and gives natural protection. So...prankish arcanists who can't help but be attracted to shiny things. They should know better, but can't help themselves. They couldn't bear to not be in on the joke, but want to be the ones telling it. I see...

A Brief History

In a past so long distant that even the Gnomes don't remember all of the details, they built two great (*at least great on the scale of Gnomes*) cities (*ElySION: city in Hraj, the Gnomish language*) named ElySION Mormoops and ElySION Kamloops. Connected by an arcane subterranean railway usable only by the Gnomes, the cities traded the arcane magic items they crafted, knowledge, priceless gems, jewelry, stories and spells. And they relished their lives and civilizations, carved from broad, rolling hills that were just perfect and far from everyone else. One day, however, a party of humans arrived in the vicinity of ElySION Mormoops. Carrying all of the implements and tools they would need to settle down, if they chose to, they were initially ignored by the Gnomes of Mormoops. Their biggest mistake...as the humans who were noodling around topside did, in fact, decide to settle down right next

to the ElySION. A campaign of prankish terror for decades did nothing to dissuade these humans from their decision and in a human generation, a town of nearly 5,000 had emerged, disastrously, as far as ElySION Mormoops was concerned. Unwilling to move and unable to drive the humans away, they settled into a cagey co-existence with the town, which the humans named Oberon. Two hundred years ago, for reasons that the Mormoops Gnomes still don't understand, all contact between them and Kamloops ended and the arcane railway failed. Fifty years after that, another settlement wave began in Oberon, driving its population closer to 40,000 and completely surrounding the ElySION inside the borders of the human city. Because of the ongoing campaign of psychic terror waged by the Mormoops Gnomes against Oberon, they have been able to continue their Gnomish lives undisturbed. Mastered by their fears but also unwilling to move, the human community of Oberon built a huge wall around the Gnomes' ancient hills. They call this wall the Wardlock and guard its towers assiduously. The stories of the Oberonians are filled with fairytales of wicked, gnarled creatures stealing food, goods or even children. Oberonians rarely if ever breach the Wardlock and stay clear of these hills. The Gnomes of ElySION Mormoops, however, have a secret entrance into practically every home in Oberon and make extensive use of them. No official contact, of course, but there are a handful of humans in the city who have met the Gnomes. They keep this knowledge a secret. Revealing that you have contact with the “*little terror demons*” generally relegates one to the sort of company one might encounter in an asylum. ElySION Mormoops has figured out how to coexist with the humans and, at least to an extent, vice versa. The Gnomes' biggest question is a simple one: what happened to their fellow Gnomes two centuries ago?

The Folkways of ElySION Mormoops

Environment Ways Mormoops

Topography	ElySION Mormoops has three distinct topographical features, which they call “ <i>topside,</i> ” “ <i>Amthesta</i> ” and “ <i>The Under Reach.</i> ” Topside describes all of those areas that are actually on the surface of the earth: the rolling hills surrounded by the Wardlock, which they only visit while wearing invisibility cloaks or other cloaking gear. The Gnomes also use this term to describe the complex system of tunnels and infiltrations they have made into the homes and public buildings of Oberon. Amthesta is the Gnomish word for a fireplace or hearth. It describes the built, underground environment that stretches more than six miles underneath Oberon and the surrounding countryside. The former location of the Kamloops Railway and all of the excavations they are doing deeper than Amthesta is described by the term The Under Reach. Nearly all Gnomes spend time Topside or in Amthesta. Only certain Gnomes have an interest in The Under Reach.
Water	Water is plentiful in ElySION Mormoops. A half-dozen springs provide water for the entire city and could comfortably support a population five times larger.
Ecosystem	Because the Gnomes live almost entirely underground, the ecosystem is more cavern-like than they would, strictly speaking, prefer. The climate is mild. The rock is easily mined and tunnelled. But it does not allow for the kind of foodways that the first settlers preferred. They have had to adapt their diets to the realities of living underground. Delicacies like cakes and vegetables are “ <i>harvested</i> ” from the homes of Oberon.
Weather	Nothing to speak of. Topside's weather features four seasons with a comparatively long summer, brief springs and autumns and a relatively short but ferociously unpleasant winter.

Urban Ways Mormoops

Permanence	The Gnomes are a people who favor long-term dwellings and a settled lifestyle. The closer a home is to the center of the Amthesta, the more desirable it is. The Mormoopians are inveterate collectors who throw nothing away. Permanence is the least of their problems. Near crushing clutter, however, is.
Configuration	ElySION Mormoops isn't hierarchical in any way and this is reflected in the layout and design of their city. Hodgepodge is a word that comes to mind. Disorderly fits the bill as well. There are streets, at least after a fashion, and eight "squares" that serve as gathering places. Two of these squares abut each other in the oldest part of the ElySION. The other six occur about once every mile or thereabouts.
Aesthetics	While disorderly, a Gnome's residence is clean and very well appointed. There's an affinity for secret doors and hidden chambers that is at the heart of every Gnomes' personality...and present in just about every Gnomes' home. There's plenty of room for laboratory space, research rooms, libraries and storage in every home.
Stratification	ElySION Mormoops doesn't reflect any kind of social stratification that would be understandable to a non-Gnome. At its most basic, the longer one has been in the community, the more prestige one has earned. Gnomes with higher prestige get access to the homes nearest to the center of the Amthesta. These homes are large, well-appointed and, in and of themselves, have prestige. Prestige is a social status that is earned by a Gnome as he or she conducts his or her business.

Family Ways Mormoops

Reach	Because Gnomes live so long (<i>in the three hundred year range, or about 12 human generations</i>), family ties are not considered very important. Because ElySION Mormoops is relatively small (<i>both in size and population</i>), everyone knows their own family relationships as well as those of every other Gnome. Because of their Marriage, Lifespan and Sexuality Ways, family is even more marginal. The only real reason Gnomes pay any attention to family is to avoid the incest taboo. Otherwise, they wouldn't care at all.
Relationship	Gnomish family life makes no distinction between close family and distant family. It's all the same—not especially important. Gnomes interested in bringing children into the world would avoid anyone closer than a second cousin. Gnomes do not expect any help or assistance from anyone in their family. There is no warfare or socially disruptive violence between Gnomes in ElySION Mormoops so there is no need for one to seek out clans or tribes. Competition is entirely based on cleverness.
Authority	Elders have no power to compel anything in ElySION Mormoops. In fact, the older a Gnome is, generally speaking, the less authority they have over other Gnomes who are looking to enhance their own prestige.
Idealization	The ideal family for a Gnome is one that doesn't make itself known in any way and makes no claims on the individual Gnome.

Marriage Ways Mormoops

Authority	The Gnomes of ElySION Mormoops do not marry and never have. There are no conventions of marriage; long-term relationships, while not unheard of, are rare in Mormoopian society. Even the longest-term relationships impose no responsibilities, divide no authority and have no bearing on the way the individual Gnome is regarded.
Inheritance	As there is no marriage, there are no inheritance practices based on marriage. Gnomish law and practice recognizes last wills and testaments that have been sworn before a Censor. The property of a Gnome who dies intestate is auctioned by a Censor ninety days after the Gnome's death (<i>allowing sufficient time for the preparation of a property catalog</i>). Proceeds from this sort of auction is the only way, other than a levy, that ElySION Mormoops generates revenue.
Legitimacy	Best understood not as Marriage Ways but as Sexuality Ways, it would be considered unseemly for a Gnome to have children with anyone closer than a second cousin. Having said that, there are no laws forbidding it.
Love	Irrelevant.

Lifespan Ways Mormoops

Infancy and Childhood	The act of bringing a child into the world is never an accident among the Gnomes. Gnomes have a very short childhood (<i>particularly considering their long lifespan</i>) and almost no period of infancy, at least as it would be understood by other races. Gnomes attain adulthood at the chronological age of seven. During infancy and childhood, Gnome children are taught Gnome traditions and history and are exposed to the “ <i>Five Customs</i> ”—the five traditional ways in which Gnome adults make their way in the world. The Five Customs are: Seeker, Tinker, Reacher, Caviller and Plasticus. Traditionally a Gnome infant (<i>newborn to age 2</i>) lives with its mother. From ages 3-4, the child lives with its father. The five-year old Gnome moves back and forth between its mother’s and father’s residence until the child is an adult, at which point the new adult is given resources sufficient to establish a small holding in the most distant “ <i>suburb</i> ” far from the Amthesta and sent forth.
Adulthood	Gnome adults devote their lives to their interests as established at their transition to adulthood. The most closely formed relationships are generally with Gnomes who follow a similar Custom. Sometimes these relationships last centuries. Gnomes have the capacity to form deep, sustaining relationships but don’t always do so as they are almost always fundamentally more interested in objects and things than in people.
Elderhood	Elderhood isn’t a concept that translates easily into the Gnome experience. Adulthood is prolonged almost until the very end of life without noticeable change in look, mood or affect. At end of life, a Gnome will discern a marked decrease in energy and vitality. This lets the Gnome know that it is time to get one’s affairs in order. A Gnome is capable of inducing their own death. If he or she doesn’t, however, they will pass away within weeks of the beginning of their decline.
Transitions	Gnomes are not remotely moved to emotion at the death of another Gnome. Upon death, the Censor will ensure that the dead Gnome has, in fact, died. The Censor will consult the records and, in the event of a valid last will and testament, will distribute the decedent’s property in accordance with the will. An intestate Gnome’s property is auctioned. The bodies of the dead are fed into The Rotary, a great spinning clockwork device in the center of the Amthesta whose purpose is known only to the Censor.

Rank Ways Mormoops

Nobility	Among the Mormoops Gnomes, nothing provides more cachet than what they call “prestige.” This ineffable characteristic is based on what the individual Gnome has achieved in their life based on unwritten standards truly knowable only to other Gnomes. These standards derive in part from a Gnome’s Custom, but also from the achievements of other Gnomes of similar age, temperament and skills. “An endless scale of gray” would be the best way to describe prestige. It’s easy to discern who is a hundred steps ahead of you or behind you, but impossible to get greater clarity. Every Gnome knows who is “nearby” and competition between these individuals is fierce. No one wants to be passed by “lowers.”
Mobiity	Social mobility is the central defining characteristic of Elysion Mormoops. There is nothing that would keep an exceptionally clever and lucky ten-year-old from having more prestige than a Gnome twenty times his age.
Exclusivity	Prestige matters to Gnomes because it confers all manner of social status and wealth. It gives one access to better property, more money, more access and more envy. All of these things can be parlayed by the clever Gnome into even greater prestige. A low prestige Gnome is going to live in a small home far from the center of town and the best labs and libraries. A high prestige Gnome will live on the main square in a mansion with the best equipment and a host of low-prestige Gnomes who, as hangers-on, toadies and lackeys, will attempt to use their superior’s status to achieve their own objectives.
Coercion	There are no coercive, official forces at work reinforcing Rank Ways in Mormoops society. Rather, the Gnomes’ own habits and culture serve to endlessly clarify and reify the social pecking order.

Gender and Sexuality Ways Mormoops

Definitions	The Mormoops Gnomes have physical, biological sexes only when they have made the decision to procreate and parent. Upon deciding to procreate, one partner undergoes transition to take on female characteristics and the other partner becomes male. These partners retain their femaleness and maleness during their child's childhood. Upon their child's accession to adulthood, both parents rapidly reacquire their genderless characteristics, usually within days. This is not biological in nature, rather, it is a conscious decision by the Gnome.
Norms	The Gnomes are not ones to establish or obey social norms, nor are they especially sexual beings. Having said that, the majority of Gnomes have at least two children in their three centuries of life and experience being both female and male at least once. To the extent that there is a norm, this would be it.
Non-Normative Patterns	Gnomes are more interested in objects, learning, fiddling, storytelling and pranking than they are in raising children or making families. Gnomes that enjoy raising children or who have a strong sexual identity are quite rare and, while they are no laws that condemn them, they are regarded as surpassingly weird by their fellow Gnomes. Gnomes with more than four children are vanishingly rare (<i>less than 2% of the population</i>). Gnomes that maintain the same sexual role as a parent are likewise nearly unheard of. Gnomes that choose to acquire biological gender outside of a decision to procreate and parent or who do not reacquire their neutral gender are viewed as exceptionally odd by their fellow Gnomes.
Relations	As nearly all Gnomes have no gender, there are no special ways in which they relate to each other. Sometimes, Gnomes who are parenting will seek advice from another Gnome or from their own parent, but generally not.

Association Ways Mormoops

Distance	Gnomes favor individual pursuits over group ones. Having said that, when they want to be together with other Gnomes, they gravitate at once to other Gnomes who share their Custom. Gnomish "adventuring parties" are almost always a half-dozen Gnomes who have the same Custom who are working together to achieve some kind of goal that drives each individual but which can't easily be accomplished alone. Jealousy, envy, rivalry and past history complicates these relationships in all cases and sometimes to a fatal degree. Gnomes never feel like they owe anything to any other Gnome. In this way they're mercenaries.
Fraternity	Each Custom might be best understood as a kind of loosely-bound association. Seekers are Gnomes most interested in Oberon and human culture. They are the ones most likely to be Topside. They love exploring human homes and bringing human goodies back to the Elysion. The Tinkers make things and fix things. They are the pranksters, fireworks-makers, toymakers and mayhem-causers in the Elysion. Reachers used to be the ones who traveled the Kamloops Railway and engaged in trade. Now, the Reachers are attracted to developing deeper arcane knowledge. They are the most capable magicians of all of the Gnomes. The Caviller Custom embraces Gnomes who value storytelling, wisdom and knowledge for its own sake. Cavillers love to assemble massive libraries and will go to any end to acquire a book or scroll of interest to them. They would be magicians of the same skill as the Reachers if only they weren't endlessly distracted by some new book or tome. The Plasticus Custom is for those young Gnomes who don't really fit into one of the other Customs. These are the ones who might be encountered far from home on a long journey. They are the ones who would be in an adventuring party with non-Gnomes. Their motivations are sometimes hard or impossible for other Gnomes to understand.
Guild	All tendencies towards sociality, mutual obligation or communalism are weak or non-existent among Gnomes. This is true of Customs as well. A Gnome would feel no more obligation to assist their own child than they would to help a fellow Seeker. If there's something that both advances a Gnome's individual goals or agenda and helps someone else, that would be different.
Obligation	Being part of a Custom doesn't obligate the Gnome to any particular behavior, clothing or what have you. Rather, the way that Gnome gravitates to particular interests will be crystal clear to all other Gnomes because their behavior so clearly mirrors their Custom. It would take a Gnome between 10 seconds and two minutes to determine another Gnome's Custom. 95 times out of 100, that determination would be right.

Order Ways Mormoops

Sphere	There is very little social control exerted officially in Mormoops society. Rather, the operation of ever-shifting prestige has the greatest influence over Gnomes and their behavior. Making decisions that decrease one's prestige are only taken advisedly by Gnomes. These decisions would include over-parenting, having too many children, giving away secrets, traveling far from home for no clear reason and so forth.
Joining	There are no ordering institutions sufficiently powerful in Elysion Mormoops to do any sort of enforcing. Having said that, the desire to have prestige is very powerful and acts as a kind of ordering system in and of itself.
Tenacity	Prestige is eternal and deeply influential. But there is no one person or office in society keeping a leaderboard. Everyone keeps their own and, almost without exception, each person knows, more or less, where they rank.
Presence	The only offices of Elysion Mormoops are the Magister and the Censor. Neither one is particularly powerful except under very particular or peculiar circumstances. What keeps the society of the Elysion on steady, level footing is that most individuals don't expect much from the society, society doesn't need to provide much in way of defense because there's very little social strife and prestige is damaged by being a pain in the ass.

Authority Ways Mormoops

Legitimacy	Power, such as it is, is wielded by two individuals—the Magister and the Censor. These two individuals are selected by the Meeting—the annual gathering of all Gnomes (<i>or at least all interested Gnomes</i>) to conduct their collective business. The Magister is elected yearly. The Censor, every ten years.
Power	There is no real tradition in Elysion Mormoops for a Magister to wield power. They are administrators with access to the treasury who might sometimes be asked by the Meeting to carry out a particular task or manage a process. The Censor, by contrast, has a great deal of power. He validates last wills and thus ensures the redistribution of property, wealth and materiel. He conducts the auctions of the dead. A successful term as Censor is highly advantageous to prestige.
Authority	The Magister is, nominally, the leader of Elysion Mormoops. The only formal responsibility the Magister has is to convene the Meeting at the end of his term. The Meeting is the yearly opportunity for the Gnomes of Elysion Mormoops to meet together to discuss their collective business and to decide to take a collective action. If there's a need for money for some common purpose, a levy could be voted at the Meeting. Money in the collective treasury is spent by order of the Meeting. The Magister is only allowed to spend 2% of the treasury under his own authority. Failure to conform brings loss of prestige. The Magister might be tasked with other duties, but their only formal responsibility is convening the Meeting and presiding over the election of his successor. There is no formal obstacle to a Magister serving more than one term. No Gnome has wanted to do so in more than a century. The Censor wields his authority through subterfuge and guile. Overseeing legal contracts and legal precedents and being empowered to arbitrate gives the Censor legitimate power.
Participation	Authority is a notion that most Gnomes view as alien to the fundamental nature of Gnomes. It's a human concept that rightly has very little impact on the day-to-day lives of Gnomes. The fact that their own system of prestige influences every single decision a Gnome takes is entirely lost on them, as prestige is enforced by each Gnome against himself, rather than by the collective.

Freedom Ways Mormoops

Freedom	Gnomes who live in ElySION Mormoops have every conceivable personal freedom and are welcome to act, speak, behave and think as they please. They can pursue their research, their magic training, their passions and any other interests to their heart's content. All of this aligns with their desire for prestige, of course. Being caught acting against another Gnome's interests brings loss of prestige and potentially a claim before a Censor for arbitration. Violent action against another Gnome automatically triggers arbitration.
Liberty	Collective responsibility is an almost alien concept to the Mormoops Gnomes. Most Gnomes want to be left alone to do what interests them. They want to spend time with their small group of friends and associates planning, tinkering, puzzle-solving, researching and the like. Their society exemplifies the Golden Rule—do to others as you would have them do to you. In this case, the expectation is <i>"I'll leave you be if you leave me be."</i>
Binding	Because there is so little upon which the Gnomes enforce collective decision making, a Gnome who failed to comply with the decision of a Censor is essentially a pariah or outcast. It happens so rarely that society has no formal process for dealing with it. Because so many people depend on a Censor for truly life-critical decisions, a Censor whose order was ignored would be able to bring hundreds of Gnomes onto his side for assistance (<i>each of these Gnomes gaining prestige for their assistance</i>). The cost of ignoring a Censor, therefore, is so high that no sensible Gnome would ignore it.
Directionality	Individuals are allowed, more or less, to do anything. The Magister and the Censor, by contrast, are only allowed to perform the very limited duties assigned to them. There is no mechanism in society by which a renegade Magister could suddenly acquire radical new powers. The Meeting would have to authorize it and that would mean, essentially, that the society had decided to evolve into something else.

Wealth Ways Mormoops

Objectification	Metal itself has little value to the Gnomes of ElySION Mormoops. Rather, their economy is founded on two media of exchange—emeralds, which are mined in the Under Reach and processed by skilled Tinkers and information, whose value depends on the beliefs of the buyers and sellers. A new spell formulation, a way of constructing a gear, machines that make other machines, a calculating tool...all of these could be very valuable to the right Gnome. The Gnomes of ElySION Mormoops engaged in trade until the Kamloops Railway failed but no longer do.
Status	Wealth doesn't confer status in this society. Rather, prestige does. Prestige is sometimes influenced by wealth, but generally isn't. Wealth for a Plasticus is particularly important as it allows for travel far from home, but it doesn't confer any higher prestige by itself.
Gift-giving	Barbarism.
Reciprocity	No notions of reciprocity exist; wealth is one of the weakest shapers of the culture of ElySION Mormoops.

Work Ways Mormoops

Subsistence	Food and water are easily attainable and essentially limitless throughout ElySION Mormoops. For this reason, work is always directed towards one's Custom and interests. There is no subsistence farming (<i>or indeed farming or husbandry of any kind</i>) in the ElySION.
Feudality	This concept has no purchase among the Gnomes.
Ethic	Gnomes are fanatical in their work, provided it is work that interests them. They can drill down into the most obscure levels of detail if they care enough. They could devote years of study to a single spell, obscure historical figure, engineering technique or Oberonian family if they were thus called. Plasticus Custom Gnomes have been known to travel for over a century questing for a particular plant or story and to return home as if a week had passed. Gnomes are always, always working and if they aren't, they wish they were.
Slavery	Not practiced.

Leisure Ways Mormoops

Leisureliness	It isn't much of a stretch to say that Mormoops society is all about leisure. As there is no need to work to live, all of the work effort of the society is, essentially, leisurely. It is, at least, in the service of interests and Customs rather than need. Hence, what one Gnome might see as tedious (<i>exploring a neighborhood in Oberon</i>) another would see as a fascinating game.
Competitiveness	If they tried to deny their competitiveness, a knowledgeable outsider would laugh. This is the core of the entire culture! Prestige is little more than a leaderboard for a society-spanning game that has no value except the intrinsic value of being better than everyone else.
Athletics	Seekers and Plasticus are the most athletic of the gnomes. None of the Customs, though, are especially athletic. There are no sporting traditions among the Mormoops.
Diversions	By contrast, there isn't a Gnome in the entire city who doesn't love games or other clever, intelligent diversions. Gnomes of a certain ilk are capable of spending lavish amounts of time and attention on their crafts, interests and games. It isn't unheard of for Caviller Gnomes to spend more than half their time on these kinds of pursuits.

Dress Ways Mormoops

Practicality	Practical isn't really the right word to describe the dress practices of the Mormoops Gnomes. Erratic would be better. Impractical isn't incorrect. Unusual would also do. Gnomes of ElySION Mormoops do not care all that much about fashion and dress. As a result, they rarely have socks or even shoes that match. It wouldn't occur to them that herringbone, paisley and check generally don't work together. A Mormoopian Gnome at a fancy dress party would be impossible to miss.
Status	Dress confers no status.
Jewelry	Jewelry is popular among an older generation of Mormoops Gnomes, but less so among those under 100 years of age. Bracelets in particular seem to fascinate the older generation. Sometimes they wear so many bracelets that they run almost to the elbow.
Body Modification	An occasional body piercing here or there isn't unheard of, but this isn't really a Gnomish practice.

Food and Drink Ways Mormoops

Locavore	The food traditions of ElySION Mormoops reflect a disinterest in social life combined with plenty along with a persistent strand of vulgar excess. The mainstays of Gnomish cuisine are an assortment of fungi that grow without cultivation throughout the ElySION. They are combined with ample and abundant stores of fish that live in the underground rivers and ponds that are found throughout the city. Many Gnomes enjoy human delicacies that are only available if purloined from Oberon. There's a rich trade in cakes, cookies, casseroles and bread from the surface to the ElySION.
Status	There is no relationship between foods and status in ElySION Mormoops.
Embellishment	Gnomes love, love, love sugary foods and they put honey in everything. They regularly raid Oberon's beet fields (<i>usually taking more than half of the yearly crop</i>) and boil them down for their sugars as well. The Gnomes don't realize that the different fungi that they harvest would fetch an unbelievable price in Oberon or anywhere else in the Landover Imperium.
Technique	The Gnomes boil and poach nearly everything—the better to infuse their foods with the sugar they love.

Language Ways Mormoops

Dialect	There is one language in use in ElySION Mormoops—Hraj—the Gnomish language. The people of ElySION Kamloops also speak, or at least spoke, Hraj. Frightfully complex, Hraj has thirteen cases for nouns, four grammatical genders, seventeen different tenses and six verbal moods.
Majority	All Gnomes speak Hraj.
Pidgins	There are no pidgins in use in ElySION Mormoops. Some Gnomes have learned how to speak the human language in use in Oberon and most Gnomes can read at least three languages, owing to their interest in research and text study.
Naming	All Gnomes have three names. The first name is taken by the Gnome himself when he becomes an adult at age 7. The second name is the name of an ancestor who the Gnome's parents think might inform their child's path in life. The third name is a combination of the Gnome's mother's and father's names.

Magic Ways Mormoops

Value	Magic is highly praised and valued among the Gnomes. In fact, there is probably nothing else that has a higher value. New spells fetch a premium price on the information markets. Of all of the lines of research being conducted by the Gnomes, none are more popular or enduring than those related to the Kamloops Railway. Nothing the Gnomes have done, however, has revealed the cause of the failure of the railway or given any information about the Railway. No one knows whether the people of ElySION Kamloops are still alive.
Occasion	Gnomes use all forms of magic as part of their daily lives. They use it to speed up cooking, to find valuable ore, to move about Topside without being discovered, to learn new things, to translate texts they can't otherwise read, to purify water and so forth. There's nothing that can be done that a Gnome hasn't found some way to use magic to make easier. Gnomes have sophisticated engineering skills that they meld with magic to make automata that perform many simple duties. Only the youngest or least prestigious of Gnomes doesn't have at least one automaton in their homes doing the cleaning and the cooking.
Constraint	Little constrains the Gnome from using magic. They don't use it against each other as that would trigger an arbitration hearing. They try to avoid flashy magic in the presence of humans in order to maintain their invisibility.
Instruction	Gnomes interested in learning particular kinds of magic will often find willing teachers amongst their kinfolk. As magic is so highly praised, it is considered prestigious to help train younger Gnomes. The successes of one's students enhance the prestige of the Gnome who was the teacher. Having said that, there are no "schools of magic" in ElySION Mormoops.

Supernatural Ways Mormoops

Reason	The Gnomes of ElySION Mormoops are governed almost entirely by reason. They worship nothing and have no gods. It wouldn't be too far off the mark to say that they worship information and knowledge, but worship isn't the right word. They are a passionate people when they are discussing their interests and value the search for knowledge.
Reflection	The operation of the forces of chance and randomness are of keen interest to the Mormoops Gnomes. They've never been able to figure out how these forces work no matter their level of study. They do not assign religious value to luck and chance, but they have a healthy respect for the way these irrational forces work in their society. As a result, the Gnomes have a particular love for dice, cards and games of chance. They are inveterate gamblers.
Ritual	These practices are outside the experience of a typical Gnome.
Soul	As Gnomes do not have a religion, the "inner spiritual lives" of Gnomes are, essentially, non-existent.

Self-reflection Ways

Individual Gnomes are occasionally self-reflective, but their society is almost pathologically unable to engage in self-reflection. There are simply no institutions in ElySION Mormoops to encourage self-reflection. The Meeting isn't designed for these purposes either. Anyone who brought a motion of this kind before the Meeting would be laughed out of the city. Having said that, there is a big, black cloud

that hangs over the whole city—ElySION Kamloops and the failure of the Railway. Many, many Gnomes in Mormoops believe that long ago they did something...something...that destroyed the Railway and perhaps ElySION Kamloops itself. If there were institutions that encouraged them to think about their past behavior they might get closer to an answer. As it is, hundreds of Gnomes are at work individually on this effort.

5 New Races



HARP Fantasy offers the player six playable races: Humans, Dwarves, Elves, Gnomes, Halflings and Gryx. The core rules also provide ways to create a character who is of mixed blood. In this chapter you will have an opportunity to explore and encounter eleven races entirely new to **HARP Fantasy**.

Racial Descriptions

All racial descriptions include the following information:

Demeanor: Noting only the general outlook of the majority of the race, it is important to realize that not every individual will conform. For instance, those who stray from the norm generally end up becoming adventurers!

Appearance: Offers a mental sketch of what a typical member of the race looks like. All races have individuals that span the ranges of hair, eye and skin color.

Lifespan: The average lifespan for members of the race.

Culture: Although a character may hail from any culture, each race also lists one or more default cultures. These listed cultures represent only the most common backgrounds of the race.

“Twenty Questions:” Offers an illustrative answer to one of the twenty questions to illuminate something unique or peculiar to the way that race considers itself or others or how it structures its society.

Special Abilities: Any particular abilities of note that differentiate the race from other races.

Amarvish

Demeanor: The Amarvish are an open-minded but clannish, proud, spiritual race whose racial mindset, mood and outlook is largely governed by the seasons of the year. In Spring, Amarvish are optimistic, frolicsome, interested in meeting new people, prone to exploration and discovery and least interested in making war. In Summer, Amarvish are more family and home oriented. They desire to wander with their kinfolk, learning new skills, practicing old ones and engaging in trade with other cultures. As the Amarvish do not farm, this is the season when they do their most vigorous trade. In Autumn, the Amarvish become more reflective, less prone to discovery and meeting new people and more interested in spiritual pursuits. The Amarvish believe that they were created on the High Plains on the day of the Autumnal Equinox, which is their greatest holiday, calling for a week of celebration and dancing. If there is to be war, the Amarvish are most likely to begin it and sustain it in Winter.

Because of the influence of the seasons, Amarvish clans do not have a single leader throughout the year. Rather, there are four leaders, one for each season. Generally, the Spring seasonal leader is going to be a Harper or Rogue. The Summer leader a Monk or Cleric. The Autumn leader is a Cleric, Mage or Ranger. The Winter leader is a Fighter, Monk or Warrior Mage.

Once an Amarvish has befriended you, there is very little short of open betrayal on your part that will break that friendship. They are deeply committed to their friends, have little to no racial animosity or jealousy and are inclined to respect everyone they meet at first pass. They are a curious people (*particularly in Spring*), but not especially effusive. They are usually not the first to speak around a campfire and they prefer to reserve their counsel unless asked. To others,

Table 5.1 Racial Characteristics

Race	Racial Stat Modifiers								Endurance	Power Pts	Resistance Bonuses		
	St	Co	Ag	Qu	SD	Re	In	Pr			Stamina	Will	Magic
Amarvish	+3	+4	+0	+3	+0	+0	+0	+1	35	25	+20	+5	+5
Bentaxa	+1	+2	+2	+0	+2	+1	+0	+3	25	35	+5	+15	+10
Faleeka	+0	+0	+3	+3	+1	+0	+3	+1	20	40	+5	+10	+15
Gordaz	+1	+2	+4	+4	+0	+0	+0	+0	35	25	+15	+5	+10
Hehn	+4	+4	+1	+2	+0	+0	+0	+0	40	20	+15	+10	+5
Kenra	+2	+0	+3	+3	+0	+0	+2	+1	35	25	+10	+10	+10
Menomonee	+0	+2	+2	+2	+0	+1	+2	+2	25	35	+10	+5	+15
Navrothor	+4	+4	+0	+0	+0	+0	+0	+1	45	15	+20	+5	+5
Queequayth	+*	+*	+*	+*	+*	+*	+*	+*	30	30	+10	+10	+10
Tomalak	+0	+0	+2	+3	+0	+0	+3	+3	30	30	+5	+15	+10
Vengha	+2	+4	+0	+0	+4	+1	+0	+0	40	20	+10	+15	+5

* Queequayth, like humans, do not have fixed racial bonuses. Players of a Queequayth character have 8 points to divide any way they like between the 8 racial stat bonuses. No stat may have a bonus greater than +3.



they seem to be more governed by reason than faith, but no Amarvish would agree with that formulation. They see the cycle of life in each season and in each year and honor it in the way they live.

The Amarvish do not write. Rather, there are specialized Ah'lehandabar (*Amarvish: speakers of stories*) who ride with each kin group and have access to that group's longterm memory. The ah'lehandabar all speak the Amarvish language, but when they speak to each other (*at the Moot, a meeting of the Amarvish clans every three years*), they speak in their own language, sharing their stories with the other ah'lehandabar and preserving the integrity of the culture.

Pace	Time Increment
Walk	Indefinite, provided a CON above 25. The Amarvish endurance record is 5 days continuous walking without sleep. Amarvish with a CON below 25 have a 1 hour per point of Con Bonus pace.
Run	30 minutes per point of Con Bonus
Fast Run	5 minutes per point of Con Bonus
Sprint	2 minutes per point of Con Bonus
Dash	1 minute per point of Con Bonus

Appearance: Amarvish resemble the Minotaur of Greek legend, which is to say, they have a bovine, horned head atop the same sort of body plan of the other **HARP** races. While all body shapes are possible, the Amarvish tend to be well-muscled but very lean (*more like a long-distance runner's build*). Amarvish males stand between 6' and 8' in height with females much more likely to be 7' or below than the males. Most Amarvish take great pride in their horns. Some cultures will tattoo them, others might carve elaborate patterns in them. Still others leave them completely natural, but will decorate them with banners or streamers to mark the seasons.

Lifespan: Amarvish live a natural lifespan of between 80 and 100 years and come to maturity between ages 12 and 14.

Culture: Amarvish are the very definition of a people drawn to the Nomadic culture. They are also comfortable in the Borderlands and Coastal cultures. It is the rare Amarvish indeed who would want anything to do with the Deep Warrens. Redistribute own language written ranks to own language spoken ranks and other language ranks.

"Twenty Questions:" Family Ways (*Idealization*): The Amarvish are deeply governed by the seasons, and this is no different with the way they experience their families and family life. In Spring, Amarvish families are joyous and curious places of laughter and fun. In Summer, there's a sense of common purpose and intention. Joyousness is still a feature, but that pleasure is bent towards the family goals. Autumn becomes more about honoring the brave and the elderly and Winter is about service.

Special Abilities

Blazing Speed: The Amarvish are an exceptionally fast race, affording them a bonus of +5 to their Base Movement Rate.

Hardiness: Because of their endurance, use the following Pace chart for Amarvish characters:

Natural Weapon: In extremis, the Amarvish will use its horns in close quarters combat and can make Small Puncture attacks using a learned Martial Arts skill.

Bentaxa

Demeanor: Befitting the fact that the Bentaxa are one of the oldest sentient races known to exist (*and their own storytellers reinforce this racial history*), the Bentaxa are exceptionally proud and possess a great deal of cultural self-confidence. To non-Bentaxa, this pride frequently reads as aloof arrogance or worse as condescension. Unfortunately for Bentaxan political history, while the Bentaxa generally consider themselves superior to "inferior" races, they take even more pride in showing that they're better (*in whatever way that matters*) than other Bentaxa. As a result, the Bentaxa have never been able to form a polity that holds sway over greater territory than a city-state at any point in their history. Even when their belief system might have led them to want to form empires, the capacity to come together and carry out that agenda was

simply beyond them. These city-states are in a nearly constant state of squabbling disagreement. All-out war is regrettably common. Despite this tendency to endless, petty disputation at home, when in foreign cities and cultures, Bentaxa can sometimes come across as clannish as Bentaxa will gravitate to other Bentaxa. They are arrogantly self confident, sometimes unbearably so. They sometimes don't get along well with others. While these qualities are widespread among the Bentaxa, there are plenty of Bentaxa for whom this attitude is sometimes subtle enough to be read merely as confidence. It helps that Bentaxa are deeply committed to their field of interest and study. Their confidence or arrogance is based on something—a strong commitment to personal training. They are ferociously disciplined and have little patience for frivolousness.

The Bentaxa have a complex spirituality with more than 65 different gods. These gods influence different days and weeks within the Bentaxa spiritual calendar. Each day has four different gods in relationship with each other. Each of the gods is said to be either “*in superior*,” “*in inferior*,” “*in ascending*” or “*in reaching*” with respect to the other gods. This relationship of superiority/inferiority/ascendingness/reachingness gives meaning and context to all of the days of a Bentaxa life. These relationships are almost entirely beyond the scope of anyone other than a Bentaxa to figure out. For the Bentaxa, they are simple.

Appearance: The Bentaxa are a bipedal race resembling dragonkind. Their scales come in six color schemes: red, gold, green, blue, silver and black. All of these color schemes

can be mixed with other colors. It's not at all uncommon for a primarily silver Bentaxa to have black and gold scales, for instance. Perfectly normal. The Bentaxa do not make any distinction between these color schemes. As far as the Bentaxa are concerned, the differences in philosophy, language, taste and city are far more important than any apparent color difference. They stand between 6 and 7 feet tall generally, with female Bentaxa standing 2-3 inches taller than the men generally. They are wide-shouldered and well-built. They are entirely hairless.

Lifespan: Bentaxa generally live about 250 years, coming into their maturity around the age of 20. Rarely, a member of the species might live to 400 years.

Culture: Bentaxa city-states can be found in Shallow Warrens, Underhill, Borderlands and Coastal cultures, but they have a strong preference for the Sylvan culture (60% of Bentaxa cities exist in the Sylvan culture).

“Twenty Questions:” Authority Ways (*Legitimacy*): Because the Bentaxa so deeply value skillfulness in themselves, they can't remotely stomach the idea of being led by someone who isn't at least as skillful as they see themselves. This leads to occasionally wild fluctuations in leadership in each of the Bentaxan city-states. The Bentaxa city-states are almost always ruled by a strongman who, by virtue of some particular skill (*public speaking, arms, magic, whatever, really*) has convinced others that he or she should rule. In the ancient history of the Bentaxa, there has never been an emperor. Never a king. The longest recorded rule by a Bentaxa over their city-state is twelve years. Legitimacy derives entirely and completely from skillfulness and from what the other Bentaxa in the city value. Once that changes, legitimacy changes.

Special Abilities

Bonus Skill Ranks: Bentaxa value learning and drive their children to learn at an early age. This training affords Bentaxa characters a one time bonus of 5 skill ranks, which may be spent on skills found in any of the character's Favored Categories (*see HARP: Fantasy, chapter 3 for details on Favored Categories*).

Imbued with Element: Bentaxa have elemental affinities based on the color of their scales. Red and gold Bentaxa are Imbued with Fire. Blue and green Bentaxa are Imbued with Water. Silver Bentaxa are Imbued with Air and Black Bentaxa are Imbued with Earth. Bentaxa receive a +20 bonus to DB and all RRs against magic of their affinity and a +10 bonus to the casting rolls of elemental spells in their affinity.

Tough Hide (Lesser): Because the Bentaxa have scales, they gain a +10 DB.





Faleeka

Demeanor: The Faleeka are among the most social and gregarious of races. More playful than the Amarvish, more convivial than halflings and more generous than almost any other race, once a Faleeka has decided that you are friendly (*or at least not overtly hostile*), they would give you the feathers off their back. Faleeka detest spending time alone, much preferring the company of family and friends. They are devoted to friends; their commitment to family is enduring. The typical social group size for a Faleeka to feel really comfortable is six to nine. More is just fine! It is the rare Faleeka who wants to spend time alone. Faleeka do not consider this a problem or an illness. Rather, they just don't understand why someone would want this! Faleeka are confident and enthusiastic adventurers, as this gives them the opportunity to meet lots of new people. Moreover, curiosity is a core quality of all Faleeka. They want to know everything and will do almost any kind of work to get to the bottom of a question that they care about. If they think you know something, they will badger you like nobody's business until you tell them. Famously inventive, individual Faleeka have been known to devise all sorts of strategies for escaping the traps, props and snares that are the great bane of most adventurers.

Faleeka are keen collectors and are skilled assessors of value, many developing specialist skills and talents in appraisal. Their sense of beauty is singular. They are particularly keen on crafting and collecting jewelry and glass. Faleeka glass is often times sufficiently valuable that it replaces currency or other gems in trade.

Appearance: Faleeka are bipedal descendants of a race of intelligent parrots that filled an ecological niche encouraging the growth of intelligence. They stand 4 feet tall and continue to resemble their ancestors. They have richly colored feathers, favoring blue and green. When in flight, their underwing feathers can be seen and they are orange, yellow or red, depending on the age and gender of the Faleeka in question. There is little to distinguish male and female. Faleeka beaks can do significant damage, as can their talons.

Lifespan: Faleeka live between 60 and 80 years. Faleeka attain maturity at age 8.

Culture: Faleeka strongly favor the Aerial culture, but their settlements are sometimes found in Coastal or Underhill contexts.

“Twenty Questions:” Wealth (*Gift Giving*): Nothing is quite as important in cementing the complex relationships that mean so much to a Faleeka as gift giving. The culture of gift giving follows laws established by the legendary founders of the Faleeka people (*Arixa and Jaro—the first couple*), whose 1000-day courtship teaches all Faleeka how to live productive, rich and meaningful lives. Each of the thousand days is associated with a particular gift or series of gifts. As a result, friends, colleagues, lovers, newlyweds and others have excellent examples of meaningful gifts to mark almost any occasion. Faleeka will spend significant time to select meaningful gifts for those they value. A Faleeka always remembers the gifts they've given and been given.

Special Abilities

Flight: As the Faleeka descend from avian stock, they have the capacity for flight. Their Base Flight Rate (*BFR*) is twice their Base Movement Rate and Pace Modifiers apply normally. Flight is extremely tiring, so Faleeka may only stay aloft a maximum number of hours equal to their total Constitution bonus. For each encumbrance level above Light, their BFR is reduced by half, and so is the amount of time they may stay aloft (*i.e. Medium encumbrance = one-half normal BFR and time aloft. Heavy encumbrance = one-quarter BFR and time aloft*). Faleeka gain a bonus of +50 to the Flying/Gliding skill.

Multiple/Peripheral Eyes [Lesser]: A Faleeka's eyes are spread far to the sides. Foes do not receive any flank bonuses when attacking the character (*unless the character is*

surprised). The bonus for Rear attacks is reduced from +20 to +10. All Faleeka make Perception rolls at +10.

Natural Weapons (beak): A Faleeka can use its beak as a natural weapon and can make Small Puncture attacks using a learned Martial Arts skill.

Natural Weapons (talon): A Faleeka can use its talons as a natural weapon and can make Small Slash attacks using a learned Martial Arts skill.

Racial Limitation:

Hollow Bones: Faleeka are able to fly because they have “hollow” bones. Unfortunately these are more fragile than normal bones. All Crush and Impact criticals against Faleeka have their attack size increased by 10 and any penalties relating to injuries associated with bones are doubled.

Gordaz

Demeanor: Every sentient race that comes into contact with the Gordaz has a word to describe them...and none of these words could be described as positive. The halflings (*who often compete with them for land and resources*) call them Ontourfa (*rat people*). Dwarves know them as Sheenv (*nuisance causers*). The Gryx language describes them as Binbegrix (*roughly translatable as smelly urchins*). Humans use a variety of terms to describe them with most using the halfling word Ontourfa or just cutting to the chase and calling them Ratmen. The name fits.

The Gordaz, one of the least long-lived of all sentient races, seem ever young. And as people who, even in adulthood,



have an adolescent view of the world, they are considered a terrible menace by the other races. They just don't seem to have much impulse control. Or indeed, any. They want what they want and they aren't afraid to go for it. This makes them fun (*sometimes*) to be around, but also equally exhausting, particularly to those races that are more prone to reflection and thoughtfulness. The Gordaz are not a people who write stirring literature, think deep thoughts or have a philosophy of life. To the degree that they do have a racial philosophy, it might be something like “*live now, for tomorrow we all might die.*” Or perhaps “*if you have something, and I want it, what should prevent me from taking it?*” They are a chaotic people prone to lying, cheating and stealing. Which is to say nothing for their predilections for drink, mind-altering substances and sexual appetites that, to other races, are well past perversions. They live in the moment and take great pleasure in what life has to offer. They are numerous and spread rapidly wherever they are. They do not live alongside others particularly well, as they have a poor sense of “*personal space.*” They have driven at least one city (*or province*) of every other race into ruin after encountering it. It wouldn't be fair to describe this as conquest, strictly speaking. Rather, the other race in question has selected to abandon its city or territory in the hopes of building more effective walls against the Gordaz in some other, more naturally defensible, place.

Appearance: The Gordaz are short (*about the same height as halflings*) and have mottled skin in a variety of colors. Male Gordaz and female Gordaz are about the same height, but the males are more thickly muscled and generally have some sort of facial hair (*Gordaz prefer mustaches, the more extravagantly waxed, the better*).

Lifespan: Gordaz live for about 40 years, reaching their maturity at age 7. The oldest Gordaz ever lived to 46.

Culture: Underhill, Shallow Warrens, Rural or Urban, roughly preferred in that order. When they live in an urban environment, their almost total incapacity to look forward into the future means that their cities are ramshackle at best.

Twenty Questions: Marriage (Legitimacy): Gordaz are practitioners of plural marriage. All marriages are sanctioned by clan elders who ascertain if the married couple is capable of sustaining (*financially and otherwise*) any children who might be born from the union. Gordaz have no interest in social welfare; children are the sole responsibility of parents. Gordaz women and Gordaz men might have any number of married partners. All marriages sanctioned by clan elders are valid for five years, after which the marriage is dissolved. While there are no rules preventing or encouraging remarriage, only about 20% of Gordaz ever renew a marriage contract.

Special Abilities

Superior Blazing Speed: The Gordaz are the fastest of the known races, receiving a +10 to their Base Movement Rate.

Wildly Nimble: Tricksters to a person, the Gordaz receive a special bonus of +15 to any Stalking and/or Acrobatic/Tumbling maneuvers.

Dark Vision (Lesser): Gordaz can clearly see up to 50' on a starlit night and by the light of the full moon they can see up to 250' as though it were daylight.

Hehn

Demeanor: The best way to describe the Hehn is “even-tempered.” Strongly favoring wide open plains, grasslands and country that would best be described as “Big Sky” country, the Hehn are among the most ancient of races. They walked the plains of the world ages before the major races emerged from the depths of time. This ancient racial history gives the Hehn a perspective on problems, life and continuity that other races simply don't have. It takes a great deal of effort to arouse a Hehn to passion. They respond to most things with wise, reflective rumination. They don't get angry very easily. They don't get carried away with passion. They form deep relationships with other Hehn, but these relationships take a long time to develop—sometimes decades of what another race might term courtship. Hehn have no problem forming these

kinds of relationships with other races. They are a friendly, if not especially gregarious, people. What the Hehn value most in their relationships with others is that easy camaraderie that comes from knowing someone a long time.

The Hehn are a deeply spiritual people with a complex religious system centered on the “Great Mother,” the first of her kind, the founder of the Hehn people. Six religious festivals (*two at the equinoxes, two at the solstices and two at New Year's, which occurs at first frost*) mark out the yearly calendar for the Hehn. Their religion is relatively easy for outsiders to understand, but the Hehn have no interest in admitting outsiders to the faith. The Great Mother is known for her forgiveness and kindness. This translates into a similar tendency to forgive amongst the Hehn. They reject violence unless no other resolution to a problem is available. They even reject it when they are offered it, preferring other solutions if they can be arranged. Having said that, the Hehn are physically powerful, capable warriors who will not accept violence indefinitely. They will respond. When they do, count on their response to be fierce and sufficient to eliminate the problem.

Appearance: The Hehn look like centaurs. Hehn females are physically larger than Hehn males, though both are physically imposing presences.

Lifespan: Hehn live many hundreds of years, rivaling elves in longevity. Half a millennium is not unheard of.

Culture: Nomadic or Borderlands. Hehn do not build cities, preferring to move across the plains with the ebb and flow of the seasons.

Twenty Questions: Food and Beverage Ways (Locavore): The Hehn are consummate pastoralists. They are exceptionally skilled at finding food but do not farm. Their diet is primarily but not exclusively vegetarian. They will eat fish and small animals, but reject the consumption of larger animals and ungulates on the basis that they constitute a kind of cannibalism. About the largest animal that a Hehn would eat would be a rabbit.

Special Abilities

Dense Musculature: With a sturdy bone structure and musculature, all Hehn receive a +5 bonus to both OB and DB. The weight alteration brought about by this natural heftiness has already been calculated into the Base Weight.

Enhanced Senses: Hehn have very acute senses, and gains a special bonus of +10 to all Perception rolls.

Portage Skills: Hehn are able to carry triple the normal weight allowed for each Encumbrance level.



Kenra

Demeanor: Befitting their origins, the ocelot-derived Kenra are prone to solitariness. To what extent do the Kenra have a society? Their tendency to solitude has a direct impact on the answer to the question about society. Certainly the Kenra share the same language, spiritual traditions and generalized hostility to others. What they don't share are those other qualities that make a society what it is. They don't build cities, preferring settlements with just a few dozen individuals with lots and lots of space between them. They don't build roads or public works. They don't have governments or taxes. They don't really cooperate with each other, have racial goals or objectives or even see themselves as being related to each other, despite the fact that they clearly are. Kenra who are wired differently than the rest of their species can be found in the cities and settlements of every race. These Kenra get along very well with humans, Gryx and Amarvish. They sometimes struggle to build relationships with Bentaxa and Dwarves. Gnomes don't make much sense to them. They have a long history of very poor relations with Elves (*too similar in personality*



and arrogance) and Hehn (*fundamentally different values*). Though having said that, Kenra that like being far from home are among the most resilient and adaptable of all of the races. It isn't unheard of for a Kenra and a Hehn to work together if both are willing to set aside their deeper prejudices.

On first encountering a Kenra, what usually comes across is supreme confidence—arrogance, even. Kenra have no problem telling others how great they are at whatever they do. They make exceptional martial artists, sublime assassins and thieves and shrewd diplomats. In fact, many civilizations have come to depend on Kenra diplomats to sort out their most difficult disagreements. A Kenra opposite you at the negotiating table is a special kind of chess game. Fun to play if you're up for it...but beware!

Appearance: As stated above, the Kenra are derived from ocelot stock. That means they are feline in appearance, but graceful in its expression. There's no such thing as a fat Kenra. They stand about 5 feet tall, with the males being sometimes 6 inches or more taller than the females. Both have luxurious coats.

Lifespan: Most Kenra live to about age 100. They reach their maturity at 16.

Culture: Sylvan or Borderlands for settled Kenra. Rural, Urban, Sylvan, Borderlands, Coastal, Shallow Warrens or Underhill for those who seek the company of others.

Twenty Questions: *Magic Ways (Instruction):* As stated, the Kenra do not build institutions or cities, with one exception. The Kenra are not an especially magical race, but when they observe the tendency in their young, they will bring that young person into contact with a roving investigator from the Lycaenum, the Kenra School of Magic. The Lycaenum has never been found by a non-Kenra. Even Kenra have only rarely stumbled upon it accidentally. Kenra magicians are trained in illusion, charms and magic related to mental discipline.

Special Abilities

Natural Weapons: Kenra claws are serious business. Kenra may make Small Slash attacks using their Claws using a learned Martial Arts skill.

Night Vision: Kenra can easily see up to 100' on a starlit night and up to 500' by the light of a full moon. In total darkness, they get no special advantage.

Shrewdness: Kenra are exceptional diplomats and evaluators of the hearts and minds of others – they have a racial flair for social perception and receive a +5 to all Influence-based skill maneuvers



Menomonee

Demeanor: Wise, slow to act, thoughtful, private and yet deeply interested in travel—all of these describe the Menomonee, who demonstrate that not all elves choose to live in a Sylvan culture. Clearly derived from the elves, the Menomonee are likewise clearly the source of the mermaid and mermen legends that abound in human lands. The Menomonee in millennia past lived in the woods with their fellow elves, but something drove them from the forests to the coasts and then onto the islands that dot the tropical regions of the world. Over a long period of time, they even gave up largely on the islands and lived increasingly in villages and cities under the sea. In time, the Menomonee developed the capacity to live both under the sea and on land. Most Menomonee prefer living in their deep sea communities in the company of other Menomonee. The other 25% or so of

the Menomonee enjoy spending some or indeed a great deal of time on land. These are the Menomonee that most people would encounter as part of an adventuring party.

The Menomonee have a long and deeply held love of travel. Capable of swimming astounding distances, they often find themselves with their fellow Menomonee a quarter of the way across the world exploring some new underwater feature or meeting a race of sentient dolphins who maintain total isolation from all other sentient races. The Menomonee love of travel also makes them inveterate adventurers. Mind you, most Menomonee adventure with others of their kind (*and are sometimes away from home for decades at a time*). Those Menomonee who like to meet other non-Menomonee can be counted on to be steadfast supporters of their fellow adventurers, despite the fact that their natural tendency to privacy might mean that they always feel a bit hard to get to know.

Of all the races of the world, the Menomonee make the most sublime and complex music. They have invented dozens of instruments that sound fantastic both above and below the sea (*but particularly below*). Bards and lovers of music have been known to travel (*at great personal risk*) to Menomonee cities to hear orchestras and quartets play. Menomonee vocalists in the service of surface-dweller courts are likely the richest people in the room, short of the king or emperor.

Appearance: Elves, but with a decidedly mermaid flavor. Having said that, they have legs, not flippers! They have limited hair—generally just a Mohawk-like stripe down the center of their heads. They retain the elegance and majesty of other elves. They have gill slits along their necks. It is generally impossible for a non-Menomonee to discern the difference between male and female Menomonee.

Lifespan: Menomonee live between 700 and 800 years. Menomonee males live closer to 800; the women, closer to 700. They attain their majority at 35.

Culture: Aquatic or Coastal.

Twenty Questions: Environment (*Ecosystem*): The Menomonee are far more dependent on their environment than they realize. As that ecosystem is the tropical ocean, they don't have all that much to worry about barring a massive ecological catastrophe. There are hardly any Menomonee cities or indeed towns in temperate oceans and none whatsoever in arctic oceans. The ecosystems they favor are full beyond description with foodstuffs and life sustaining resources. The Menomonee could have a civilization ten times the size of the one they have built and they wouldn't even scratch the surface of what their environment offers them.

Special Abilities

Amphibious Action: All Menomonee can move and act underwater without penalty, e.g. they may swim at base movement rate without requiring any maneuver and suffer no penalties to movement, initiative, DB, Dodge or Sudden Dodge when underwater.

Enhanced Amphibious Senses: All Menomonee have exceptionally acute senses, earning them a special bonus of +10 to all General Perception checks. They can see as easily underwater as they can in air.

Gills: All Menomonee can breathe underwater using their gills as easily as they breathe on land.

Navrothor

Demeanor: The tallest, bulkiest, most muscled and physically hardiest of all of the known sentient races, the Navrothor have adapted themselves to lives in environments too harsh for most of the others. Their great civilizations all exist above the Arctic Circle. Despite the fact that they live in these sorts of environments, it would be inappropriate to describe their cultures as harsh or forbidding. The Navrothor cultures have a long history of creating inspiring poetry, ballads, songs and visual arts in rock, ice and precious stones that attract the interested in significant numbers. The Navrothor are deeply proud of their accomplishments. Navrothor display a strong commitment to personal improvement. If one's path in life is to be a warrior, then most Navrothor would prefer to be regarded as the best of his or her generation. The same is true for farmers, scholars or sorcerers. The Navrothor have no gods, but they do have emblematic heroes. These heroes represent the very best of what the Navrothor have to offer, regardless of what it is. They function the same way that gods do in other civilizations, but the Navrothor do not worship them. Rather, they honor these exemplars for being what they were—the singular examples of everything that makes a Navrothor proud to be Navrothor.

Because of their height and bulk, Navrothor cities are towering places. They build their cities into ancient volcanoes,



mountains, hills and rock faces. The permanent ice north of 80 degrees latitude has also been carved and shaped into Navrothor dwellings. Humans and elves are dwarfed by these buildings. Halflings and gnomes struggle to make any progress (*and are more or less incapable of using tools made for Navrothor*). Despite this, the Navrothor are welcoming and friendly. They are the best hosts one might imagine and have the capacity to cook foods from most of the sentient races and are known for the quality of their cooking. Navrothor are not the most curious of races. They have no particular drive to travel or explore. They value the comforts of home and family and friendships.

Appearance: The Navrothor are giants. They resemble a cross between humans and dwarves, with Navrothor men having a dwarfish mien and Navrothor women resembling human women to a certain degree. The shortest adult Navrothor stand north of 8 feet tall. Typical Navrothor men are between 9 and ten feet tall. Navrothor women are just a few inches shorter than their men. Navrothor have extravagant hairstyles and beards and love fashionable jewelry. Their clothing is well tailored. Their armor made to the highest quality.

Lifespan: Navrothor live between 80 and 100 years. They reach maturity at age 14.

Culture: Arctic, Urban, Borderlands.

Twenty Questions: *Work Ways (Slavery):* Navrothor value self-improvement and self-direction. They view the practice of slave owning as antithetical to the capacity of the slave owner to improve himself and destructive not just to the life of slave but to the slave's soul. They hold the slave owner as being twice damned, however, for undermining his own self-improvement and for denying the slave his own story and development. In the history of the Navrothor there have been at least three occasions where they embarked on a systemic attack on a neighboring slave owning culture to free those slaves.

Special Abilities

Cold Resistance (minor): Because the Navrothor are people of the Arctic, they are inured to the cold. The temperatures at which Navrothor have to make Stamina RRs is lowered by 20 degrees Celsius and 35 degrees Fahrenheit.

Exceptionally Dense Musculature: The Navrothor are massive in all respects. They receive a +10 to OB and DB, but suffer a -50 penalty to Swimming. The weight alteration brought on by this natural massiveness has already been calculated into the Base Weight.

Tough Hide (Lesser): Navrothor's skin is sufficiently tough that it grants them an additional +10 to DB.



Queequayth

Demeanor: Hunted. Hounded. Hated. The Queequayth have hundreds of years of experience of being the scapegoat whenever they have lived near human societies. Many aspects of Queequayth society reflect this history. Their gods are all two-faced. One aspect of their gods speaks to suffering; the other, to resilience. This is true regardless of what a particular god's "portfolio" might be. In his positive aspect, K'rmanath the God of War encourages soldiers to endure through the slaughter and civilians to sacrifice for the cause of all Queequayth. In his negative aspect, K'rmanath is all about anguish, the pestilence of warfare and the devastation that warfare brings not only to the soldiers fighting the war but also to the civilians on both sides whose lives are laid waste by that war. The stories Queequayth tell their children are about endurance in the face of adversity and the perpetual

struggles of a people who are never allowed to live alongside others without being forced into subservience or slavery.

Their history and privations have made the Queequayth an astonishingly resilient people. Capable of living in nearly any environment, they have the skills to make barren land fertile. They can find nourishment in waters that others would not even bother to fish. If forced underground, they make do. When left to their own devices, Queequayth prefer to live in environments that reflect the fact that at one point in their history, they were little different from humans. Of all the races that walk the world, it is with humans that the Queequayth get along with least well. Halflings and Amarvish have no problem with them. Other races remain standoffish for reasons that have little to do with the Queequayth and more to do with these other races' history with humans.

Appearance: The Queequayth are related to humans, but an unusual genetic mutation caused them to diverge from the main pathway of human evolution millennia ago. Their appearance is now bestial. They are completely covered with hair and barely resemble their distant human cousins. Wolflike (*but not descendent from wolves*) or apelike best describe them. They are just as intelligent as humans but perhaps craftier and more creative. Queequayth men stand a bit more than 5 feet in height with the women averaging 5 feet on the nose.

Lifespan: Queequayth live about 80 years and reach their maturity at age 15.

Culture: Queequayth can manage in any environment, but prefer Rural, Urban and Borderlands when left alone.

Twenty Questions: *Supernatural Ways (Reason):* The Queequayth are not a people who place much stock in reason. Their long history of suffering has instead made them a people with a richly diverse supply of gods who give answers that make sense and explain why the Queequayth have been forced to suffer as long as they have. The Queequayth understand science and respect its implications for understanding the physical world, but reject it entirely for all other purposes.

Special Abilities

Bonus Skill Ranks: Queequayth value learning and encourage their children to learn at an early age. This training affords Queequayth characters a one time bonus of 5 skill ranks, which may be spent on skills found in any of the character's Favored Categories (*see HARP: Fantasy, chapter 3 for details on Favored Categories*).

Danger Sense: Queequayth have become accustomed to peril. They make Combat Perception maneuvers at a -20 modifier rather than the normal -50 modifier.

Skill Specialization—Because the Queequayth encourage learning they may select a skill during character generation to receive a +10 bonus.



Tomalak

Demeanor: Chatty and gregarious, what a Tomalak wants least in this world is to be left alone. Always born in litters of between three and six, Tomalak children are accustomed to the presence of others from the moment of birth and love being with others throughout their lives. The rarest bonds are formed between Tomalak born as twins—something that happens once every twenty years at most among the Tomalak. Twins are accorded a nearly mythic quality and are always seen as portents of some fantastic or devastating change in the society which sees their birth. Tomalak build cities and settlements that are very tightly packed in no matter what sort of environment they choose. They always build around communal spaces and sometimes their villages are mostly communal. There are plenty of examples of Tomalak towns where the private space is large enough only for a bed and a small table while all other activities are undertaken in public. To the Tomalak, that is perfectly normal. This makes dealing with Tomalak difficult for everyone who isn't Tomalak. Elves find them overbearingly social. Humans find them a nuisance verging on the Gordaz. Dwarves do not like them, period. Even the Queequayth find them a bit much to be around. Tomalak take all of this in stride. If someone else doesn't like them much that doesn't really matter, as they always have one of their kind nearby to socialize with. The expression

“six Tomalak walk into a bar” in every language other than Tomalak does not signal the beginning of a joke, but rather the start of a dark morality tale.

Tomalak are perhaps the least reflective of all of the sentient races. Their poetry is about having fun, drinking, love and sex. Their songs are about, well, having fun, drinking, love and sex. The same is true about their gods. And they love adventuring! But never alone. If they are found in a mixed group, Tomalak are never alone.

Appearance: Imagine weasels that stand about 4 feet in height and you'll get the picture. Tomalak males are significantly taller than Tomalak females.

Lifespan: Tomalak live between 65 and 85 years, with the women frequently living as long as age 100. They attain their majority at age 10. Tomalak who for whatever reason are forced to live alone, generally die very young.

Culture: Borderlands and Rural are the preferred cultures for Tomalak, but they can make do in Urban settings as well.

Twenty Questions: *Leisure Ways (Competitiveness):* For all of their vaunted unity and love of spending time with others, the Tomalak have an insanely fierce competitive streak within their culture. What isn't fully appreciated by outsiders is that they have the strongest connection to family and clan (*while preserving a connection to other Tomalak who are more distantly related*). In Tomalak cities, many sports and games are organized in complex leagues whose leaderboard results are known to any who care for such things. Gambling is both legal and encouraged.

Special Abilities

Blazing Speed: Their small stature gives the Tomalak a +5 bonus to their Base Movement Rate.

Enhanced Scent: Tomalak have an extremely sensitive sense of smell. They can smell odors up to 100' upwind, 2000' downwind, and up to 500' in still air, depending upon the strength of the odor. If a Tomalak can pick up the scent of a specific target, the Tomalak can gain a +50 bonus to the tracking attempt.

Gregariousness: The social nature of the Tomalak means that they find it naturally easy to cooperate on tasks with other Tomalak (*and over time with friends of other races*). This equates to a +10 bonus when a Tomalak makes a supporting maneuver to assist another individual.

Vengha

Demeanor: Cool, deliberate, slow to speak, slower to react, essentially impossible to provoke, the Vengha are in many ways one of the purest expressions of the Deeping way of life. They take little joy from the presence of travelers and have scant interest in the affairs of other people or nations. They are not, however, entirely disinterested. They are endlessly fascinated by stone in all of its forms, and not just the kind of stones that make less sophisticated races slobber with desire. Sure, the Vengha like diamonds and emeralds as much as the garden-variety dwarf, but all stone is interesting and that is what gets the Vengha out and about exploring other lands and interacting with other cultures. A rumored violet marble located in a Deeping quarry a thousand miles distant would certainly trigger a search, for example. The social relations of the Vengha are unusual in that they don't have a few things other cultures routinely do: there are only 5 males in any given Vengha settlement and their sole purpose is reproductive; they have no religion and no gods and they live communally in homes of between 6 and 10. The Vengha get along reasonably well with Dwarves. They find Gnomes too frivolous. Monstrous creatures like goblins are loathed with a particular fury.

Appearance: The Vengha stand between 4 and 5 feet in height. Their skin is a stony gray with mottling of pink, green, orange, amber or violet depending on their ancestry. Mottling is purely decorative, it has no social function. Their eyes are a bit larger proportionally than would be expected given the size of their head and face. They have no body hair of any kind and have a body type that would be best described as "sturdy." Outsiders who have encountered them without knowing who they are have described them as looking like



gargoyles. While that is apt, it isn't quite fair. The Vengha are not nearly as monstrous.

Lifespan: Vengha live 150 years, give or take a year or two.

Culture: Deeping only, but it would not be impossible to encounter a Vengha in other Cultures. There are no Vengha cities anywhere but the Deeping.

Twenty Questions: *Supernatural Ways (Ritual):* The Vengha have no gods and have never seen the point of having them. They engage in no religious rituals, have no religious architecture or places in their homes that are set aside for spiritual purposes. When they encounter the spiritual practices of other peoples they are at best bewildered and at worst hostile and dismissive.

Special Abilities

Dark Vision (Greater): Vengha can clearly see up to 100' on a starlit night and by the light of the full moon can easily see up to 500' as if it were daylight out. Vengha have the additional quasi-magical ability to see up to 50' in total darkness. With at least some illumination like a candle, lantern or torch, they are able to see three times the distance provided by the light source.

Enhanced Senses: All Vengha have particularly acute senses and gain a +10 to all Perception rolls.

Tough Hide (Minor): Vengha gain a +10 DB because of their stone-like skin.

Racial Hybrids

Many players prefer to customise their characters by creating a character with a mixed racial heritage. To do so, the player should select one race to be the primary influence for the character. Players may then use their DPs to purchase one Greater or two Lesser Blood Talents to become either the hybrid of two races (*such as the Half-Elf*) or to have the heritage of several races. Many of the races presented are unusual and the GM is at liberty to rule that certain or all hybrid combinations are not permitted.

The original race selected becomes a character's Base Race, determining the character's traits and abilities. Blood Talents (*whether Lesser or Greater*) modify or add to a character's racial abilities or natural affinities. Blood talents may only be chosen at the time of character creation

DP Cost	Talent
5	Amarvish Blood (<i>Lesser</i>)
10	Amarvish Blood (<i>Greater</i>)
5	Bentaxa Blood (<i>Lesser</i>)
10	Bentaxa Blood (<i>Greater</i>)
5	Faleeka Blood (<i>Lesser</i>)
10	Faleeka Blood (<i>Greater</i>)
5	Gordaz Blood (<i>Lesser</i>)
10	Gordaz Blood (<i>Greater</i>)
5	Hehn Blood (<i>Lesser</i>)

10	Hehn Blood (<i>Greater</i>)
5	Kenra Blood (<i>Lesser</i>)
10	Kenra Blood (<i>Greater</i>)
5	Menomonee Blood (<i>Lesser</i>)
10	Menomonee Blood (<i>Greater</i>)
5	Navrothor Blood (<i>Lesser</i>)
10	Navrothor Blood (<i>Greater</i>)
5	Queequayth Blood (<i>Lesser</i>)
10	Queequayth Blood (<i>Greater</i>)
5	Tomalak Blood (<i>Lesser</i>)
10	Tomalak Blood (<i>Greater</i>)
5	Vengha Blood (<i>Lesser</i>)
10	Vengha Blood (<i>Greater</i>)

Amarvish Blood (Lesser)

The character has a bit of Amarvish blood in his ancestry, marking him with slightly Amarvish features. The player may also select one of the following Special Abilities to replace any one of the character's normal racial Special Abilities. Once selected, it cannot be altered.

- Blazing Speed
- Hardiness
- Natural Weapon

Cost: 5 points

Amarvish Blood (Greater)

One of the character's parents is an Amarvish, making him half-Amarvish. His features are heavily marked, denoting his Amarvish heritage. The players may also select two of the following Special Abilities to replace any two of the character's normal racial Special Abilities. Once selected, they cannot be altered.

- Blazing Speed
- Hardiness
- Natural Weapon
- The character's Amarvish blood has a strong influence on his strength, physique and lifespan
 - Constitution Bonus +2
 - Strength Bonus +2
 - Average the lifespan of both your races

Cost: 10 points

Bentaxa Blood (Lesser)

The character has a bit of Bentaxa blood in his ancestry, marking him with slightly Bentaxan features. The player may also select one of the following Special Abilities to replace any one of the character's normal racial Special Abilities. Once selected, it cannot be altered.

- Bonus Skill Ranks
- Imbued with Element
- Tough Hide (*Lesser*)

Cost: 5 points

Bentaxa Blood (Greater)

One of the character's parents is a Bentaxa, making him half-Bentaxan. His features are heavily marked, denoting his

Bentaxan heritage. The players may also select two of the following Special Abilities to replace any two of the character's normal racial Special Abilities. Once selected, they cannot be altered.

- Bonus Skill Ranks
- Imbued with Element
- Tough Hide (*Lesser*)
- The character's Bentaxa blood has a strong influence on his grace, bearing and lifespan
 - Agility Bonus +2
 - Presence Bonus +2
 - Average the lifespan of both your races

Cost: 10 points

Faleeka Blood (Lesser)

The character has a bit of Faleekan blood in his ancestry, marking him with slightly Faleekan features. The player may also select one of the following Special Abilities to replace any one of the character's normal racial Special Abilities. Once selected, it cannot be altered.

- Flight and Hollow Bones
- Multiple/Peripheral Eyes (*Lesser*)
- Natural Weapon (*beak*)
- Natural Weapon (*talon*)

Cost: 5 points

Faleeka Blood (Greater)

One of the character's parents is a Faleeka, making him half-Faleekan. His features are heavily marked, denoting his Faleekan heritage. The players may also select two of the following Special Abilities to replace any two of the character's normal racial Special Abilities. Once selected, they cannot be altered.

- Flight and Hollow Bones
- Multiple/Peripheral Eyes (*Lesser*)
- Natural Weapon (*beak*)
- Natural Weapon (*talon*)
- The character's Faleeka blood has a strong influence on his speed, dexterity and lifespan
 - Agility Bonus +2
 - Quickness Bonus +2
 - Average the lifespan of both your races

Cost: 10 points

Gordaz Blood (Lesser)

The character has a bit of Gordaz blood in his ancestry, marking him with slightly Gordaz features. The player may also select one of the following Special Abilities to replace any one of the character's normal racial Special Abilities. Once selected, it cannot be altered.

- Superior Blazing Speed
- Wildly Nimble
- Dark Vision (*Lesser*)

Cost: 5 points

Gordaz Blood (Greater)

One of the character's parents is a Gordaz, making him half-Gordaz. His features are heavily marked, denoting his Gordaz heritage. The players may also select two of the following Special Abilities to replace any two of the character's normal racial Special Abilities. Once selected, they cannot be altered.

- Superior Blazing Speed
- Wildly Nimble
- Dark Vision (*Lesser*)
- The character's Gordaz blood has a strong influence on his dexterity, speed and lifespan
 - Agility Bonus +2
 - Quickness Bonus +2
 - Average the lifespan of both your races

Cost: 10 points

Hehn Blood (Lesser)

The character has a bit of Hehn blood in his ancestry, marking him with slightly Hehn features. The player may also select one of the following Special Abilities to replace any one of the character's normal racial Special Abilities. Once selected, it cannot be altered.

- Dense Musculature
- Enhanced Senses
- Portage Skills

Cost: 5 points

Hehn Blood (Greater)

One of the character's parents is a Hehn, making him half-Hehn. His features are heavily marked, denoting his Hehn heritage. The players may also select two of the following Special Abilities to replace any two of the character's normal racial Special Abilities. Once selected, they cannot be altered.

- Dense Musculature
- Enhanced Senses
- Portage Skills
- The character's Hehn blood has a strong influence on his strength, physique and lifespan
 - Constitution Bonus +2
 - Strength Bonus
 - Average the lifespan of both your races

Cost: 10 points

Kenra Blood (Lesser)

The character has a bit of Kenra blood in his ancestry, marking him with slightly Kenra features. The player may also select one of the following Special Abilities to replace any one of the character's normal racial Special Abilities. Once selected, it cannot be altered.

- Natural Weapons
- Night Vision
- Shrewdness

Cost: 5 points

Kenra Blood (Greater)

One of the character's parents is a Kenra, making him half-Kenra. His features are heavily marked, denoting his Kenra heritage. The players may also select two of the following Special Abilities to replace any two of the character's normal racial Special Abilities. Once selected, they cannot be altered.

- Natural Weapons
- Night Vision
- Shrewdness
- The character's Kenra blood has a strong influence on his speed, dexterity and lifespan
 - Agility Bonus +2
 - Quickness Bonus +2
 - Average the lifespan of both your races

Cost: 10 points

Menomonee Blood (Lesser)

The character has a bit of Menomonee blood in his ancestry, marking him with slightly Menomonee features. The player may also select one of the following Special Abilities to replace any one of the character's normal racial Special Abilities. Once selected, it cannot be altered.

- Amphibious Action
- Enhanced Amphibious Senses
- Gills

Cost: 5 points

Menomonee Blood (Greater)

One of the character's parents is a Menomonee, making him half-Menomonee. His features are heavily marked, denoting his Menomonee heritage. The players may also select two of the following Special Abilities to replace any two of the character's normal racial Special Abilities. Once selected, they cannot be altered.

- Amphibious Action
- Enhanced Amphibious Senses
- Gills
- The character's Menomonee blood has a strong influence on his bearing, intuition and lifespan
 - Insight Bonus +2
 - Presence Bonus +2
 - Average the lifespan of both your races

Cost: 10 points

Navrothor Blood (Lesser)

The character has a bit of Navrothor blood in his ancestry, marking him with slightly Navrothor features. The player may also select one of the following Special Abilities to replace any one of the character's normal racial Special Abilities. Once selected, it cannot be altered.

- Cold Resistance (*minor*)
- Exceptionally Dense Musculature
- Tough Hide (*Lesser*)

Cost: 5 points

Navrothor Blood (Greater)

One of the character's parents is a Navrothor, making him half-Navrothor. His features are heavily marked, denoting his Navrothor heritage. The players may also select two of the following Special Abilities to replace any two of the character's normal racial Special Abilities. Once selected, they cannot be altered.

- Cold Resistance (*minor*)
- Exceptionally Dense Musculature
- Tough Hide (*Lesser*)
- The character's Navrothor blood has a strong influence on build, brawn, physique and lifespan
 - Constitution Bonus +2
 - Strength Bonus +2
 - Average the lifespan of both your races

Cost: 10 points

Queequayth Blood (Lesser)

The character has a bit of Queequayth blood in his ancestry, marking him with slightly Queequayth features. The player may also select one of the following Special Abilities to replace any one of the character's normal racial Special Abilities. Once selected, it cannot be altered.

- Bonus Skill Ranks
- Danger Sense
- Skill Specialization

Cost: 5 points

Queequayth Blood (Greater)

One of the character's parents is a Queequayth, making him half-Queequayth. His features are heavily marked, denoting his Queequayth heritage. The players may also select two of the following Special Abilities to replace any two of the character's normal racial Special Abilities. Once selected, they cannot be altered.

- Bonus Skill Ranks
- Danger Sense
- Skill Specialization
- The character's Queequayth blood has a strong influence on his ability to learn and lifespan
 - The character has 3 points to divide between a minimum of two stats
 - Average the lifespan of both your races

Cost: 10 points

Tomalak Blood (Lesser)

The character has a bit of Tomalak blood in his ancestry, marking him with slightly Tomalak features. The player may also select one of the following Special Abilities to replace any one of the character's normal racial Special Abilities. Once selected, it cannot be altered.

- Blazing Speed
- Enhanced Scint
- Gregariousness

Cost: 5 points

Tomalak Blood (Greater)

One of the character's parents is a Tomalak, making him half-Tomalak. His features are heavily marked, denoting his Tomalak heritage. The players may also select two of the following Special Abilities to replace any two of the character's normal racial Special Abilities. Once selected, they cannot be altered.

- Blazing Speed
- Enhanced Scint
- Gregariousness
- The character's Tomalak blood has a strong influence on his social interactions, intuition and lifespan
 - Insight Bonus +2
 - Presence Bonus
 - Average the lifespan of both your races

Cost: 10 points

Vengha Blood (Lesser)

The character has a bit of Vengha blood in his ancestry, marking him with slightly Venghan features. The player may also select one of the following Special Abilities to replace any one of the character's normal racial Special Abilities. Once selected, it cannot be altered.

- Dark Vision (*Greater*)
- Enhanced Senses
- Tough Hide (*Lesser*)

Cost: 5 points

Vengha Blood (Greater)

One of the character's parents is a Vengha, making him half-Venghan. His features are heavily marked, denoting his Venghan heritage. The players may also select two of the following Special Abilities to replace any two of the character's normal racial Special Abilities. Once selected, they cannot be altered.

- Dark Vision (*Greater*)
- Enhanced Senses
- Tough Hide (*Lesser*)
- The character's blood has a strong influence on his physique, self-control and lifespan
 - Constitution Bonus +2
 - Self Discipline Bonus +2
 - Average the lifespan of both your races

Cost: 10 points

Height & Weight

The following table details the base Height and Weight for each race. For any race, height may vary ten inches in either direction, which can also modify a character's weight. Players should feel free to adjust their height and weight to their liking.

The following guidelines are presented only to introduce a quasi-random element into determining the height and weight of a character. Simple adjustments may be made by rolling 1d10 twice. For determining random Height

adjustments, subtract if the first roll is odd, and add if the roll is even. The second die roll determines how many inches are added or subtracted (*as per the first roll*) from the base Height.

Simple adjustments may also be made for beginning weight values. Follow the same rules above, but multiply the second die roll's result by the weight Modifier found on the table below to determine the final adjustment

Race Height and Weight Table

Race	Base Height	Base Weight	Weight Modifier
Amarvish, Male	7'	300	6
Amarvish, Female	6' 6"	275	5
Bentaxa, Male	6' 6"	275	5
Bentaxa, Female	6' 9"	300	6
Faleeka, Male	4' (8' wingspan)	70	2
Faleeka, Female	4' (8' wingspan)	70	2
Gordaz, Male	3'	45	1
Gordaz, Female	3'	40	1
Hehn, Male	6' 10"	850	40
Hehn, Female	7'	900	40
Kenra, Male	5'	90	2
Kenra, Female	4' 6"	70	2
Menomonee, Male	5' 6"	120	2
Menomonee, Female	5' 3"	100	2
Navrothor, Male	9' 3"	450	50
Navrothor, Female	9'	400	50
Queequayth, Male	5' 2"	120	5
Queequayth, Female	5'	100	5
Tomalak, Male	4'	75	2
Tomalak, Female	3' 6"	50	2
Vengha, Male	4' 6"	90	2
Vengha, Female	4' 5"	80	2

Starting Age

Each of the races ages at varying rates. The following table indicates the age at which members of a given race are considered to have reached adulthood, and thus able to strike out on their own.

Race: This is base race of the character. If the character's lifespan has been modified due to the purchase of Blood Talents, adjust the columns according to the normal lifespan of the character.

Adulthood: This is the age that characters of a given race are considered to have reached adulthood. It is also generally the starting age for a 1st level character.

Lifespan: This is the average lifespan for a character of this race.

Increment: Should a character ever begin the game above first level, this value represents the recommended number of years to be added to the starting age of the character for each level he has obtained beyond the first.

Table: Starting Ages

Race	Adulthood	Lifespan	Increment
Amarvish	12	100	2
Bentaxa	20	250	4
Faleeka	8	80	2
Gordaz	7	40	1
Hehn	50	500	10
Kenra	16	100	2
Menomonee	35	750	10
Navrothor	14	100	2
Queequayth	15	80	2
Tomalak	10	85	2
Vengha	15	150	3

Cultures

Aquatic

Befitting the presence of water in all aspects of this culture's identity, it is little surprise that most people who live in this culture take things in their stride. The ocean is massive beyond describing. Even lakes can be so large as to seem like oceans. What is one drop of water to an ocean? Much the same can be ascribed to those who live in an Aquatic culture. *"It's not worth getting worked up about,"* is a common litany in an Aquatic culture.

Preferred Locations: Underwater always, but may interact with the Coastal cultures in some circumstances.

Clothing & Decoration: Those who live in the Aquatic culture tend to favor gauzy, translucent garments that are not really designed for warmth or cooling. In this regard, their clothing amounts to decoration.

Demeanor: Slow to warm to others, but equally slow to take offense, individuals from an Aquatic culture don't go out of their way to make friends. If they do befriend you, however, you'll be a friend for life.

Starting Languages: Racial Tongue (*S 6/W 5*), Common (*S 4/W 3*).

Aerial

The Aerial culture lives wherever they can command the greatest view of the world around them. Whether that's in the treetops, atop towering mountains or in cloud-scraping cities built on enormous pillars, Aerial culture members like to get a sense of what's going on. They don't like to be surprised.

They like to make their own mind up about how to deal with others. They value surveying. Aerial cultures value discipline, shrewdness and hard work.

Preferred Locations: As long as it's higher up than those living nearby, it counts. They never build cities and settlements on the ground.

Clothing and Decoration: Aerial cultures tend to favor garments with feathers or other natural materials. Most of the way over to ornate on the plain-ornate scale, as it were.

Demeanor: Sometimes viewed as cautious, other times as suspicious, those who live in the Aerial culture are definitely mistrustful of ground-dwellers, but take great pleasure in meeting other members of Aerial cultures.

Starting Languages: Racial Tongue (*S 6/W 5*), Common (*S 4/W 3*).

Arctic

From the Arctic and Antarctic Circles all the way to 90 degrees latitude there is a forbidding but beautiful land inhabited only by the sturdiest of peoples. The Arctic culture breeds strong men and women who don't mess about. They get down to business and pay very close attention to changes in the environment, be it the physical or social, to ensure that there are no surprises. Because they build their cities and towns in rock and ice, it can be difficult sometimes to realize, unless one knows what to look for, that one has even come across an Arctic city.

Preferred Locations: Between the polar circles and the poles.

Clothing and Decoration: People who live in Arctic cultures value warmth more than design! They understand the value of layering and make use of everything they can hunt or gather to fabricate their clothing and get what they need to survive. Despite the drabness of their clothing, they do enjoy wearing flashy jewelry if they can get it.

Demeanor: Warm and welcoming but also Spartan and severe, it can be difficult to read those who come from an Arctic culture sometimes because there are so many contrasts in their personalities.

Starting Languages: Racial Tongue (*S 6/W 5*), Common (*S 4/W 3*).

Borderlands

Somewhere between Nomadic, Underhill and Shallow Warrens lies the Borderlands culture. Borderlanders have a unique ability to function effectively in the Marches that divide other cultures from each other. They are frequently known as honest brokers between hostile powers. They do not build settlements as a rule, but if they do, they are Shallow Warren-like, in that they are nearly impossible for others to find. Given their choices, Borderlanders would want to exist no closer than the fringes of other civilizations and cities.

Preferred Locations: Like Nomadic cultures, Borderlands cultures tend to shift in space over time. Like Shallow Warrens cultures, they tend towards rugged countryside because in the event of a problem, these territories are better defended than others. Like Underhill cultures, Borderlanders don't like to be piled on top of one another. They like a bit of space.

Clothing and Decoration: No particular pattern predominates with the Borderlanders. They might favor the clothing style of one nearby civilization and the jewelry and adornment practices of their great enemy.

Demeanor: Forgiving and friendly, curious and honest. Borderlanders realize that there is little value in deception as, in any calculation about power, they are going to come in last in whatever region they reside in. Rather different from the Nomadic culture in that that culture values the individual while the Borderlands culture values the collective.

Starting Languages: Racial Tongue (*S 6/W 5*), Common (*S 4/W 3*).

Coastal

Related to Borderlands and Rural, Coastal cultures make their living from the sea and prefer to spend as much time on the water as possible. They are not Aquatic, in that they don't live underwater, but they prefer to live at the shore or within an easy walking distance.

Preferred Locations: Any kind of coastal terrain will suit. Rolling plains that lead to sandy beaches are great, but rocky beaches that give way to cave systems and rough hills are no problem either. In fact, many Coastal communities use sea-shore cavern systems to build epic settlements, some of them capable of supporting whole fleets.

Clothing and Decoration: The best way to describe the clothing and decorative traditions of Coastal communities would be "piratical." Big and flouncy garments, oversized jewelry, gaudy hats...they are a warm people with big personalities.

Demeanor: As likely to give you the clothes off their back as steal the clothes on yours, they are a culture of rascals and rapsallions...and that's just the children! No one loves life more than a Coastal culture dweller.

Starting Languages: Racial Tongue (*S 6/W 5*), Common (*S 4/W 3*).

Deeping

There's Deep Warrens...and one might even say Deeper Warrens...and then, there's the Deeping. Way, way down, as it were. Dark and chilly indeed.

Preferred Locations: There's really only one. If you think you've dug too far down...you haven't. Keep going. Deeping cultures start where Deep Warren cultures have dug down enough. They are way, way down. As a result, they have

contact with races and beings that are entirely unknown on the surface and scarcely imagined in the Deep Warrens.

Clothing and Decoration: Clothes are made for working in—and Deeping cultures work almost entirely with stone. As a result their clothing is rugged and meant to last. Decoration is unheard of.

Demeanor: Humorless and hard working at the best of times. Dour, sour and forbidding at the worst. They have absolutely zero interest in travelers, have no real tradition of hospitality and would be perfectly content if you would just go away, if that wouldn't be too much trouble.

Starting Languages: Racial Tongue (*S 6/W 5*), Common (*S 4/W 3*).

Adolescent Skill Ranks

Cultural Skills	Aquatic	Aerial	Arctic	Borderlands	Coastal	Deeping
Ambush	1	1	0	1	1	1
Animal Handling	1	0	1	1	0	0
Appraisal	1	2	1	2	2	2
Armor	0	0	2	1	0	2
Attunement	0	0	1	0	0	1
Climbing	0	0	1	0	0	1
Crafts*	1	1	1	2	1	2
Endurance	3	1	3	1	1	2
Flying	0	3	0	0	0	0
Foraging / Survival	0	0	2	1	0	0
Healing	1	1	1	0	1	0
Herbcraft	0	0	0	0	1	0
Jumping	0	0	1	0	1	1
Locks & Traps	0	0	0	2	1	0
Lore (Local)	1	2	1	2	1	1
Navigation	3	2	1	0	2	0
Perception	1	2	1	2	2	2
Riding	0	0	0	1	0	0
Runes	0	0	0	0	0	1
Stalking & Hiding	1	0	0	1	0	2
Swimming	3	0	0	0	2	0
Tracking	0	0	1	1	0	0
Weapon Skills**	2	2	1	1	1	2
Weapon Skills***	1	3	1	1	3	0
* Select one craft skill						
** Select one melee weapon group						
*** Select one ranged weapon group						

6 New Professions



In **HARP Fantasy**, you are given the option to play one of nine different character classes: Cleric, Fighter, Harper, Mage, Monk, Ranger, Rogue, Thief, Warrior Mage. Each of these character classes emerges from a cultural tradition that resonates for those of us raised in the West and educated in the classics of Western civilization. It isn't so difficult for us to recognize the archetype of the Fighter or the Thief: they're all over our literature. Even trickier examples like the Mage or the Monk are not so hard for us to imagine. What makes these archetypes interesting is the way in which gamemasters morph them to fit their own particular cultural needs. Using the example of the Gryx of the Commonwealth of Enryyx (*developed in greater detail in chapter 4*), their culture doesn't really call for many Clerics. The Enryyx have a need for Fighters, but not too many, and they aren't so different from

Fighters in other cultures. Harpers are a highly specialized, small group that would be accorded great honor in that culture, because that culture so deeply values craft and leisure. Enryyx are not esoteric masters and the quest for such knowledge would feel a bit unruly to them. It is possible that most Enryyx Mages exist outside of the Commonwealth. Monks would be devout followers of the practices of Coursing River Ice. Rangers are essential, given how spread out the society is and how wild their land is. Rogues and Thieves exist in every culture, but Thieving tendencies would most certainly cause the Gryx doing it to be expelled from the Commonwealth. The only character class that isn't particularly aligned in some way to the Enryyx is the Warrior Mage. It is likely that this hybrid form doesn't even exist.

New Professions

Artisan

Every society has crafts that they value particularly, whether they are ceramics, metalworking, gourd making, bone crafting or any one of thousands of other potential areas of concentration. Precision is generally the order of the day for most Artisans in their chosen work. Whilst some Artisans are content to remain in their home village or town, the love of their artistic focus drives the more adventurous to travel far from home in search of new techniques, skills, wisdom and knowledge, and perhaps better fortune.

Favored Categories

Concentration: 4

General: 6

Influence: 2

Outdoor: 4

Physical: 4

Key Stats: Agility, Self Discipline and either Reasoning or Insight

Professional Abilities

All Artisans may choose at 1st level one ability from the following list: Fast Crafter, Master Craftsman, or Skilled Trader. Beginning at first level, and then every fifth level thereafter, Artisans gain a +10 bonus to any Concentration or General skill of their choice. No skill can have more than a +30 bonus from this ability.

Talents

Fast Crafter

The character can make or repair mundane items using Crafts skill in half the normal time required

Master Craftsman

The character has a gift for making and building things, and receives a +10 bonus to all Craft skills.

Skilled Trader

The character is a shrewd dealer in goods and services. This Talent gives a +10 bonus to Appraisal, Duping and Trading.



Athlete

Most cultures have some kind of tradition of sporting, a tradition based on physical contests of strength, agility and endurance. These Athletes are often accorded superheroic qualities by their countrymen. They are deeply valued and respected by their cultures, sometimes above and beyond nearly anyone else. They sometimes require the support of a large urban infrastructure, but when that isn't present, they can be supported by individual sponsors. Athletes are the most physically well-developed of all professions. Added to this, however, is generally a fierce mental discipline that comes from becoming the masters of the mental game of their chosen sport. This can make the athlete a potentially fearsome foe.

Favored Categories

Athletic: 6

Concentration: 3

Combat: 2

General: 2

Physical: 7

Key Stats: Agility, Strength, Constitution

Professional Abilities

All Athletes may select one of the following four Talents: Agile Defense, Dense Musculature, Inner Strength, or Sureshot. Beginning at first level, and then every fifth level thereafter, Athletes gain a +10 bonus to any Athletic, Combat or Physical skill of their choice. No skill can have more than a +30 bonus from this ability.

Talents

Agile Defense / Swashbuckler

This talent allows a character to add 2 x his Agility Bonus to his DB in addition to the bonus gained from Quickness. However, the character only gains this bonus if not wearing any armor heavier than Soft Leather, not carrying a shield larger than a Buckler, and not wielding a two-handed weapon.

Dense Musculature

The character's body is denser and heavier than normal. As a result, the character multiplies his or her racial weight modifier by 5 when determining their weight. The character gains a special +5 to both his OB and DB. However, due to this increased density, the character suffers a -25 to all swimming maneuvers.



Inner Strength

The character receives a +10 modifier to all Chi related skills.

Sureshot

Characters with this talent are an excellent shot with bows, crossbows or other missile weapons. They have an amazingly acute sense of distance and a smooth and easy aim and release. All modifiers are reduced to -5 per Range Increment instead of the normal -10. This Talent may be taken multiple times, once for each type of missile weapon, including thrown weapons.

Hunter

By choice, inclination or necessity, the Hunter is most at home in the wilderness. Hunters have the skills to live off the flora and fauna of their chosen environment indefinitely, to travel through its harshest terrain, and defend themselves from its predators. Hunters have an understanding of and a respect for nature, but there is no onus on them to be its protector. Hunters make excellent scouts, trackers, trappers, and explorers.

Favored Categories

Athletic: 2

Combat: 3

General: 3

Outdoor: 6

Physical: 3

Subterfuge: 3

Key Stats: Insight, Agility, Reasoning and Strength

Professional Abilities

All Hunters gain one of the following talents: Master Tracker, Master Trapper, Outrider Training or Skilled Hunter. Beginning at first level, and then every fifth level thereafter (*5th, 10th, etc.*), Hunters gain a +10 bonus to any Outdoors skill of their choice. No skill can have more than a +30 bonus from this ability.

Talents

Master Tracker

The character has an unnerving ability to follow the tracks of a target quarry over long distances. This Talent gives a +10 bonus to Navigation, Perception and Tracking.

Master Trapper

The character is particularly skillful at catching wild animals and beasts using a variety of traps and snares. This Talent gives a +10 bonus to Camouflage, Foraging/Survival and Locks & Traps skill.

Outrider Training

The character is an expert rider. This Talent gives a +10 bonus to Animal Handling, Riding and Combat Style & Maneuver: Mounted Combat.

Skilled Hunter

The character has been trained in the arts of killing at a distance. This Talent gives a +10 bonus to Sniping, Stalking & Hiding, and one missile or thrown weapon skill.



Intellectual

The professional intellectual is a scholar, researcher, man of knowledge, storyteller, librarian or sage. Their task is to expand knowledge, educate the young (*or indeed elders, depending on the circumstance*), preserve memory and enhance the skills and abilities of others through their learning. Some Intellectuals are public in nature, sharing their wisdom broadly throughout their society. Others are private, sharing what they've learned with others of like mind and discipline but rarely venturing into the larger world of ideas. Still others apply their knowledge in specific fields of endeavor such as law or medicine. The Intellectual (*be s/he public or private*) is highly motivated by knowledge; this is what gets them out of the ivory tower and onward to adventures and deeper learning.

Favored Categories

Artistic: 2

Concentration: 3

General: 9

Influence: 3

Physical: 3

Key Stats: Self Discipline, Reasoning, Insight

Professional Abilities

An Intellectual selects one talent from the following list: Academic Specialization, Physick, Racial/Cultural Expert, or Scholar, and one talent from the following list: Good Memory, Natural Linguist or Speed Reader. Beginning at first level, and then every fifth level thereafter, Intellectuals gain a +10 bonus to any General skill of their choice. No skill can have more than a +30 bonus from this ability.

Talents

Academic Specialization

The character has concentrated his efforts in a particular area of academic study, and gains a +20 bonus in one chosen Mundane Lore. This Talent may be taken multiple times, but must be for a different Mundane Lore each time.

Good Memory

The character can accurately recall any conversations heard and describe any places, items, or individuals seen within 5 days. Thereafter, his memory fades normally.

Natural Linguist

Using knowledge of a language that he already knows, a character may attempt to understand (*both listening and reading*), speak and write a related language. A Maneuver roll (*All-or-Nothing or Percentage at GM's discretion*) will be required for any communication in the related language with a special +20 bonus to the maneuver.



Physick

The character has a gift for healing, and receives a +10 bonus on all his healing & medical skills.

Racial/Cultural Expert

The character gains +10 to all skills relating to one race or culture (*not their own*). This Talent may be purchased multiple times for a different race or culture each time.

Scholar

The character has an insatiable appetite for knowledge and a fantastic ability to recall information. He gains a special +10 bonus to all Lore skills, both mundane and magical.

Speed Reader

The character can read at three times normal speed, i.e. the character can read and comprehend 750 words per minute, instead of 250 words per minute

Laborer

The Laborer is found in every city, every town and on every manor in every society more complex than a single family living on an island by itself. Laborers make society work by planting and harvesting crops, carrying goods, repairing items, passing information, being the heavy when that's called for and in general doing the hard work that nobody notices that is essential. Physically extremely strong and hardy, their very ubiquity can make them invisible to those who would consider themselves the social superiors of Laborers.

Favored Categories

Combat: 3

General: 5

Influence: 3

Outdoor: 5

Physical: 4

Key Stats: Strength, Agility and Constitution



Professional Abilities

All Laborers begin with two of the following talents: Accelerated Healing, Blazing Speed, Enhanced Senses, Lesser Resistance (*Stamina*), Lesser Resistance (*Will*), Lightning Reflexes, or Skill Specialization (*can be taken twice for different skills or the same skill*). Beginning at first level and then every fifth level thereafter, Laborers gain a +10 bonus to any General, Outdoor or Physical skill of their choice. No skill can have more than a +30 bonus from this ability.

Talents

Accelerated Healing

The character heals extremely fast. For him, all natural recovery times are halved. The amount of time required by magical healing (*if any*) is not halved.

Blazing Speed

The character's Base Movement Rate is increased by 5'.

Enhanced Senses

The character has very acute senses, and gains a special bonus of +10 to all Perception rolls.

Lesser Resistance (Stamina)

The character has a special +10 bonus to all Stamina-based Resistance Rolls. This talent does not stack with the Greater Resistance (*All*), Greater Resistance (*Stamina*), or Lesser Resistance (*All*) Talents.

Lesser Resistance (Will)

The character has a special +10 bonus to all Will-based Resistance Rolls. This talent does not stack with the Greater Resistance (*All*), Greater Resistance (*Will*), or Lesser Resistance (*All*) Talents.

Lightning Reflexes

The character has extremely fast reflexes. This grants him a +5 bonus to his initiative roll.

Skill Specialization

The character is capable of great focus in learning. This is reflected in him gaining a one time +10 bonus to a single skill. This Talent may be taken no more than three times, for a different skill each time.

Sailor

The waters of the world exert a special fascination on many, giving those who follow the profession of Sailor a life and livelihood beyond the land. Some Sailors find their adventure on sturdy boats traversing inland canals and rivers, while other Sailors venture out into the deep blue sea in sailing ships for exploration, for commerce and for warfare. Whether the Sailor's motivation may come from a desire to see distant lands or rise in the ranks of leadership or to pillage and cause piratical mayhem, the needs of fleets across the world's maritime powers will always mean there's a special place for Sailors.

Favored Categories

Athletic: 3

Combat: 3

General: 6

Outdoor: 4

Physical: 4

Key Stats: Insight, Strength, Agility

Professional Abilities

All Sailors begin the game with one talent from the following list: Mariner Training, Sea Legs or Strong Swimmer, and one talent from the following list: Enhanced Senses, Lightning Reflexes, or Skill Specialization. Beginning at first level, and then every third level thereafter, Sailors gain a +5 bonus to a skill of their choice from their Favored Categories.

Talents

Enhanced Senses

The character has very acute senses, and gains a special bonus of +10 to all Perception rolls.

Lightning Reflexes

The character has extremely fast reflexes. This grants him a +5 bonus to his initiative roll.

Mariner Training

The character has been trained in the nautical skills through an apprenticeship on the waterways or at sea. This Talent gives a +10 bonus to Climbing, Navigation and Sailing.



Sea Legs

The character is used to the rolling motion of boats and ships. The character reduces all penalties for maritime conditions and sea state conditions by 20.

Skill Specialization

The character is capable of great focus in learning. This is reflected in him gaining a one time +10 bonus to a single skill. This Talent may be taken no more than three times, for a different skill each time.

Strong Swimmer

The character is a fast and strong swimmer. When required to make a successful Swimming maneuver, the character may move at Base Movement Rate rather than half Base Movement Rate. The character also gains a +10 bonus to Swimming skill.

Scoundrel

A Scoundrel is a thief...of hearts and minds. Whereas a traditional thief will pick your pocket, the Scoundrel will convince you to give up your hard earned silver voluntarily. Some are just weavers of silken words and tellers of elaborate but convincingly sad stories, who want nothing more than whatever it is of value that you have. Such Scoundrels are natural con artists, hustlers, seducers, and if really down on their luck, beggars desperate for some alms. Other Scoundrels aspire to greater things and enter politics, using their powers of persuasion from the street corner through smoky rooms to the corridors of power.

Favored Categories

Artistic: 2

Influence: 6

Subterfuge: 5

General: 4

Physical: 3

Key Stats: Insight, Presence, Agility

Professional Abilities

At 1st level, all Scoundrels begin the game with one talent from the following list: Diplomat Training, Master Entertainer, Manual Dexterity, Silver Tongued or Street Smart, and one talent from the following list: Calming Voice, Good Memory, Judge of Value, Natural Linguist or Skill Specialization. Beginning at first level, and then every fifth level thereafter, Scoundrels gain a +10 bonus to any Influence skill of their choice. No Influence skill can have more than a +30 bonus from this ability.

Talents

Calming Voice

The character gains +10 to all Influence skills when used to calm down one or more individuals.

Diplomatic Training

The character has been trained for a career in diplomacy. This Talent gives a +10 bonus to Diplomacy, Public Speaking and one Mundane Lore (such as Heraldry or a Culture Lore).

Good Memory

The character can accurately recall any conversations heard and describe any places, items, or individuals seen within 5 days. Thereafter, his memory fades normally.

Judge of Value

The character gains +10 to all Appraisal skills.

Manual Dexterity

The character is nimble of fingers. The Talent grants the character +10 to Locks & Traps, Pick Pockets and Trickery.



Master Entertainer

The character is a natural entertainer. This Talent gives a +10 bonus to any three Artistic skills.

Natural Linguist

Using knowledge of a language that he already knows, a character may attempt to understand (*both listening and reading*), speak and write a related language. A Maneuver roll (*All-or-Nothing or Percentage at GM's discretion*) will be required for any communication in the related language with a special +20 bonus to the maneuver.

Silver Tongued

The character has mastered the arts of duplicity in spoken word and manner. This Talent gives a +10 bonus to Acting, Charm and Duping.

Skill Specialization

The character is capable of great focus in learning. This is reflected in him gaining a one time +10 bonus to a single skill. This Talent may be taken no more than three times, for a different skill each time.

Street Smart

The character is well-versed in the subtleties of urban living. This Talent gives a +10 bonus to Duping, Streetwise, and Trading.

Seeker

There is hardly a society, no matter how simple or complex, that doesn't have within it undesirable elements. These people, whether they operate singly or in groups, often attract the negative attention of the well-off sort (*because they steal their stuff or kidnap their children or worse*) and when they do, these elites turn inevitably to the Seeker to recover their wealth or their kin or exact revenge. The Seeker is a tracker equally at home in city and wilderness, and a jack-of-all-trades. The Seeker is able to move throughout all levels of society with ease and can also track their bounty in an assortment of environments.

Favored Categories

Athletic: 2

Combat: 2

General: 3

Influence: 3

Outdoors: 2

Physical: 2

Subterfuge: 6

Key Stats: Insight, Strength, Agility

Professional Abilities

Beginning at first level, and then every fifth level thereafter, Seekers gain a +10 bonus to any Influence, Outdoors or Subterfuge skill of their choice. No skill can have more than a +30 bonus from this ability.



Trader

Traders are buyers and sellers of goods and services. Traders have the unique ability to move between and among the layers of societies with relative ease. Known to members of the city guard, the constabulary, the rich and powerful and even the less well off, those engaged in the merchant trade must be well known to their existing and potential customers. Traders tread a careful line between seeking too much fame and attention, and avoiding a reputation for secrecy or sneakiness. Making money requires accessibility to one's customers, making large amounts of money requires everyone trusts you. That is the great advantage of the Trader—when they get it right, they can get away with anything, because no one believes that the Trader is anything other than a purveyor of goods and services.

Favored Categories

Artistic: 2

Combat: 2

General: 6

Influence: 6

Physical: 2

Subterfuge: 2

Key Stats: Insight, Reasoning, Presence

Professional Abilities

All Traders may choose from one of the following talents: Diplomat Training, Racial/Cultural Expert, Silver Tongued, or Skilled Trader. Beginning at first level and then every five levels, Traders gain a +10 bonus to a General or Influence skill of their choice. No skill can have more than a +30 bonus from this ability.

Talents

Diplomatic Training

The character has been trained for a career in diplomacy. This Talent gives a +10 bonus to Diplomacy, Public Speaking and one Mundane Lore (*such as Heraldry or a Culture Lore*).

Racial/Cultural Expert

The character gains +10 to all skills relating to one race or culture (*not their own*). This Talent may be purchased multiple times for a different race or culture each time.



Silver Tongued

The character has mastered the arts of duplicity in spoken word and manner. This Talent gives a +10 bonus to Acting, Charm and Duping.

Skilled Trader

The character is a shrewd dealer in goods and services. This Talent gives a +10 bonus to Appraisal, Duping and Trading.

Valet

No common drudge, the Valet is the master of social relations and the vicissitudes of daily life, trained to anticipate the needs of an employer or a guest. Broad training in a host of general skills and deep learning across a wide variety of areas makes the Valet an invaluable asset to nobles, personages of high status and wealth, diplomats and more. When not in service as butler, steward, or majordomo, Valets may establish themselves in more independent careers such as innkeepers, restaurateurs, and so forth. The Valet can often smooth over difficulties caused by others and is never the cause of the problem.

Favored Categories

Artistic: 2

Combat: 2

General: 5

Influence: 6

Physical: 3

Subterfuge: 2

Key Stats: Reasoning, Presence, Insight

Professional Abilities

All Valets may choose from one of the following talents: Master Entertainer, Master of Vocation, Physick, Silver Tongued, Skilled Trader, or Street Smart. Beginning at first level and then every five levels, Valets gain a +10 bonus to a General or Influence skill of their choice. No skill can have more than a +30 bonus from this ability.

Talents

Master Entertainer

The character is a natural entertainer. This Talent gives a +10 bonus to any three Artistic skills.

Master of Vocation

The character is an expert in their chosen vocational skill set. This Talent gives a +20 bonus to one specific Vocation.

Physick

The character has a gift for healing, and receives a +10 bonus on all his healing & medical skills.



Silver Tongued

The character has mastered the arts of duplicity in spoken word and manner. This Talent gives a +10 bonus to Acting, Charm and Duping.

Skilled Trader

The character is a shrewd dealer in goods and services. This Talent gives a +10 bonus to Appraisal, Duping and Trading.

Street Smart

The character is well-versed in the subtleties of urban living. This Talent gives a +10 bonus to Duping, Streetwise, and Trading.

New Skills

The races, cultures, professions and training packages in this book necessitate the introduction of some additional skills to **HARP Fantasy**. All of these skills were first described in **HARP SF** but are applicable to historical and fantasy milieux, with minor modifications.

Camouflage

This is a character's skill for concealing an item or another person using the properties of the surrounding environment, such as hiding them in ditches or hollows in the ground, covering them with fallen foliage, daubing them with suitably colored paints in natural patterns, and so forth.

(Subterfuge – In/Ag – All-or-nothing)

Painting

This skill is used in the creation and design of visual art and graphics. It includes pen and pencil sketches and actual painting in watercolors and oil pigments.

(Artistic – In/In – All-or-nothing)

Sculpting

This skill is used in forming (*by carving, etching, molding etc.*) three-dimensional figures and shapes in relief (*projections from the surface*) or in solid materials. This skill does not give its possessor the ability to work materials without appropriate tools.

(Artistic – In/Ag – All-or-nothing)

Sports

This skill encompasses individual and team games, such as tennis, football, competitive running, skiing, etc. Each sport must be developed as a separate skill and includes knowledge of the rules and techniques.

(Athletic – Ag/Co – All-or-nothing)

Vocation

This set of skills encompasses the training and specialist knowledge gained by people through study and on-the-job experience in everyday occupations. Each Vocation is a separate skill – a number of possible Vocations are described below:

Administration: This covers record-keeping and bureaucratic procedures

Category	Skills	Stats	Resolution
Artistic	Painting	In / In	All-or-nothing
	Sculpting	In / Ag	All-or-nothing
	Writing	In / Re	All-or-nothing
Athletic	Sports	Ag / Co	All-or-nothing
General	Vocation	In / Re	All-or-nothing
Subterfuge	Camouflage	In / Ag	All-or-nothing

Seaman: This covers knowledge relating to shipboard life and duties, and seafaring etiquette.

Soldiering: This covers knowledge relating to military organization and military etiquette.

Steward: This covers the administration involved in running a substantial estate or wealthy household, and the etiquette of dealing with masters and servants.

Writing

This skill is used by any character who wishes to compose poetry, saga, short stories, novels, or other works of fiction. Writing also covers journalistic writing where the emphasis is on accurate and concise reporting of factual information.

(Artistic – In/Re – All-or-nothing)

New Talents

Academic Specialization

The character has concentrated his efforts in a particular area of academic study, and gains a +20 bonus in one chosen Mundane Lore. This Talent may be taken multiple times, but must be for a different Mundane Lore each time.

Cost: 15

Amphibious Action

The character can move and act underwater without penalty, e.g. they may swim at base movement rate without requiring any maneuver and suffer no penalties to movement, initiative, DB, Dodge or Sudden Dodge when underwater.

Cost: 20

Calming Voice

The character gains +10 to all Influence skills when used to calm down one or more individuals.

Cost: 10

Cold Resistance (minor)

The character has a significant resistance to natural cold. The temperatures at which the character has to make Stamina RRs is lowered by 20 degrees Celsius (*i.e. to -16 and -38 degrees Celsius, or 3 and -36 degrees Fahrenheit*).

Cost: 10

Cold Resistance (major)

The character has a very significant resistance to natural cold. The temperatures at which the character has to make Stamina RRs are lowered by 50 degrees Celsius (*i.e. to -46 and -68 degrees Celsius, or -50 and -90 degrees Fahrenheit*).

Cost: 20

Danger Sense

The character has become accustomed to peril. The character makes Combat Perception maneuvers at a -20 modifier rather than the normal -50 modifier.

Cost: 30

Diplomatic Training

The character has been trained for a career in diplomacy. This Talent gives a +10 bonus to Diplomacy, Public Speaking and one Mundane Lore (*such as Heraldry or a Culture Lore*).

Cost: 15

Enhanced Amphibious Senses

The character has exceptionally acute senses, earning them a special bonus of +10 to all General Perception checks. They can see as easily underwater as they can in air.

Cost 25

Exceptionally Dense Musculature

The character's body is much denser and heavier than normal. As a result, the character multiplies his or her racial weight modifier by 10 when determining their weight. The character receives a special +10 to OB and DB, but suffers a -50 penalty to Swimming.

Cost: 50

Fast Crafter

The character can make or repair mundane items using Crafts skill in half the normal time required

Cost: 15

Gills

The character has gills and can breathe underwater using their gills as easily as they breathe on land.

Cost 10

Good Memory

The character can accurately recall any conversations heard and describe any places, items, or individuals seen within 5 days. Thereafter, his memory fades normally.

Cost 10

Gregariousness

The character finds it naturally easy to cooperate on tasks with friends. This equates to a +10 bonus when the character makes a supporting maneuver to assist another individual.

Cost: 15

Hardiness:

Because of the character's extreme endurance, use the following Pace chart for the character:

Cost: 20

Pace	Time Increment
Walk	Indefinite, provided a CON above 25. For a character with a CON below 25 have a 1 hour per point of Con Bonus pace.
Run	30 minutes per point of Con Bonus
Fast Run	5 minutes per point of Con Bonus
Sprint	2 minutes per point of Con Bonus
Dash	1 minute per point of Con Bonus

Heat Resistance (minor)

The character has a significant resistance to natural heat. The temperatures at which the character has to make Stamina RRs are increased by 20 degrees Celsius (*i.e. to 52, 63, and 74 degrees Celsius, or 125, 145, and 165 degrees Fahrenheit*).

Cost: 10

Heat Resistance (major)

The character has a significant resistance to natural heat. The temperatures at which the character has to make Stamina RRs are increased by 50 degrees Celsius (*i.e. to 82, 93, 104 degrees Celsius, or 180, 200 and 220 degrees Fahrenheit*).

Cost: 20

Judge of Value

The character gains +10 to all Appraisal skills.

Cost: 10

Multiple / Peripheral Eyes [Lesser]

The character's eyes are spread far to the sides. Foes do not receive any flank bonuses when attacking the character (*unless the character is surprised*). The bonus for Rear attacks is reduced from +20 to +10. The character makes Perception rolls at +10.

Cost: 15

Manual Dexterity

The character is nimble of fingers. The Talent grants the character +10 to Locks & Traps, Pick Pockets and Trickery.

Cost 15

Mariner Training

The character has been trained in the nautical skills through an apprenticeship on the waterways or at sea. This Talent gives a +10 bonus to Climbing, Navigation and Sailing.

Cost: 15

Master Entertainer

The character is a natural entertainer. This Talent gives a +10 bonus to any three Artistic skills.

Cost: 15

Master of Vocation

The character is an expert in their chosen vocational skill set. This Talent gives a +20 bonus to one specific Vocation.

Cost: 15

Master Tracker

The character has an unnerving ability to follow the tracks of a target quarry over long distances. This Talent gives a +10 bonus to Navigation, Perception and Tracking.

Cost: 15

Master Trapper

The character is particularly skillful at catching wild animals and beasts using a variety of traps and snares. This Talent gives a +10 bonus to Camouflage, Foraging/Survival and Locks & Traps skill.

Cost: 15

Outrider Training

The character is an expert rider. This Talent gives a +10 bonus to Animal Handling, Riding and Combat Style & Maneuver: Mounted Combat.

Cost: 15

People Person

The character gains +10 to all Influence skills.

Cost: 20

Racial/Cultural Expert

The character gains +10 to all skills relating to one race or culture (*not their own*). This Talent may be purchased multiple times for a different race or culture each time.

Cost: 15

Sea Legs

The character is used to the rolling motion of boats and ships. The character reduces all penalties for maritime conditions and sea state conditions by 20.

Cost: 15

Shrewdness

The character is an exceptional evaluator of the hearts and minds of others and has a flair for social perception. The character receives a +5 to all Influence-based skill maneuvers

Cost: 10

Superior Blazing Speed:

The character's Base Movement Rate is increased by 10'.

Cost: 20

Silver Tongued

The character has mastered the arts of duplicity in spoken word and manner. This Talent gives a +10 bonus to Acting, Charm and Duping.

Cost: 15

Skilled Hunter

The character has been trained in the arts of killing at a distance. This Talent gives a +10 bonus to Sniping, Stalking & Hiding, and one missile or thrown weapon skill.

Cost: 15

Skilled Trader

The character is a shrewd dealer in goods and services. This Talent gives a +10 bonus to Appraisal, Duping and Trading.

Cost: 15

Speed Reader

The character can read at three times normal speed, i.e. the character can read and comprehend 750 words per minute, instead of 250 words per minute

Cost: 10

Street Smart

The character is well-versed in the subtleties of urban living. This Talent gives a +10 bonus to Duping, Streetwise, and Trading.

Cost: 15

Strong Swimmer

The character is a fast and strong swimmer. When required to make a successful Swimming maneuver, the character may move at Base Movement Rate rather than half Base Movement Rate. The character also gains a +10 bonus to Swimming skill.

Cost: 15

Wildly Nimble

The character is extremely nimble and light on his feet. He gains a special bonus of +15 to any Stalking and/or Acrobatic/Tumbling maneuvers.

Cost: 20

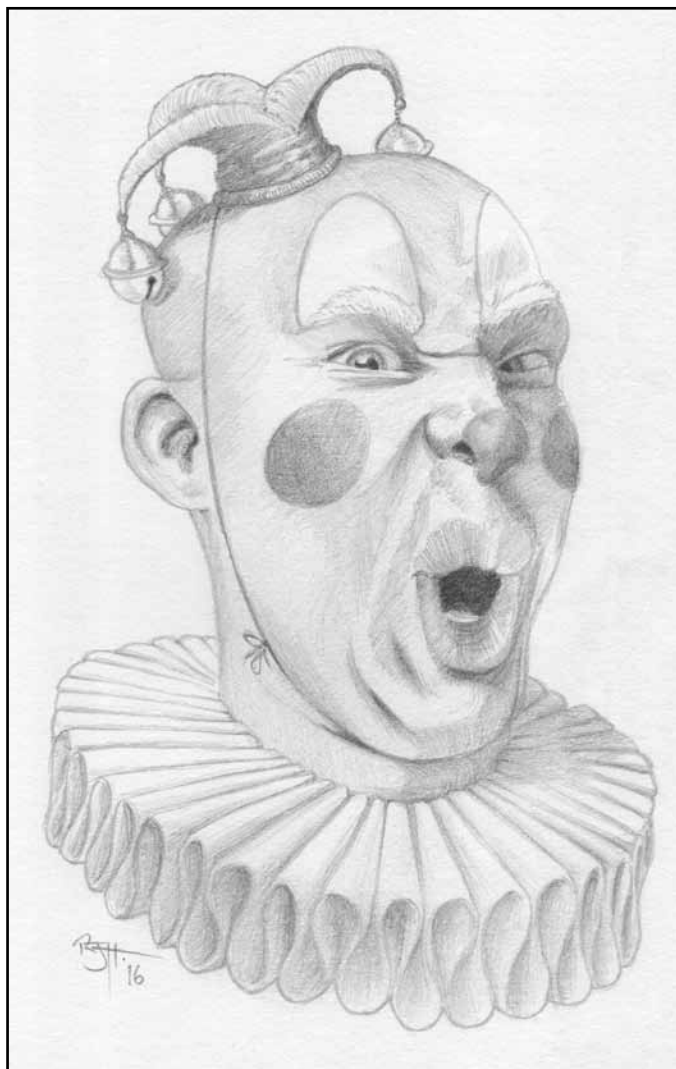
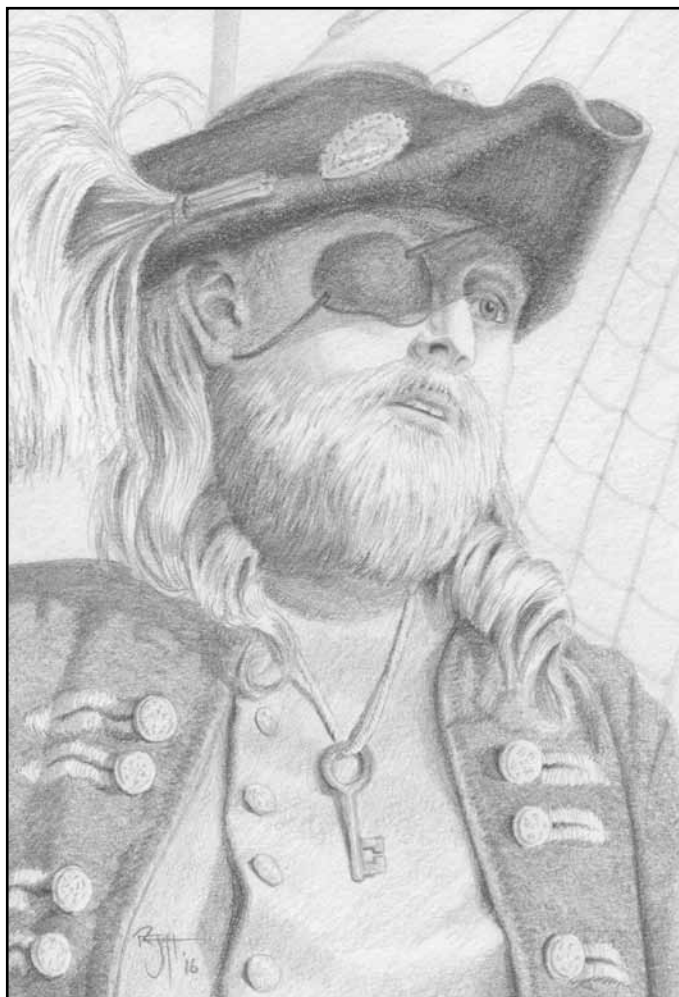
7 New Training Packages



Brotherhood of Aliens

Scattered throughout Coastal and Borderlands Cultures one can find large cosmopolitan cities known for how different they are from every other place. These cities are home to lots and lots of different people and often have reputations that precede them. Filled with shysters and rogues, criminals, pirates and jackanapes, cities like these owe their entire existence, tone and way of life to the fact that they are not in the central core of their home civilization. In these cities, there is always one group of sworn brothers who, despite their tendency to thievery and mischief-making, band together in common purpose or at least in common defense. The only thing common between these Alien Brothers is their differences. They bind these folks together.

Skill	Ranks
Brawling	2
Survival	2
Ambush	2
Locks & Traps	4
Pick Pockets	4
Stalking & Hiding	4
Streetwise	2



Clowns

Entertainment takes many forms. In many cultures, the archetype of the clown is a powerful figure who uses makeup, slapstick and a willingness to tweak the rich and powerful to subversively educate and entertain. Clowns can range from the court jester type to more serious forms. Sometimes they take on the aspect of a character particular to a culture. They are sometimes but not always associated with circuses or traveling entertainments.

Skills	Ranks
Acting	2
Dancing	2
Mimicry	2
Play Instrument	2
Charm	4
Public Speaking	2



Conquistadors

Almost every society has a group of adventurous types—the forward-lookers who others call nuts or crazy for the values they profess. These people are the ones who will set sail in ships that others would call barely seaworthy in search of lost or undiscovered continents. They fear little, except boredom. If sailing isn't their bag or they didn't grow up near the sea, the call of oceans of sand and grassy plains can exert just as powerful a call. For some, the call of adventure alone is a driving force. Without question, for others, what motivates is a desire not just to see but to exploit. There are a few cultures that put no value on the accumulation of wealth, but there aren't that many. In some societies, the Conquistadores serve as the spearhead to a more significant process of exploration, extraction and colonization that can occupy a culture for centuries.

Skill	Ranks
Weapon Skills (<i>choose</i>)	2
Rope Mastery	2
Signaling	2
Charm	2
Navigation	4
Sailing	4
Swimming (<i>if by sea</i>)	3

Envenomers

Respected, essentially, by no one but highly valued by those who need their services, the Envenomers are specialists in the development, use and deployment of poisons. Considered by many cultures to be akin to murderers, they are often driven from cities and towns and forced to live in the countryside. Cultures with strong senses of order and ethics would particularly loathe Envenomers. Be that as it may, their services are rarely in light demand.

Skill	Ranks
Herbcraft	5
Horticulture	2
Perception	2
Poisoning	5
Resistance: Stamina	1



Fisherfolk

The ability to make a living on the seashore requires a specialized set of skills requiring significant training. The Fisherfolk have, over the centuries, developed the ability to help anyone learn how to work in Aquatic and Coastal cultures and make a good living doing so. Moreover, because their training is so physically rigorous, even people who wouldn't have a particular need for this skill will find it a great boon if they have to operate for long periods of time in the water or below it.

Skill	Ranks
Chi Focus	2
Crafts	2
Foraging	5
Perception	1
Resistance: Stamina	2
Swimming	5

The Gamemasters of Anjaxe

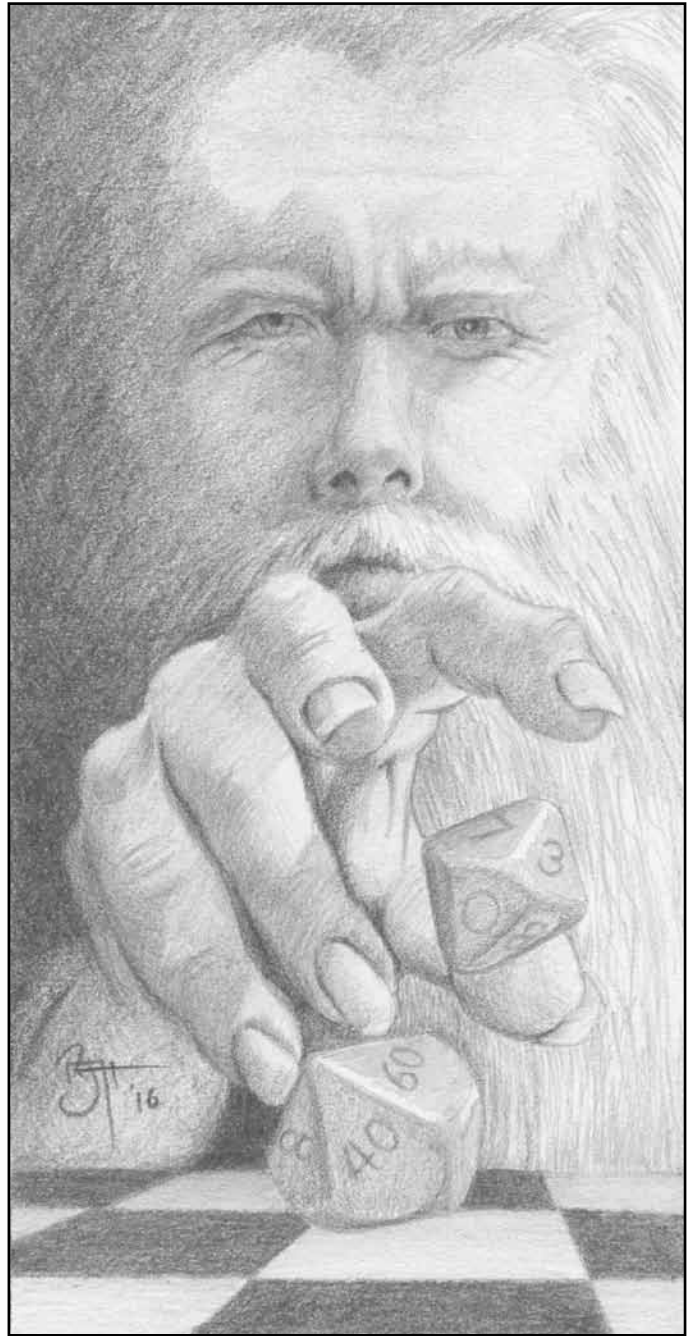
Who doesn't like a well crafted game? Be you Bentaxe, Dwarf, Gnome, Human or Tomalak, a game that is properly designed can bring about endless hours of diversion. Games that also take the form of stories can be even more compelling. The Anjaxe are known for many things, but their paramount creative skill is the construction of fine games. Capable of coordinating the play of more than 100 players, the Gamemasters of Anjaxe create stories from whole cloth or from the legends and history of the people they encounter. An Anjaxe game is worth a journey of months to play.

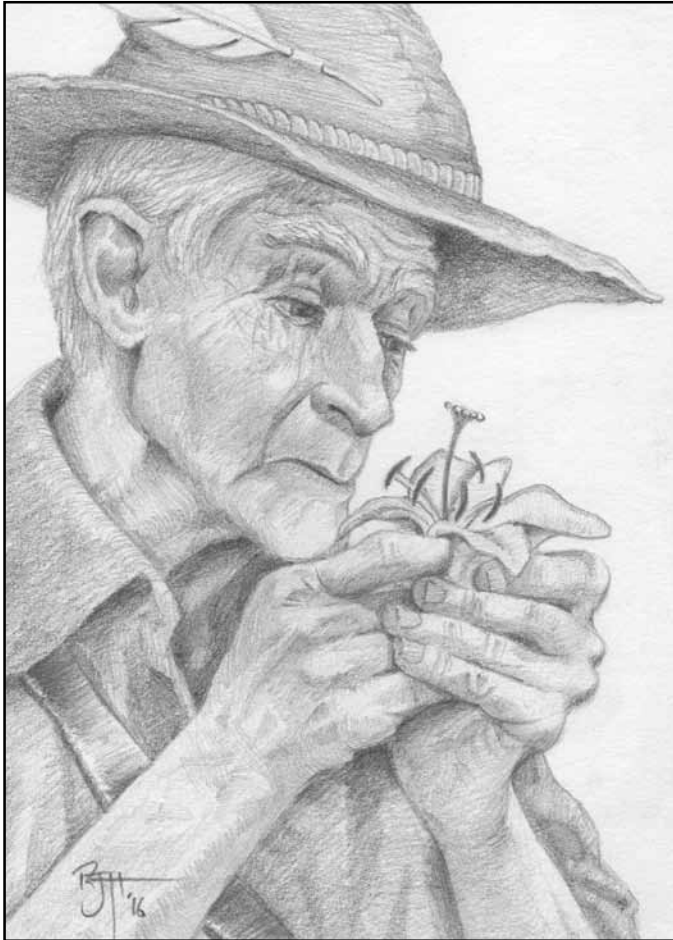
Skill	Ranks
Acrobatics	2
Mental Focus	2
Mundane Lore: Games	2
Duping	2
Storytelling	4
Trickery	2

Greensmen and Greenswomen

There's hardly a culture or race that doesn't value a beautiful garden. Well-kept landscape architecture doesn't design itself or maintain itself—that is the role of Greensmen and Greenswomen. Their knowledge of plants, design and the seasons is unparalleled.

Skill	Ranks
Appraisal (<i>Plants</i>)	2
Herbcraft	5
Horticulture	5





Knights Gastronomist

No one, and I mean no one, who encounters the Knights Gastronomist regrets the encounter. Charming rogues (*not the character class, but rather the personality type*) who could coax a Navrothor to buy ice (*not that they'd want to, mind you*), the Imperial, Sovereign and Munificent Order of Metabolical Knights, Gastronomist want nothing more than for you to be satisfied. They want your next meal to be one you won't forget. Your next cocktail? Sublime. A wine pairing with that sumptuous meal? What you will recall on your death bed. In short, they care about entertaining, cooking, preparing meals and ensuring that you've had a great time. Created a century ago by order of Emperor Darwish V, the Knights Gastronomist have become the most important of all of the Ordered Knights (*which number 47 in total*). When the Knights Gastronomist aren't cooking or learning the latest mixology tricks, they are keen adventurers hoping to learn even more about the food and drink ways of others.

Skill	Ranks
Mental Focus	5
Crafts: Cooking	4
Crafts: Mixology	4
Charm	2



Maskmakers

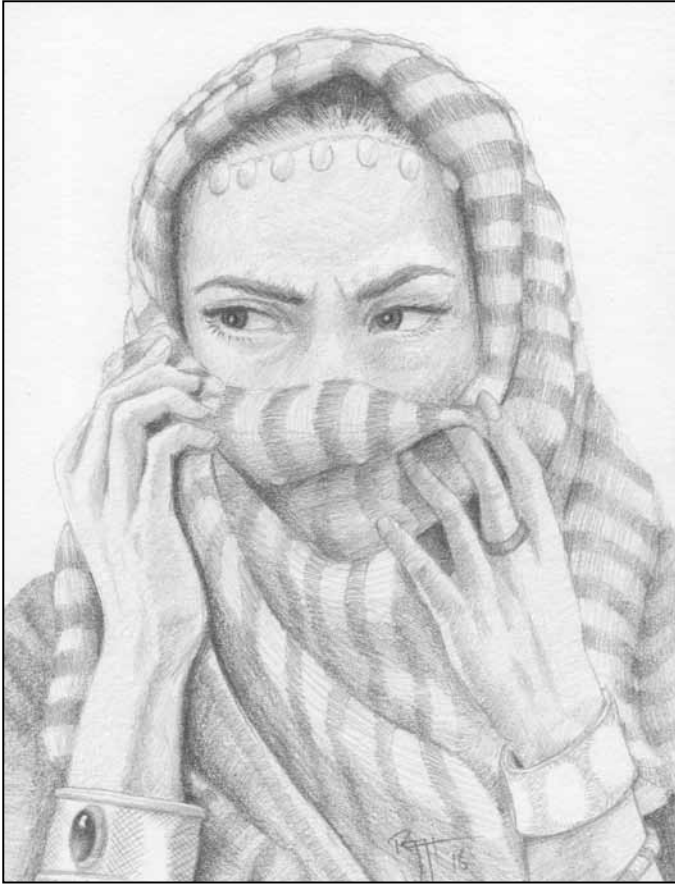
Covering the full range of techniques and skills required to provide others with the ability to pass unnoticed, the Maskmakers are the masters of crafting disguises for others in need. They are experts at clothing, wig-making, jewelry and costuming and most importantly, they have the judgment necessary to combine these techniques in ways that make it possible for others to succeed with whatever dissembling is required.

Skill	Ranks
Appraisal (<i>Clothes</i>)	2
Crafts (<i>Tailoring</i>)	3
Crafts (<i>Masks</i>)	3
Disguise	5

Nestorians

Found generally in the largest cities where there is a great deal of demand for storytelling (*and the available capital to support lots of storytellers*), the Nestorians are known for their prodigious memories. What separates a Nestorian from other kinds of storytellers is their love of detail. When one attends a telling from a Nestorian, the commitment is to a full evening's entertainment. Not everyone is a fan of Nestorian practice. It takes many years of experience to become one, and in that time, some Nestorians become more interested in detail than in the subtle craft of storytelling. It is one of the risks that a Nestorian is willing to take, after all, a storyteller is only as good as his or her material!

Skill	Ranks
Acting	3
Mimicry	2
Storytelling/Charm	7
<i>points between them, no more than 5 in either one</i>	
Public Speaking	3



Precisionists

Do not for a moment mistake the intentions of a Precisionist. Precision of movement. Precision of speech. Precision of intention. These warrior mages are best known for the scrupulous ways in which they practice their craft. They are disciplined, focused and intense to a person. Every Precisionist spends a number of years at the Crimson Enclosure, the monastery and intellectual center of the order. Nearly two-thirds of those who arrive in their youth at the Crimson Enclosure fail to graduate. Those who do are keenly sought after by any and all who value the assistance of the finest martial artists and most skilled practitioners of magic that can be found.

Skill	Ranks
MA Strikes	4
MA Styles (<i>choice</i>)	4
MA Sweeps	4
Attunement	4
Runes	4



Private Eye

There will always be a need for investigators who are not getting paid by the local authorities. For those needs, no one fits the bill quite like a private eye. These personal investigators inveigle themselves into their local setting with cat-like grace (*if they're any good*) and can get people to squeal even when they don't realize it. Most prevalent in Human societies, Private Eyes can be found among the Gryx, Halflings, Navrothor and Tomalak slightly less frequently.

Skill	Ranks
Diplomacy	3
Duping	3
Interrogation	5
Perception	5

Scavengers

There are always going to be those who are on the margins of their society. These people, shunned, ignored and forgotten, nevertheless will find a way to survive. Every culture creates wealth that it disposes of (*in our contemporary world, think of the amount of food thrown away or of electronic devices that are recycled*); the Scavengers have all the skills they need in order to endure by means of the waste of the rich. Common in Urban cultures, Scavengers are next most common in Deeping cultures, where there is so little that the skill of finding food and material is highly prized.

Skill	Ranks
Foraging	5
<i>(the most common environment in which the character lives)</i>	
Foraging	4
<i>(the second most common environment)</i>	
Streetwise	4
Stalking&Hiding	3



Servants of the Eighth Order

There were seven orders in the history of the Empire. Seven different visions of the balance between the forces of order that maintain society and the forces of chaos that stimulate growth and change. Seven visions...and seven different versions of collapse. Now, the Servants of the Eighth Order work day and night to establish and maintain the Eighth Vision of the Celestial Investigators. At the heart of the Eighth Vision is the belief that every eight years, everyone should change their vocation. A Servant of the Eighth Order commits to an eight year term of service in defense of the Celestial Investigators.

Skill	Ranks
Combat Styles (<i>choice</i>)	2
Weapon Skills (<i>choice</i>)	2
Mental Focus	2
Leadership	2
Arcane Lore	2
Armor	2



Singers of the Ascending Sun

This order of clerics is sworn to one aspect of the god Thumu, the god of the sun. This particular group of clerics honors Thumu in his aspect as the rising sun. Three centuries ago, a terrible schism arose among those who worship Thumu and when the civil war between the sides was resolved after more than a generation, two orders were brought into existence. The Singers of the Ascending Sun serve the coming of the day and the first flower of the morning. They do their best work between daybreak and mid-morning and swear off the casting of spells during the last two hours of daylight and the first two hours of evening. Thumu their patron encourages this behavior by changing the way Ascending Singers spend Power Points to cast spells. Spells cast in the Ascending cost 1/2 of their base cost. Spells cast in Setting cost double their base cost. All other times are normal.

Skill	Ranks
Singing	4
Climbing	3
Concentration	3
Charm	3
Religious Lore	3

Singers of the Setting Sun

This order of clerics is also sworn to one aspect of the god Thumu. Singers of the Setting Sun give homage to Thumu in his aspect as the setting sun. Singers of the Setting Sun are mindful of the transition from day to night and relish the coming of the darkness. These clerics know that there is evil in the world. Rather than reject that evil in a pollyanna way, they combat it on its own terms (*at least according to their sense of the way the world works*). Thumu encourages the Singers of the Setting Sun to focus on their values by changing the way Setting Singers spend Power Points to cast spells. Spells cast during the last two hours of daylight and the first two hours of evening cost 1/2 of their base cost. Spells cast between sunup and noon cost double their base cost. All other spells bear their normal cost.

Skill	Ranks
Singing	4
Brawling	2
Duping	2
Religious Lore	3
Stalking & Hiding	2

Stylites

It takes a special man or woman to make the kind of commitment that the Stylites call for. Named for a once-extinct order of extremely ascetic monks who lived years or decades perched atop elaborate pillars, the modern Stylites use the perch-dwellers as inspiration for their own ascetic practices. While many modern Stylites take the inspiration directly and sit atop pillars in the big cities, many others wander the streets of cities or the wilderness and perform acts of deprivation and dispense words of wisdom to followers and believers. Practiced most especially by humans, but Bentaxa have been known to be so moved as well.

Skill	Ranks
Contortions	2
Mental Focus	4
Perception	2
Survival	2
Endurance	5





The Traceurs

Not so interested in the rural heartland of civilization, The Traceurs can be found in the towns and cities, regardless of whether they are above ground, on the ground or in the Deep Warrens. Every culture that builds cities has people who embrace the Traceur mindset. Traceurs are all about moving in cities. They run, they jump, they live atop the roofs and on the sides of buildings. There is no structure that is secure against them. They are assertive in their use of the physical space and love competition, particularly against one another. If anything is true, they love to have a good time.

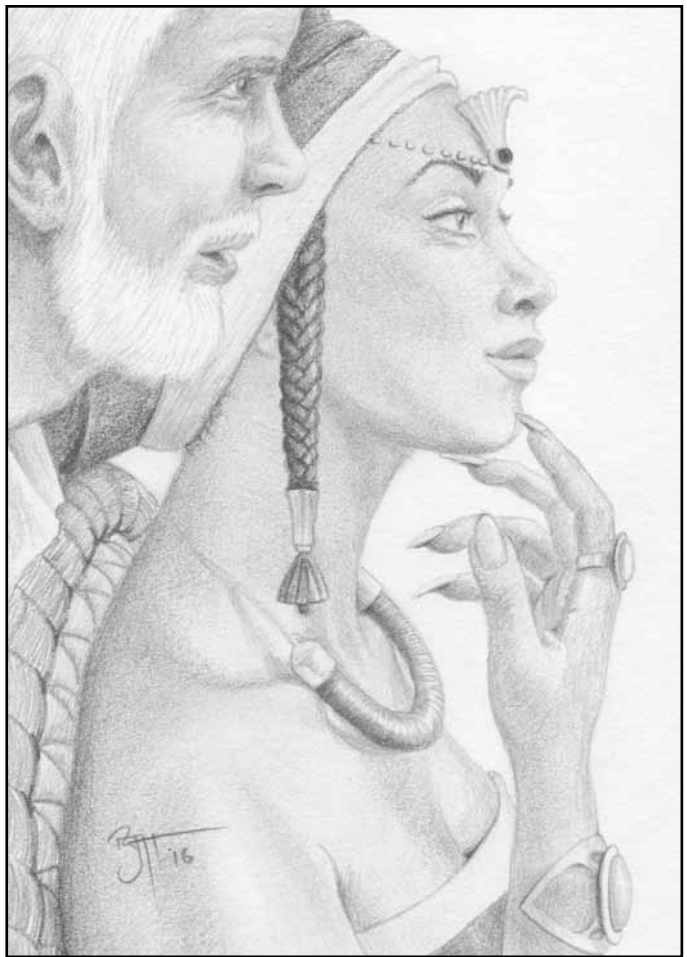
Skill	Ranks
Acrobatics	5
Climbing	4
Jumping	4
Locks & Traps	2
Streetwise	3

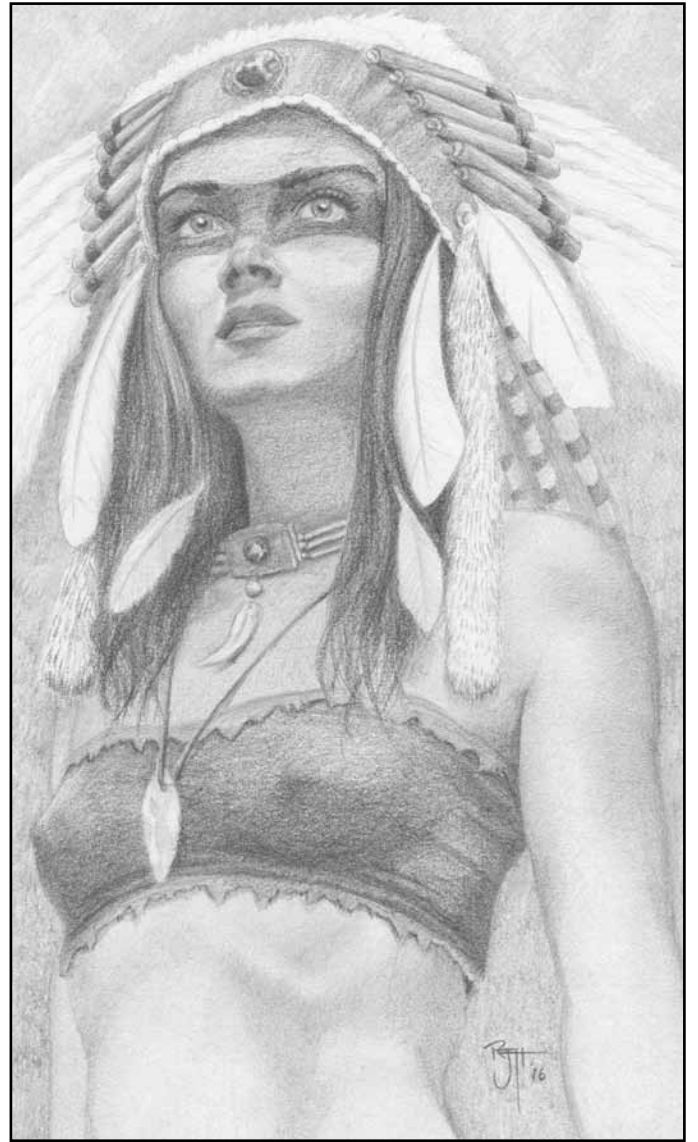
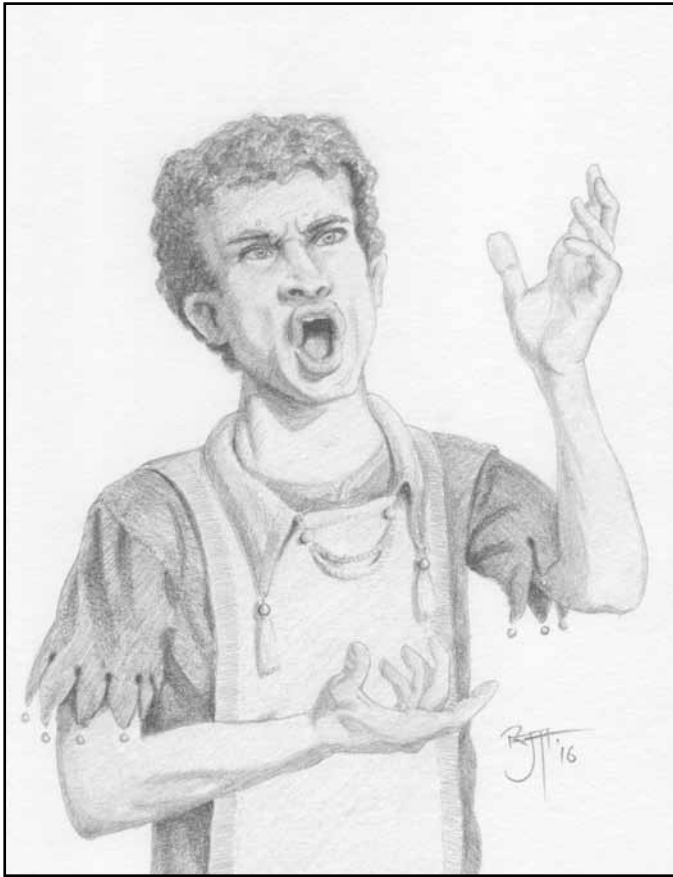
Translators and Interpreters

In complex cosmopolitan societies, the presence of multiple language communities makes the services of translators and interpreters a given rather than an exception. For highly sophisticated societies, the services of these learned individuals is worth its price in gold.

Skill	Ranks
Linguistics	10

(any combination of Spoken/Written, no more than 3 languages at a time)





The Ululators of Hark

The village of Hark is located in a steep mountain valley. Twice a day, howling winds blow in from first the west and then the east. As these winds pass through the mountains and the myriad passes that criss-cross these mountains, they cause extraordinary, keening sounds that are so intense and stimulating that they attract visitors from a continent away. The Ululators of Hark are trained in the singing of these sounds and, intrepid adventurers to a person, they travel the lands sharing their knowledge and looking for new songs.

Skill	Ranks
Dancing	4
Play Instrument (<i>choice</i>)	4
Singing	6
Public Speaking	3

Útilegumennarnir

Útilegumennarnir (*the outlaws*) is a name given to a clan of criminal brothers and sisters who make their lives entirely outside the realm of civilization. Usually, these Útilegumennarnir are driven from their civilization because of their crimes (*and because they escaped whatever justice was going to be meted out to them*). Sometimes, they leave society of their own free will seeking adventure or simply motivated by a desire to be entirely and completely free of rules and expectations. More than 80% of Útilegumennarnir are men, but in many respects the women are the ones who influence the others. Fiercely independent, Útilegumennarnir are rarely encountered in cities or even in towns. There are dozens of stories of Útilegumennarnir being hunted by the forces of civilization. Almost always these stories serve to accentuate the bravery and heroism of Útilegumennarnir defending themselves against wickedness.

Skill	Ranks
Storytelling	2
Brawling	4
Healing	2
Rope Mastery	2
Animal Handling	2
Foraging	2
Endurance	2
Stalking & Hiding	2

Ways of the Forestals

Throughout the lands where civilized people dwell, there are those who value cities and those who prefer towns. Still others range through the borderlands between civilizations walking and riding for hundreds of miles to accomplish their goals. Of those who range, the rarest are those who spend all of their time ranging in the Sylvan woodlands and deep forests that resist civilizations built on stone and rock. Knowing that their ways are not the ways of the Elves who make their lives in these woodlands, those rangers whose preference is for the woodlands have not only a special affinity for Elves of all sorts, but also the singular ability to understand the complex ways of woodlands. The most honored of these rangers are sometimes accorded a visit with the High Forestals, the ancient order of forest protectors who move in the deep shadows of the woods. Those sworn to the Ways of the Forestals spend a great deal of time learning how the forests work and are evangelical in the protection of these lands against predation.

Skill	Ranks
Climbing	4
Crafts: Woodworking	3
Herbcraft	2
Linguistics: Elven	S 1 / W 1
Foraging: Woodlands	2
Tracking	4



Witch Hunter

In all the cities and towns of the more repressed and repressive civilizations, one will find Witch Hunters. Fiendish interrogators with an overweening commitment to order and social cohesion, Witch Hunters serve religious, political or social organizations dedicated to resisting unruliness and disorder. These socially disruptive forces can take many shapes. This training package takes its name from the most typical expression of these forces. In culture after culture in which patriarchal forces dictate what is and what is not proper for women, women have come under the violent, watchful eye of Witch Hunters. Empowered by their societies to stamp out forces that might propel change, Witch Hunters use a variety of tools to prevent that change. Universally feared, except by those who give them their power, these orders are extraordinarily powerful, but almost always the first to be toppled when whatever gave them their power fails.

Skill	Ranks
Mundane Lore: Their Order	2
Charm	2
Diplomacy	2
Duping	2
Interrogation	5
Leadership	2
Disguise	2



8 Cultures of Cyradon & Shadow World



HARP provides players and gamemasters with two compelling settings—Cyradon and Shadow World. The objective of this section is to develop one culture in each setting using the Twenty Questions. This will afford gamemasters with a richer understanding of a culture from each campaign setting and offer players significant additional context for the characters they make within that culture.

Cyradon: The Theocracy of Asut and the Orsai Empire

Young, violent, expansionist, territorial and intolerant, the Orsai Empire, ruled by its secretive and all-powerful priestly cult known as the Theocracy of Asut, rules more of the continent of Anias than any other power. Now that they have at long last vanquished the hated city of Tarahir and driven its rebellious, areligious enemies of Memra from the continent, they can turn their attentions to even richer prizes like the Treaty Kingdoms and the rich kingdoms of the Skaldi. All that can be comfortably asserted is that, at least as far as the Orsai are concerned, their empire is still a bit too small for their tastes...and the opportunities presented by the weaknesses of their enemies a bit too large to be ignored.

The Orsai are a race of humans, one of many, that make the continent of Anias their home. As indicated above, they can best be differentiated from the others by the relative youth of their culture and their outsized commitment to violence as a way of getting along (*so to speak*) with other people. As presented in Cyradon, these are the broad strokes. What follows supplements these principles and explains them and their consequences.

The Folkways of the Orsai Empire

Environment Ways: Orsai

Topology: The dominant environment in the Orsai Empire is The Great Desert. The Orsai are people of that desert and its harshness dominates, shapes and determines the worldview of the Orsai. They believe that the environment must not just be managed, but conquered or it will destroy you. This is the lesson of the desert, a lesson the Orsai have learned well and have not yet forgotten, even though some of their territory now includes river basins that are quite lush and in the northern parts of the Empire, plains that are quite suitable for agriculture. To what degree these new lands will reshape the Orsai remains unclear.

Water: Though they would deny it, the demands of water have always been forefront in the imagination of the Orsai. From their earliest days, the routes of their conquests have taken them from water source to water source. Water was a grave problem for the Orsai in their prehistory and access to it in the Great Desert was by means of irregularly spaced oases. The Orsai are known for the speed of their cavalry and the ruggedness of their soldiers. These aspects of Orsai society

owe their existence to the patterns of water availability in the earliest days of their society.

Ecosystem: The heart of the Orsai Empire lies about twenty degrees north of the Equator and stretches for hundreds of miles north and south of this line. The Orsai territories are hot, often blazingly so. The only temperate relief comes in the most northerly parts of their Empire, recently acquired. In the south, the deserts give way to savannah, but the heat stays the same. Temperatures above 110 degrees are common ten months per year, rising into the 120s and even sometimes into the 130s in the deep desert during summer.

Weather: The heat is the dominant quality of Orsai weather. Nearly every accommodation to the heat has been developed by the Orsai to combat its malevolence. Rain is unheard of in the Great Desert, averaging less than 2 inches per year and coming almost entirely in the two months of what passes for winter. Dust storms in the Great Desert are common as winds from the west can be intense and pick up speed as they move over land.

Urban Ways: Orsai

Permanence: The Orsai pattern of building includes both permanent and non-permanent forms. Permanent settlements are built by the Orsai wherever they encounter water sources. There are dozens of oases settlements scattered throughout the Great Desert. The largest and oldest is as close to a capital as the Orsai have—SaiMemragair (*that which is especially holy to Memra*). SaiMemragair is as good an example as any of permanent settlements. It is home to about nine thousand Orsai and is constructed around the oasis. Far more common are the roving camps that house 80% of the Orsai population. Moving from oasis to oasis and pitching camp on the outskirts of the permanent settlements, these roving bands have discovered dozens of ways to manage their water needs while they are away from oases. It is these non-permanent settlements that give the Orsai their reputation for being “*everywhere, all at once.*”

Configuration: An Orsai city is built in a circular pattern around the core of the oasis that forms its center. In the center, nearest the water, are the palaces of the Asut Theocrats and the holy houses of Memra. Next out are the dwellings of the wealthy and powerful. These dwellings are connected to each other and to the inner districts by means of circular roadways. Out further still are the commercial districts and the dwellings of the poor who serve the needs of the wealthy and well-heeled. Beyond the city itself are the places where nomadic tribesmen build camps when they are in the vicinity of the city.

Aesthetics: Despite their reputation for brutality and military obsession, Orsai cities are actually quite beautiful. Their homes are carefully planned open structures that are designed to withstand the ferocious heat. They make extensive use of the palm leaves that are found everywhere to enhance

shade. This gives their cities a bucolic quality that stands in sharp contrast to their lived values.

Stratification: Orsai cities are marked by severe stratification based on access to water. The richest and most powerful live in the biggest homes closest to or adjacent to the water. The poorer you are in an Orsai city, the further away from water you'll find yourself. In the nomadic settlements, stratification is almost non-existent. Conflict between the permanently settled and the nomadic elements of Orsai culture is limited.

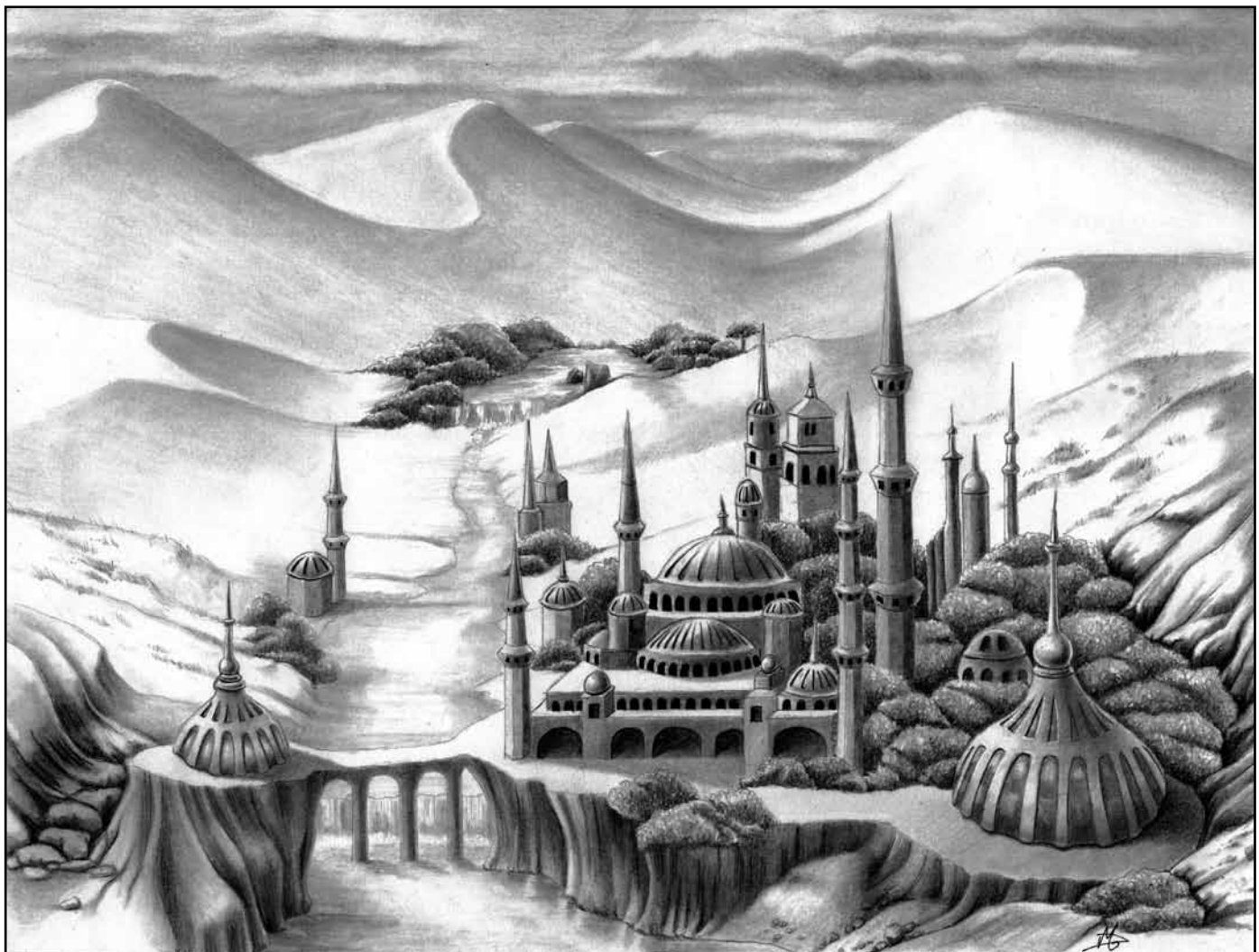
Family Ways: Orsai

Reach: Orsai have a complex understanding of family and familial obligation. Their tribal history is complex but completely understandable to any Orsai as it is one of the most important concepts taught to Orsai children. Orsai are divided into twenty-six tribes which are themselves divided into 157 clans. Allegiance is owed first and foremost, of course, to Memra and his servants the Asut Theocrats. Beyond this, allegiance is owed to the tribal chieftains and then the clan overlords. Each clan is divided into hundreds of different families, but social loyalty is owed not to father or mother, but

to clan and tribe. Clan overlords have immense direct power over the families in that clan.

Relationship: The essential pattern of relationship in the Orsai is family: clan: tribe: nation: Memra, with clan being the most powerful unit. Any Orsai child knows where he or she fits in this order. Every Orsai is sworn to uphold it.

Authority: Authority is complex in Orsai society because all authority rests, ultimately, with Memra who gives all things and takes away what is just. In day-to-day life, authority rests with whichever parent is present at home, with the father's power predominant if both father and mother are present. Decisions made within the family, though, are subjected to scrutiny at the next level, which is to say the clan. A clan leader hearing of something that a family did or plans to do that doesn't fit with his intention will correct the family leader, by force if necessary. This ensures that power in the complex Orsai family is held by the alpha at that level. If an alpha clan leader is disobeyed by one below him and that disobedience isn't swiftly corrected, the alpha clan leader will be deposed. This pattern is true through the tribal relationship. No one has ever contested with the Asut Theocrats and survived...



Idealization: The Orsai value directness and love nothing more than knowing their place. They believe their families reflect the desires of Memra and serve the Asut Theocrats with enthusiasm. They wouldn't change a single thing about their culture's way of managing family.

Marriage Ways: Orsai

Authority: Within the nuclear family, the power of the father strongly predominates in all matters, but only when he is at home. The unique nature of the Orsai military, its mobility and the fact that men are frequently away from home for considerable amounts of time means that women are de facto usually the most powerful nexus in the nuclear family. By custom, decisions made by women can not be countered or gainsaid by clan or tribal leaders, because women can not lead clans and tribes. So in practice, women are more powerful influences over family decisions than men.

Inheritance: Patrilineal inheritance is the only inheritance form that exists in Orsai society. Women do not inherit and do not own property. They can not control the descent of wealth or land.

Legitimacy: There are two immutable laws of marriage in Orsai culture. First, marriage is between one man and one woman. Second, marriage must be within tribe but not within clan. Men are allowed to have two additional women in their household from another tribe, but these women are not considered wives and their children would not inherit. Marriage within clan is tantamount to incest.

Love: Love is irrelevant to the Orsai. Their families are enterprise units meant to build up the next generation of Orsai warriors. To the degree that love forms in marriage, there is no objection to it. But nothing is done by anyone from the Asut Theocrats on down to encourage it.

Lifespan Ways: Orsai

Infancy and Childhood: Male children are prized beyond all other things to the Orsai. Female children are tolerated in the cities. In the nomadic population, there is a tendency towards female child exposure, particularly if the child is a second girl or if there have been recent deprivations. Women never expose their girls; only men make such decisions. Children who do survive infancy are treated like little family royalty and are allowed all manner of naughtiness and rambunctiousness...at least until age 6 for boys and age 8 for girls. At these transition ages, the children are subjected to gender-specific education, with boys being trained in warrior skills (*horsemanship, archery, etc.*) and girls being educated in home skills. "Reluctant" children are forcibly corrected; children unable to perform their gender-specific duties are sacrificed to Memra.

Adulthood: The transition to adulthood begins in boys when the hair on the upper lip becomes dense enough to require shaving. At this point, the boy's family initiates a two-week long ritual, managed by elders in the clan, to transition



completely from boy to man. This ritual involves endurance in the desert, suffering deprivation and aiding allies. Support is not offered by the elders. About 10% of boys die during this ritual. Girls transition to adulthood at first menses. Though legally able to wed at this point, in Orsai custom, young women generally remain unwed until 16.

Elderhood: Because of the endemic violence inherent in Orsai culture, there are not that many elders to speak of. Elders that do exist manage the rites of passage for children and manage the affairs of either the clan or the tribe, depending on how powerful they are. Tribal elders are especially powerful as they have direct contact with the Asut Theocrats and therefore have the capacity to shape the "public policy" of the Empire (or at least direct its energies in a particular direction).

Transitions: Death is a powerful event to the Orsai. Death rituals demand three days of mourning, the rending of flesh and shaving of hair and the cremation of the corpse in a public ceremony. Even in victory, an Orsai battleground is a charnel landscape.

Rank Ways: Orsai

Nobility: Strictly speaking, the Orsai do not have a nobility. There is a social order that, to the untutored eye, might seem to be a nobility, though. Orsai noble status is conferred in battle and lost due to age, weakness or cowardice. At the top of the social pecking order is the "emperor." This is how the Orsai word is translated by others. It has the flavor of "vanquisher," more than emperor. The person who stands astride Orsai society is the most badass warrior there is. He who isn't defeated. The alpha of alphas. The moment that man can't defend his position, he is replaced by a new alpha of alphas and so forth. Beneath the emperor are tribal and clan leaders and warriors in the thousands, most of whom believe they can, with a bit of good fortune, become emperor.

Mobility: Mobility is the predominant social reality of rank in the Orsai Empire. Because one's status depends almost entirely on military success and the ability to maintain one's reputation, there is nothing but mobility. Tribes are always

assessing each other versus other tribes...clans against clans and so on down to the individual.

Exclusivity: Social power is wielded by the powerful who possess their rank based on their military skill. Atop that pyramid is the real power in the Empire - the Theocracy of Asut, who dominate the society but entirely behind the scenes.

Coercion: Just as mobility is the preeminent reality of Orsai life, so is coercion. The entire nation's social, political and cultural relationships are based on the ability of the more powerful to coerce the less powerful. This is the essence of Orsai life.

Gender and Sexuality Ways: Orsai

Definitions: The Orsai have two biological sexes. Children who do not rigidly conform to the physical expectations of these two biological sexes are exposed.

Norms: As indicated above, there is no tolerance for gender ambiguity among the Orsai. One is either and clearly male or female. Gender norms for the growing child are clearly expressed and rigidly adhered to. A child who demonstrates any predilections that belong to the other gender would be viciously and repeatedly corrected until such behavior is suppressed. The Orsai are a lusty people with an expansive sexual interest. There is no expectation that sexuality be restricted to marriage. Having said that, only children produced within a marriage bond are considered to be members of a family with capacity to inherit. Children born outside these bonds find themselves at adulthood taking up with nomadic bands or simply becoming foot soldiers in the Empire's large armies.

Non-Normative Patterns: Non-normative patterns are violently suppressed in Orsai culture and come with near constant challenge to one's social status. Orsai are expected to conform to the expectations of society with regard to marriage, gender and sexuality. Failure to do so results in such damage to status and loss of face that the only real solution is to leave one's family forever.

Relations: Men and women in Orsai society have a great deal of respect for one another and the roles they play in society. Men who are violent against their wives are shamed by other men, as it is considered indecent to assert one's self against someone who isn't able to defend himself (*it would be like a grown man challenging a six-year-old boy*). This derives in part from the way Memra's own relationships are constructed and understood by the Asut Theocrats.

Association Ways: Orsai

Distance: Because most Orsai relationships are based on the family: clan:tribe social structure, there are not many other ways that the Orsai place value on association. Clan ties are the strongest ties outside of the nuclear family. It is only those marginal Orsai who have not left their civilization but do not have the status to participate in its regular structures who have strong association. Nomadic bands bind together

very strongly but without expectation of that bond becoming permanent. Thieves, rogues and merchants, who in other cultures would be at odds, are actually supportive of one another in Orsai territory because they need each other to endure.

Fraternity: Fraternity-like forces are weak among Orsai men because they are not given over to hobbies and friendships. Most Orsai males see others as competitors and keep a certain distance. Orsai women, particularly in the cities, have well-established and generally enduring friendships based on personal interests and sometimes based on just the fact that they live nearby. Orsai women are not particularly plugged into the same status-making tendencies as Orsai men and so are much more congenial.

Guild: Guild-like forces are non-existent among the Orsai. This is a pity as their existence would not doubt improve the quality of their military efforts (*which, mind you, are already formidable*).

Obligation: One's obligation is to one's superior in the chain-of-command. Ultimately, Memra is at the top of that chain of command and what the Asut Theocrats say is law.

Order Ways: Orsai

Sphere: The Orsai Empire is first and foremost militaristic and expansionistic. Its instincts are to violently suppress those who would undo or militate against these tendencies. Servants of other gods, for instance, are not tolerated. Those who value scholarship over conquest are seen as so beneath the dignity of the Orsai that their lives are at risk because they are so low in the social pecking order. War is Memra's purpose. So the purpose of war is expansion of empire and the purpose of empire is the perpetuation of war.

Joining: Within Orsai culture there is a special order who serve the Asut Theocrats (*and the High Theocrat himself*) directly. These servants act as enforcers, judges and executioners of those who violate the will of Memra. Their word is law; their capacity to destroy clans and tribes through both military and spiritual assault means they are never disobeyed. But they know their limits. They have never enforced themselves on the alpha of alphas.

Tenacity: Only a more powerful individual would have the ability to resist the ordering forces at work in Orsai society. If an Orsai can cause a superior to yield, that Orsai becomes the superior. This is true from the smallest family to the largest clan.

Presence: In the Orsai Empire, everyone wants to be powerful, because power is status and status is wealth, access, property and glory. There is precious little incentive to resist the core values of the Empire and stay within its borders. Orsai encountered outside the Empire, therefore, have completely rejected the Empire's values, its religion and their own families...at great cost. Many of these Orsai would be hunted by their families or clans because their mere existence is shameful.

Authority Ways: Orsai

Legitimacy: All legitimacy in the Orsai Empire derives from Memra. In essence even though the empire has an emperor the real emperor is Memra himself. In this way, the Orsai are truly a theocracy, which is to say, they are ruled by a god. Because they speak for Memra, the Asut Theocrats have the greatest legitimacy in the Orsai state. This is contrasted with the legitimacy earned by armed men in battle. The emperor serves Memra, who is in turn served by the Asut Theocrats.

Power: Power in Orsai contexts is either straightforward or complex, depending on where you stand. It is straightforward if you are in a military chain-of-command because your orders come from men who have demonstrated in battle that they are your better in combat. You believe they could kill you if they wished and so you conform. The moment you believed that you could be the one giving orders, you would challenge your superior...and then all would see the result. It is complex because no matter what you do physically, no matter how great your martial skills, you are not going to be deciding who your enemies are. That is the job of the Asut Theocrats...not the Emperor. This fundamental conflict hasn't been put to the test because the Empire is still young.

Authority: All Authority rests with Memra and therefore with the Asut Theocrats. Their Palatine's travel with the armies of the Empire and ensure that the will of the Theocrats is carried out precisely. Only the High Theocrat and his advisors make political decisions, speak for the empire, negotiate treaties, levy taxes and the like. The Emperor does none of these things...

Participation: Because all worship Memra, everyone participates in the maintenance of authority and legitimacy in the Orsai Empire. There is great social pressure to conform, status is earned only within a conforming context and status can be lost if one doesn't conform. A soldier disobeying a Palatine would be considered so disruptive that he would be immediately challenged (*and likely killed*). Disobeying a direct instruction from a Theocrat? Unheard of.

Freedom Ways: Orsai

Freedom: Orsai values are not based on freedom but rather on obligation. The Orsai see themselves as servants of Memra and expect to be in service until their death. They have the freedom to choose the way in which they serve, of course, but limited other freedoms. Notions of freedom are worrying to the Orsai because they do not help one understand one's relationships and place in society.

Liberty: Within the context of this impoverished understanding of freedom, there is much that speaks to liberty in Orsai culture. Provided they do not violate the precepts of Memra or draw the attention of the Asut Theocrats, families have significant power to make binding decisions. The same is true of clans. Each clan, in fact, imparts its own values onto its tribe—this is why each tribe is vastly different one to the next (*when one would think, given how coercive the society is,*

that there would be little difference). As long as Memra's will is obeyed, almost anything might be ok.

Binding: The Orsai are not a free-thinking, open-minded people. They have very specific expectations of themselves and no patience for those who do not do what they're supposed to do. Within a family context, a mother will discipline a child ferociously if obligated to. The same is true from tribe to clan and from clan to family. The same is true in a military command or within the Asut Theocracy. Failure to conform is considered a spiritual crime and is corrected by the Palatines.

Directionality: If Memra has taken a position on a matter, then the Orsai are expected to obey and conform, under penalty of death. Memra hasn't taken positions on everything, however, and if Memra doesn't care, the society doesn't care. It's ultimately all about the degree to which one can push up in the pecking order and resist being driven back.

Wealth Ways: Orsai

Objectification: Shiny things... the Orsai do love shiny things...particularly if they've been pillaged from some weakly held city worthy of being conquered by Memra's holy armies. The Orsai are almost laughably conventional in this regard—coins, jewelry, gems, bullion—these are high value items to the Orsai, and the more the better. Although there is little inclination to slave taking in the Orsai, they sometimes do this with exceptionally gifted people.

Status: Wealth is lovely and all, but it confers no status in Orsai society. Only military skill gives status outside of the context of the Asut Theocrats. Even comparing clan to clan within a tribe or tribes versus tribes, wealth isn't a determining factor.

Gift-giving: The Orsai are not gift-givers, viewing such behavior as undermining of status.

Reciprocity: There is no expectation of reciprocity among the Orsai. "*What's mine is mine,*" is a typical belief. Should wealth be needed to support a military enterprise, it might be taxed by the Asut Theocrats, but there would be no expectation that one would volunteer his wealth before such a levy occurred.

Work Ways: Orsai

Subsistence: While there is nothing more important to the Orsai than military conquest, there is still the all-important matter of where the food is going to come from. For the nomadic Orsai, it's a matter of keeping their herds safe from the sand and the heat and making full use of whatever the animals have to offer. In the cities, it's a matter of life and death whether crops get planted and livestock is attended to. Plenty of men are not suitable for the rough and tumble of military life—these men form the bedrock of the merchant and farming class. No social status, but great social importance.

Feudality: It's not really fair to describe the relationships between workers in Orsai society as having a feudal quality. Recalling that most Orsai men live their life in a military context, separate from the way we might understand "work," this type of relationship is just not important.

Ethic: Work is something people who are too weak to fight do. Its critical role in society is undervalued because power is held by people who don't work in any properly understood definition of the word.

Slavery: The Orsai are neither anti-slavery or pro-slavery. There are some slaves who are kept by individual Orsai and there are some slaves held by the Asut Theocracy (*primarily linguists*). In the capital, with a population of about 9,000, there are fewer than 150 slaves.

Leisure Ways: Orsai

Leisureliness: The Orsai are not the most leisure focused people in the world. They are first and foremost soldiers. Soldiers are not constantly fighting, however, and in the copious downtime, Orsai get up to all manner of activities. They are inveterate gamblers (*there's always a pair of dice available if you get three Orsai together*) and enthusiastic athletes. Most of their leisure activities, it must be said, serve the cause of becoming better soldiers.

Competitiveness: Orsai are fanatically competitive. Because Orsai culture is so heavily dependent on a pecking order that is established hour-by-hour sometimes, any game or activity has embedded within it the possibility of subtle status change. This makes absolutely everything feel like a battle to the death, even if it's just a simple game of dice.

Athletics: Orsai athletics all simulate combat in one way or another. They have a strong predilection for one-on-one contests, preferring them much more than team sports. Their most popular sports are wrestling (*of which they have seven recognized forms ranging from the technical and austere to the bloody and extreme*) and field games that involve throwing an assortment of objects like javelins or carrying heavy objects like boulders.

Diversions: Gambling is the big vice of Orsai that isn't an athletic contest. Settled Orsai in the cities are drawn to athletic contests. There is very little by way of "culture" in the Orsai Empire. There is no support for poets, musicians, dramatists or the like.

Dress Ways: Orsai

Practicality: Orsai are practical to a fault. They have limited interest in non-athletic diversions, no traditions of an artistic type and no interest in fashion as a concept. They are soldiers, athletes, workers and priests. Their dress reflects the nature of their work, is plain, rugged and purposeful. The nature of Orsai soldiery means that they are actually high quality leather workers and armorsmiths, but it wouldn't occur to them that this is true.

Status: Clothing has no effect on how an Orsai understands another Orsai's status.

Jewelry: The Orsai frequently take booty in the form of jewelry and have no problem wearing it. As they don't make any jewelry, an Orsai wearing jewelry has seized it in conquest. Some tribes have a tradition of wearing this kind of booty. For others, it is regarded as showy and inappropriate. Again, any jewelry on an Orsai is going to be looted.



Body Modification: Orsai are enthusiastic practitioners of body modification. They engage in tattooing, scarification and some tribes have the custom of branding to mark particularly hard-won battles and conquests.

Food and Drink Ways: Orsai

Locavore: Orsai foodways are a study in contrast. They have a great affinity for dairy products (*primarily from goats*) and eat a great deal of meat. In the oases, cuisine features rice, dried fruits, fish and assorted imported goods. Orsai have a long tradition of fermentation. They ferment nearly anything, but have a particular affinity for fermented dairy and certain kinds of fermented goat milk.

Status: Status among the Orsai does not derive from food nor is it marked by food. Everyone pulls their weight in the military—all need to be well nourished.

Embellishment: The Orsai do not have a history of making extensive use of spices or herbs. They favor them when they can get a hold of them, particularly when on campaign. In the oases, there is more of a tradition of using fermented bean pastes and sauces that are soy-like.

Technique: Grilling, grilling and more grilling. The Orsai love grilled meats and have no use for other techniques.

Language Ways: Orsai

Dialect: Dozens of languages are spoken within the territory of the Orsai, owing to the rapidity of their conquests beyond the great desert. The dialect spoken in the core of the culture is called Orseen. Prayers to Memra are conducted in Orseen and the priestly class conducts all of its affairs in Orseen.

Majority: The majority of people in the core of the country speak Orseen, but on the limits, Orseen is a language of the ruling minority. To the degree that these conquered peoples follow Memra, their language use would align them with the Orsai. The Empire expects people to speak to it and not the other way around. The priesthood uses only Orseen. Everyone on the frontier realizes that no matter how much they might want others to speak Orseen, it doesn't matter because no one understands it (*at least not yet*).

Pidgins: Pidgin languages are evolving on the frontiers of Orsai territory because there's no other way to ensure communication. Trade pidgins exist with the River Cities and cities of the north. No religious pidgins have developed yet.

Naming: Orsai have a complex naming scheme with four elements. The

first element is the clan name. This is followed by the family name. This is then followed by the personal name and then a language particle (*a vowel of some kind*) that denotes membership in a tribe. So, Zeleth Kevando Ichnora'ou would be understood this way. Ichnora is the personal name. He is a member of the tribe Oulansai which is indicated by that 'ou sound at the end of the personal name. He is a member of the Kevando family which is part of clan Zeleth.

Magic Ways: Orsai

Value: The use of magic is a criminal act to the Orsai. The priesthood expends a considerable amount of its resources attempting to extirpate the use of magic by the Ghersal (*the magic-men*) and other magicians. Magic use in the Orsai core is essentially unheard of. In the thousands of miles of periphery and frontier, however, it is commonplace.

Occasion: There is no context in which the use of magic is acceptable to the Orsai. There are no problems that the Orsai would solve using magic.

Constraint: Magic use is punishable by death in Orsai lands; it is abomination.

Instruction: There is no magical instruction in the Orsai Empire.

Supernatural Ways: Orsai

Reason: The Orsai are not a people given to scientific explanations to anything. They are not learned and have little patience for "*book learning*." The answers they need come to them through the teachings of the Asut Theocrats, priests or their parents.



Reflection: Orsai culture is focused on status, glory, military honor and conquest. These values are reinforced day-by-day by the teachings of the Asut Theocrats. Memra is a demanding, austere divinity. His sigil, the sun, is both life giving and foreboding. Recall that temperatures in the core territories can climb into the 130s. Under those circumstances the sun isn't a friend—it's a bitter enemy. This is not to say that Orsai view Memra as the enemy. Rather, they know that the alpha of alphas is Memra himself and what he demands is almost impossible to pay.

Ritual : Orsai build great temples and houses of worship for Memra in the cities. These structures are built from wood (*like palm*) or from bamboo. Stone structures are not built. They are open and meant to admit the light of the sun in such a way that it illuminates a cult figure of the god. In the armies, the ritual practice is to welcome Memra at sunrise with a sequence of prayers and to bid him well in the afterworld at sunset through a different sequence of prayers.

Soul: Orsai have a wide range of devotion to Memra. Everyone believes. Many believe fervently. Some people undertake pilgrimages to the deepest desert in order to be embraced by the full power of the sun. Orsai is known to be a guardian of warriors. In this respect, the warrior culture loves him, worships him and respects him.

Self-Reflection Ways

There are two areas where the Orsai have demonstrated limited capacity to understand themselves. The most important is that they do not understand the relationship between their expansionism and the problems that come with expansion that they are increasingly having to face. The frontier of their territory is large and gets larger by the day. These frontiers are not as sparsely populated as the Orsai core is and they have no idea how to govern these tens of thousands of people who don't speak their language, share their values or care anything for being dominated. The balance between desire for empire (*high*) and capacity to govern conquered territories (*low*) is a significant problem for the Asut Theocrats and one that they have given no consideration of. What the Theocrats don't realize is that this problem, answered by an Emperor who doesn't feel beholden to the Asut Theocrats and believes he has a personal relationship with Memra, would completely undermine the whole conceptual framework for the existence of the Orsai Empire. The second relates to Memra himself and the recent campaign against Tarahir. How should the Orsai understand the fact that Memra, worshipped by the Tarahiri, allowed the Orsai, who also worship Memra, to conquer the great city? Of course the way they describe it is to say that the Memra worshipped in Tarahir was a corruption—a false expression of the god. But even the Theocrats know that there is a critical relationship between their Memra and the other Memra. The fact that they ignore that relationship doesn't mean that someone else might ask a question that can't easily be answered.

Shadow World: The Vasai Republic (Lydians and Ochu)

The campaign setting Shadow World, published originally for Rolemaster is a massive sandbox with more than enough content for a gamemaster looking for almost any kind of campaign flavor. Richly appointed with races both mortal and immortal and places that run an environmental gamut from icy to jungle, Shadow World gives an enterprising gamemaster an opportunity to build high fantasy campaigns or low, urban campaigns or those set in the wilderness or even undersea campaigns. Extraordinary variety...the stuff of life and the foundation for gaming in Shadow World.

Folkways of The Vasai Republic

Near the South Pole is a landmass featuring one of Shadow World's most intriguing environments—the Ice Grottoes. These ice caves are monstrous underground systems large enough to house cities and civilizations. Lacking rain but not water, they sustain themselves through springs and the ice. Great thermal vents (*a common enough environment to encounter in the South Polar Region*) provide the heat necessary for a people adjusted to cold (*the Lydians*) to sustain a creative, innovative and comparatively rich society. Founded more than a century ago by enterprising Lydians, the Vasai Republic is a compelling case study of a culture on the make but in transition. The social relationships upon which the Republic is founded are interesting, problematic and, perhaps, unsustainable over the long term, and this is to say nothing of the larger questions of magic and sorcery that are central to their culture. Nor have the Lydians sorted out their relationships with the minority Ochu whose social power in the Republic is limited by their history with the Lydians. This relationship is called "*The Trials*," and marks a three-generation long period where the Lydians essentially stripped the Ochu of any power, respect or authority over their own lives. These policies have ended, but they remain a dominant feature of Ochu life.

Environment Ways: Vasai

Topography: The entirety of the Vasai Republic is located within five massive ice grottoes (*and their tributary tunnels and out-grottoes*) some hundreds of miles north of the South Pole. Despite the forbidding nature of the weather outside of the grottoes, within the grottoes moderation (*but not heat*) is the order of the day. The Vasai grottoes run for more than one hundred miles beneath the surface of the ice, encompassing thousands of square miles of territory.

Water: Water is the least of the concerns of the Vasai. They have water in abundance as ice and as underground rivers. Each of the five grottoes has a chamber with a falls that serves as a central meeting space, zocalo and market.

Ecosystem: Riverine is perhaps the best way to describe the ecosystem of the Vasai Republic. It certainly isn't polar or arctic as there are no Vasai settlements (*with the exception of a*

military base at Ocean's Reach) outside the grottoes. The rivers that flow within the Republic's territory are extraordinarily rich in mineral wealth, fish and water-based vegetation.

Weather: Depends on where you're standing! At the surface, the temperatures average 40 degrees below zero. Summer temperatures will rise regularly about 10 degrees, but only in July and August. Weather systems at the surface are known for their ferocity with winds nearing 80 miles per hour commonplace. Within the grottoes themselves, the temperature is a steady 54 degrees without overcast, winds or weather of any kind.

Urban Ways: Vasai

Permanence: Both the Lydians and the Ochu favor permanent settlement. There is no nomadic tradition in the Vasai Republic—people live where they were born, more or less. Vasai settlements are built from stone, never from ice, as the temperatures in the grottoes are a steady mid-50s. The Vasai respect the historicity of their buildings. Very little is torn down and they are expert at repurposing.

Configuration: Vasai cities are built outwards from the central falls that is the core feature of each of the Ice Grottoes and inwards from the outer gates that mark the end of the grottoes and the beginning of "*outside*." The Lydians are orderly by nature and this is reflected in the fact that their residential and commercial districts are kept separated. Mining is not conducted in the grottoes themselves, rather, mines are dug from tributaries down into the bedrock.

Aesthetics: The Vasai are not great lovers of paint or adornment, but they have a singular command of stonework and form. Their structures are heavy but possess an elegance and a propriety in the space they occupy. They "*fit*" in those grottoes more than any other structure would. They aren't dainty, though!

Stratification: The Ice Grottoes are dominated by the social stratification that is fundamental to the Vasai Republic. Each Ice Grotto has a relationship with the other four based on history and these relationships are if not fixed certainly difficult to transform. Within each grotto there is further stratification. The closer one is to the ground, the higher one's status (*it gets colder higher up*). The closer one is to the center of the settlement, the better.

Family Ways: Vasai

Reach: Lydian family life is governed by the extended nuclear family. Mothers/fathers and their children compose the core of the family, but all families honor their parents and grandparents, not quite as though they were gods and not exactly like they were honored ancestors, but close. There is a reverence that is directed towards grandparents in particular.

Ochu family life was disrupted by the Trials. Ochu families that are intact are inward-looking and self-protecting. Mothers have significantly more power in Ochu family

decision making than fathers do. Men are expected to follow instructions from women.

Relationship: Lydians have a pretty expansive view of who they are in relationship with. Essentially, anyone who is Lydian and is resident in their grotto is close enough to get at least a modicum of respect. They know who they are very closely related to (*and those people have special status*), but see everyone from their grotto as "*cousin-like*."

Ochu do not view Lydians as being akin to family and keep a certain distance from them whenever possible. Many Ochu do everything in their power to avoid interacting with Lydians, though that is not really possible.

Authority: In Vasai, both Lydian and Ochu parents have authority over their children. Lydians, particularly of an older generation, see Ochu children as being part of their responsibility. This gravely annoys Ochu.

Idealization: For a Lydian, the ideal family is one where all of its members enjoy harmonious time together and where the grandparents give valuable and cogent advice. To an Ochu, the ideal family is one that is intact and hasn't been disrupted by some scheme or act of the Lydians.

Marriage Ways: Vasai

Authority: Marriage in Vasai is a civil relationship entered into between the couple and facilitated by a civil magistrate. For a Lydian, that is sufficient. For an Ochu, this is the first step. The Ochu spiritual tradition (*Ochu'ungra*) compels an Ochu couple to swear love and fealty before an idol of the Aspect of the Family.

Inheritance: Wealth passes from married partner to married partner before it passes to any children. Male children are presumed to stand first in line for inheritance over female children. Among the Lydians, females may only inherit if there are no males in the extended family. Among the Ochu, it is the parent's decision who inherits, boy or girl.

Legitimacy: In both communities, marriage is between one man and one woman. No multiple marriages; no same-sex marriages are legitimated by the civil authorities. The Ochu do have a ceremony for same-gender couples that is sworn before an idol of the Aspect of Love. Vasai society does not consider that relationship to be marriage. Divorce is allowed in the Lydian community—it simply requires a magistrate's decision to dissolve a marriage. Only men are allowed to petition for divorce. Ochu do not divorce.

Love: Love is an important part of the Lydian marriage bond. A couple is expected to spend a lot of time together before deciding to marry and should certainly be in love beforehand! Ochu marriages are more about duty and obligation than love. As many Ochu families were broken up by the Trials, the economic nature of marriage has greater precedence.

Lifespan Ways: Vasai

Infancy and Childhood: Lydian children are doted on by their parents and grandparents, showered with love and attention and generally spoiled. To an outsider, it might even seem sometimes like the Lydian home is being run by and for the children without consideration of the parents. Ochu children do not get raised in an environment where love is the central emotion. Ochu children are loved, but infant mortality is much higher among the Ochu and as a result, there is less emotional investment of Ochu parents in infants. Ochu transition to adulthood at age 12. Lydian children transition at age 18.

Adulthood: Lydians have vastly more economic, work and educational opportunities than Ochu do. Ochu children, almost without exception, become laborers and other low-skilled workers in Vasai society. They are not given ready access to education (*Lydians think they are uneducatable*) nor are they allowed to sign binding economic contracts or own commercial property. Lydians by contrast can do anything in Vasai society. The three universities in Vasai are all dominated by Lydians.

Elderhood: Elders are accorded more or less equal status by the Lydians and the Ochu, but for different reasons. The Lydians value grandparents as part of the larger narrative of family. Ochu value grandparents because they are rather rare in Ochu families. Only 1 in 50 Ochu born has all four grandparents alive at their birth.

Transitions: Lydian funeral customs are intensely family oriented and private unless the dead person is someone who has a special status in the broader community. Public funerals among the Lydians are epic affairs sometimes taking days to conclude. Ochu funereal customs are also private, but in this case, private means *“related to other Ochu.”* The Ochu keep their mystical and spiritual traditions away from the prying eyes of Lydians.

Rank Ways: Vasai

Nobility: There are no noble classes in the Vasai. The Republic is, technically, without nobility. The Republic goes so far as to officially forbid nobilities in its basic laws. While this is true, it is clear to anyone who's spent time in the Republic that all Lydians are more prestigious than the Ochu who form a clear underclass.

Mobility: Social mobility is possible for Lydians in Vasai society, but difficult. The structure of wealth makes it very difficult for those who don't already have wealth to get more. The

most likely route for becoming wealthy is through engaging in trade or piracy in the southern oceans.

Exclusivity: Having more status in Vasai society entitles one to nearly everything. Better housing, better education, higher status marital partners and so forth. The ways in which these status markers are measured and adjudicated is pretty straightforward for a Vasai but would be pretty difficult for an outsider to recognize.

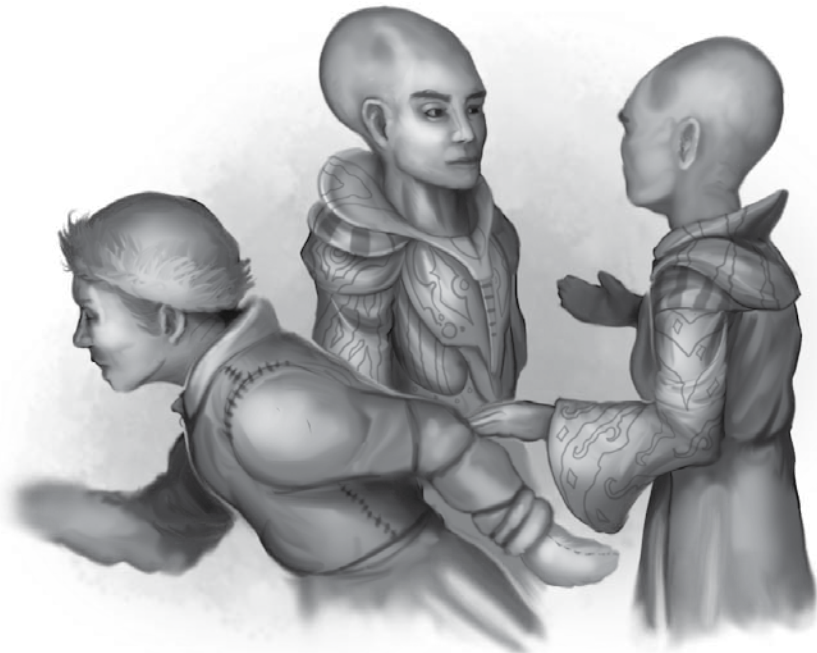
Coercion: The Vasai police their own perceptions of rank and status without need of a force that does this.

Gender and Sexuality Ways: Vasai

Definitions: The Lydians and the Ochu both have two biological sexes, male and female, and two socially constructed third genders. The Lydian third gender comprises men who live their lives as women. The opposite is true for the Ochu, who have women who live their lives as men.

Norms: Vasai culture strictly controls the sexual practices of its members. Children brought forth out of wedlock are killed, the parents exiled or killed, regardless of whether they are Lydians or Ochu. Lydians, however, do have the opportunity in two of the five grottoes, to pay a hefty penalty to avoid being exiled.

Non-Normative Patterns: Lydian and Ochu third gender members are allowed to be in relationship with each other. They are even allowed to marry. It is forbidden for other Lydians and Ochu to do so under penalty of death or exile. There are small homosexual populations among both the Lydians and the Ochu, but homosexuality is suppressed by the Ochu.



Relations: In Vasai culture, there is a slight tendency for men to have and exert more social power than women. This is particularly true with regard to political power.

Association Ways: Vasai

Distance: The principal creator of social distance in Vasai society is racial. Lydians and Ochu do not associate all that much. There are very few contexts in which it is appropriate for a Lydian and an Ochu to spend time together, associate or be friends. Most entities in society are segregated and that is precisely how the Lydians and Ochu want it. The Lydians want it because they loathe the Ochu. The Ochu don't want to associate with Lydians because they view Lydian values as anti-family and corrupt.

Fraternity: Friends in Vasai society bond over nearly anything but always at a distance that is further than family ties. It is the rare Vasai indeed that forms a friendship across the racial boundary.

Guild: All tendencies towards sociality, mutual obligation or communalism are weak or non-existent among Vasai. They are particularly weak among the Lydians. They are rather stronger among the Ochu, who have felt the oppression of Lydian culture for generations and who come to believe in each other more than anything else.

Obligation: Ochu feel very strong connections towards other Ochu when they see injustice. They are strongly inclined to help, assist and feel alignment. Lydians do not share a similar tendency towards each other.

Order Ways: Vasai

Sphere: The most important concern of the Vasai is that there is no mixing between the Lydians and the Ochu (*except for the third genders*). The Trials came about because one faction in Vasai society enacted a series of laws that drove the Ochu more or less into slavery. Secondarily to this is the tendency on the part of the rich to want to stay rich. Many subtle bendings and shapings of their institutions are enacted to ensure this stays true.

Joining: Vasai government is divided into six a'at (*offices*). One of these offices is called the Grottoes Office. In the basic law, this office has limited power. In reality, the Grottoes Office ensures that Lydians and Ochu are largely kept apart from each other. It ensures that they don't work together (*unless the Ochu have a demonstrably lower status*), that Ochu power remains limited and that Ochu do not live where Lydians are better "suited" to living. In a contemporary Earth context, the Grottoes Office might be called the Apartheid Office.

Tenacity: The Senate is the only entity in the Vasai state that would have power to rein in the Grottoes Office (*or indeed any other office*). The division of power in the Senate makes it difficult for the Senate to act with that level of decisiveness.

Presence: The Grottoes Office is like any other entity - its force of will is dependent on who is in office. In nearly all

cases, it wants to maintain a light hand, but not so light as to be misunderstood. It will assuredly act to ensure that Lydians and Ochu are kept separated. They are like social police. There are no formal entities that could limit the power of the Officers. Other offices, however, will act if they feel that the Grottoesmen are getting too powerful. They won't act if they feel the Grottoes Office is acting too brutally.

Authority Ways: Vasai

Legitimacy: Legitimacy is conferred through elections, held yearly in each of the Ice Grottoes for Magistrate, who governs their specific Ice Grotto, and held every five years across the Republic to determine membership in the Senate. There are three principal factions in the Senate—a conservative faction that dislikes innovation, a progressive faction more tolerant of it and a faction that wants to rewrite the rules of Vasai society. In the last ten elections, the conservative faction has won eight times and the progressives twice. The conservatives presently rule the Republic.

Power: Political power is wielded by the Senate. Each session, the Senate elects a Speaker. That Speaker is, formally, the Vasai Republic's chief executive. The Speaker, acting with the guidance of the Senate, appoints officers to run the five a'at and oversees the day-to-day business of the Republic. The Vasai are a people of law and obedience. They yield most of their power to the Senate they elect.

Authority: There is little that the Senate and the authorities of the Republic don't claim authority over. The civil authorities regulate family life, marriage, birth, death, the military, taxation, spending and the like.

Participation: Male and female Lydians have the franchise from age 20. Ochu are allowed to vote if they meet property ownership requirements and pay a poll tax. Only about 5% of Ochu are eligible to vote under these conditions.

Freedom Ways: Vasai

Freedom: Freedom is a problematic concept among the Vasai. The Vasai strongly believe in law (*Lydians more than Ochu*) and their laws restrict and regulate what other societies would simply allow or forbid. There is very little forbidden to a Vasai Lydian (*use of force in public is restricted to the government, family and social relations are regulated*) and rather more to an Ochu. The Vasai do not really value freedom, but are happy to have what they have.

Liberty: The Lydians do not have a notion of collectivity in the same way the Ochu do. The Ochu, being minorities in their culture, strongly feel ties each to the other and act on them.

Binding: Law is the force that binds the Vasai together. They have a strong belief in their political values and they are committed to maintaining them. Because the system violates the basic civil liberties of the Ochu, the Ochu commitment is dramatically lessened.

Directionality: Vasai society asks more than it gives. Its legal system, political processes and social norms all place more obligations on the individual than they grant in rights.

Wealth Ways: Vasai

Objectification: Wealth is highly valued among the Vasai, be they Lydians or Ochu. The Vasai mine ore and mint coins. This is the principal mode of exchange in the Republic. The most common metal is copper. Silver is comparatively rare and gold unheard of.

Status: Wealth is the primary way in which Vasai distinguish themselves from other Vasai. It is very important. It confers all of the other things that mark status in the society. Wealth isn't just coins, it's everything that can be bought with those coins, like property.

Gift-giving: Both the Lydians and the Ochu have gift-giving traditions. The Ochu traditions are more firmly established and speak more broadly to their cultural values of shared sacrifice and suffering.

Reciprocity: Reciprocity functions more among the Ochu than among the Lydians. It doesn't really matter to Lydians, who believe that no matter what, they can get access to the higher rungs of their society. Ochu communities have mutual aid societies and the expectation that the stronger will come to the aid of the weaker.

Work Ways: Vasai

Subsistence: The Vasai have a wide range of beliefs about work. Many do it for their own interest, many more because if they don't they're not going to be able to survive. As money is very important to the Vasai work is as well. More than three-quarters of Vasai society have to work in order to live day-to-day.

Feudality: It is not at all uncommon for a Lydian to be responsible for the employment of dozens of Lydians and perhaps hundreds of Ochu. This is the only kind of relationship where Lydians and Ochu are allowed or expected to be together. Provided the Ochu are serving a proper Lydian, that will be ok.

Ethic: Vasai have a wide range of work ethics. There is nothing in the society that encourages the practice of a strong work ethic and only the threat of starvation encourages the practice of any work ethic at all. The work ethic is stronger among the Ochu who have to do everything twice as hard to be recognized half as much.

Slavery: No longer practiced, but the Trials were essentially a period where the Lydians were engaged in enslaving the Ochu. This period lasted for more than three generations. The practice of official slavery that the Trials represents caused the deeply strained relations between the Lydians and the Ochu that marks the experience of the current citizens of the Vasai Republic.

Leisure Ways: Vasai

Leisureliness: Neither the Lydians nor the Ochu are particularly given over to leisure. They aren't hostile to it, but it isn't something they value more than anything else. *"Don't work too hard, don't play too hard,"* might be an expression of Lydian values—slow and steady. Ochu value leisure more and prefer to spend that time with family or in spiritual pursuits.

Competitiveness: The Vasai are not especially competitive with each other. Lydian values place a greater price on getting along than on competition. Still, there is a lively tradition of Ice Grotto versus Ice Grotto competition every two years in an assortment of winter-appropriate games.

Athletics: The *"Vasai Olympics"* as indicated above happen every two years. These athletic



games involve not just skiing and sled racing but also ice climbing, skating (*both figure and speed*) and games that are related to Curling. Each Ice Grotto wants to win, if only for pride of place among the community.

Diversions: The Vasai are more likely to spend time in athletic pursuits than in other kinds of diversions. Lydians, however, do value leatherworking and tinkering. The Ochu are excellent sculptors in both bone and in ice.

Dress Ways: Vasai

Practicality: The key word to describe Vasai clothing is practical. They live in a wildly unforgiving climate outside the Ice Grottoes and within, it's never warmer than the mid-50s. The Lydians are adapted to this climate and prefer it. If one didn't realize the temperature, the presumption would be that the Lydians think it feels like the mid-70s. The Lydians are masters of layering. The Ochu by contrast are not adapted to the cold and are prone to being bundled up in heavy garments.

Status: Dress confers great status in the Republic. Master seamstresses and tailors are highly prized and command a premium for their articles. Because the Lydians so value layering, sophisticated color and fabric matching layer-by-layer is a mark of elegance and is an indicator that the wearer is well off. Lydian bootmakers are perhaps the finest footwear manufacturers in Shadow World, if any other culture realized it. The primary goal of a Lydian in clothing selection is to not be mistaken for an Ochu. The Ochu favor practicality above all things in apparel and don't really express a lot of interest in color, pattern or other frivolities.

Jewelry: Jewelry is very popular among the Lydians, who use it along with their clothing to mark status. Pearls are the preferred gemstone with chains made from silver being a signifier of real status. The Ochu are given to wearing anklets and bracelets, but these are not meant to be showy, rather, they are usually a token that shows a close relationship between two individuals.

Body Modification: Lydian men have a tendency to pierce their ears (*perhaps 65% of Lydian men are pierced*), but this is unheard of among the Ochu. Lydian women are disinterested in the practice, but the youngest generation of Lydian girls has shown perhaps a bit more interest.

Food and Drink Ways: Vasai

Locavore: The majority of calories in the Vasai Republic come from animal sources. Fish from the rivers that flow through the Ice Grottoes are, practically, without limit (*the population of the Republic would need to increase tenfold before the fish populations were impacted*). Penguins, dolphins, whales and puffins are taken during the summer months in great numbers and their meat made into pemmican and jerky. There is very little vegetable cultivation within the Ice Grottoes. Some potatoes and turnips is about the limit.

Status: Food is food—there is nothing the rich have access to that the poor don't also have access to. The food sources that are available just aren't all that plentiful.

Embellishment: The richer they are, the more likely a Lydian has a predilection for fancy service. They make extraordinarily frilly serving platters, plates and flatware. There is very little by way of herbs and spices in Vasai foodways. There is some dill, some tarragon and some rosemary, but not much. The Ochu do not use these embellishments at all.

Technique: Preserving and fermenting are the key techniques of the Vasai.

Language Ways: Vasai

Dialect: For such a small country, the Vasai Republic is a linguistic stew with a host of ingredients. The fundamental divisions are between Lydian languages and Ochu languages, which are mutually unintelligible. Lydians and Ochu speak their own languages at home. There are three main, mutually intelligible languages among the Lydians and two in the Ochu family. Middle Lydian is the most common of the three Lydian languages, spoken by about 60% of all Lydians. Churonax is the most common Ochu language, spoken by about 80% of Ochu (*the other 20% speak Churonak*).

Majority: There really isn't a language majority in the Republic, though everyone speaks Vasai, the trade pidgin, to some degree.

Pidgins: Vasai, the language of government and commerce, is a pidgin language about three centuries old that has grammatical patterns common in the Ochu languages melded to Lydian sentence structures and vocabulary. It is a complex pidgin, difficult to master, and unintelligible to a monoglot speaker of either Lydian or Ochu.

Naming: Lydians have two names. The first is a personal name and the last is a family name that connotes membership in one of the now extinct 125 Lydian tribes (*these tribes have no meaning or cultural significance*). The Ochu use patronymics for their naming. So, Rex Plaxeson is Rex, the son of Plax.

Magic Ways: Vasai

Value: Magic is neither praised or condemned among the Vasai. There are plenty of practitioners of various kinds of magic, but generally this is of the hearth and home school of magic. Nothing especially fancy, aggressive or complex.

Occasion: Vasai are more likely to use magic to find food, enhance mining or for other readily obvious commercial reason than any other reason. Ochu magic has a strong spiritual dimension and they regularly use it for divination, shamanistic purposes and predicting the future.

Constraint: There are no formal constraints about or against magic use in the Vasai Republic. There are no laws specifically

speaking to the use of magic. There are customs about the Ochu use of Ochu magic in the presence of Lydians, but these are customs. The Lydians know that the Ochu have a form of magical practice the Lydians don't have.

Instruction: Ochu priests and priestesses train acolytes in the use of the tradition from a fairly young age (*pre-adolescent*). There are always a few thousand practitioners of the Ochu Way at any given time, but never more. Lydians who use magic as part of their day-to-day lives number in the dozens. They are always personally instructed by another magic user.

Supernatural Ways: Vasai

Reason: Both the Lydians and the Ochu have a respect for reason and reasonable explanations for natural phenomena. Their gods are not interested in explaining the natural world. Rather, their gods are interested in the world of social relations, culture and custom. These areas are perceived by the Vasai as being beyond the scope of reason.

Reflection: The central theme in the Vasai Republic is "*what caused the Trials, were they bad and what do they say about us?*" The Lydians, to the degree that they care, need to map and understand why they were willing and able to enslave an entire race of people for generations. The Ochu, by contrast, are always asking themselves if there was anything they might have done to keep themselves out of slavery.

Ritual: Neither the Lydians or the Ochu engage in "*big ticket*" religion. They don't build houses of worship as worship takes place in the home. The Lydians are not a spiritually sophisticated people. The Ochu are and have a priestly class, holy texts, forms of worship and the like. Worship still takes place in private settings.

Soul: Lydians do not have an especially involved spiritual inner life. Lydians who do are encouraged to undertake directed study to enhance their interests. The Ochu do have a richly involving and involved personal life. They deeply value their spiritual lives and place a high premium on parts of their relationships with others that the Lydians wouldn't really even be able to understand.

Self-Reflection Ways: Vasai

For a culture with a recent history of cultural crime, the Vasai have not developed the reflective capacity to understand themselves well enough to prevent the same crime from repeating itself. Three generations ago, the Vasai Republic's conservative faction was overtaken by a particularly reactionary subgroup and that group, anxious about race-mixing and fearing that their control of the Republic was ebbing, enacted a host of laws that impoverished and then enslaved the Ochu. Many Lydians rejected this practice, but they didn't do anything dramatic to change the reality of it. Many members of this conservative faction took the opportunity to buy an Ochu family as an opportunity to get rich and to take it easy. These decisions did severe harm to the fabric of Vasai society, built a high wall of mistrust between Lydian and Ochu and dramatically encouraged the development of Ochu magic and spirituality. There were very few Ochu priests before the Trials and hundreds afterwards. There has never been an apology by the Lydians to the Ochu and the Lydians even now don't seem to realize that the rules of their society make the Ochu little better than slaves. Opportunity is weak for the Ochu and so is power.

9 Appendix: 20 Charts

Environment Ways

d100	Cultural Quality
1-10	The culture is shaped by its association with a water feature like a lake or aquifer. Its gods are associated with this feature.
11-20	Once a decade, great fires sweep through the region, causing the people to have to migrate for a season before returning home. The buildings are either temporary or made of fire-resistant materials.
21-30	Weather systems in one season are notoriously extreme and they give the culture a deep fatalism about most things.
31-40	Weather is nearly always tranquil, giving the culture an easy, laid-back quality.
41-50	The culture is located in a canyon or other isolated feature, giving them a xenophobia towards foreigners.
51-60	The culture is migratory, choosing to be in plains in spring and summer and mountains in fall and winter. They have temporary structures for homes in the plains and permanent homes in the mountains.
61-70	These people were driven from their fertile lands and now persist on the edges of scrubby waste and combine a resentment with a stubborn will to persist.
71-80	A mighty river runs through the culture's lands, giving them a sense of order and stability. They live near or on the river.
81-90	The terrain is dotted with the ruins of a long-dead civilization. The people venerate these spaces.
91-99	The culture has built a huge mine in the center of their territory and they've dug very, very deep.
100	The people live in balloons or airships that rarely land.

Urban Ways

d100	Cultural Quality
1-10	There are no settlements; each family lives independently and only comes together once a season at a neutral site.
11-20	The people live in one giant walled settlement and strictly control who comes in. All buildings are connected to each other.
21-30	The settlements are built in trees and can only be accessed by ladders.
31-40	All settlements are strictly segregated in some way by class, race or profession with undesirables living underground.
41-50	Permanent settlements exist but men are not allowed to live in them. Men live in temporary structures outside of town or are nomadic.
51-60	The culture travels a decade-long circuit taking them to the ocean, the mountains and then to canyon lands following the migration pattern of a sacred bird.
61-70	The civilization has occupied the remains of a long-dead culture.
71-80	The people live atop a mesa but conduct a robust trade at sea level with travelers using a major road connecting a major city and the sea.
81-90	The culture builds only in gleaming white marble.
91-99	The culture builds only with materials mined a week's journey away.
100	The culture lives inside the perfectly preserved skeletal remains of a giant (blue whale sized) trilobite.

Family Ways

d100	Cultural Quality
1-10	Distant kinship is very important to these people. Everyone is a "cousin," seemingly even strangers.
11-20	Families associate with one of ten divinities important to the culture. Relationships across this divide are managed by a priestly class.
21-30	Young men hold authority in this culture. At age 30, young men retire from the society and leave their people never to return.
31-40	The culture values discipline in family relations.
41-50	The most important quality in family life in this culture is harmony.
51-60	Family isn't very important in this culture. Far more important is shared interests and values.
61-70	The society requires family members to defend the honor of slighted kinsfolk with violence.
71-80	Children are raised collectively in dormitories by a selected class of caregivers.
81-90	The culture perceives itself to be one family. The head of the family dispenses all economic benefits.
91-99	There is no word or concept to describe family relationships other than mother, father, sister and brother. Everyone else isn't considered "family."
100	Family relationships have recently been disrupted by some cataclysmic social change. People are highly on edge.

Marriage Ways

d100	Cultural Quality
1-10	Divorce is forbidden, but estranged partners are allowed to cohabit with non-married partners.
11-20	Love is the only thing upon which a marriage can be based. People in the culture marry frequently and have many married partners.
21-30	Marriage's only purpose is for the creation and raising of legitimate children. All marriages end when a child reaches majority.
31-40	Marriages are strictly arranged by elders who favor marriages to outsiders.
41-50	Marriage is only valid with at least three partners.
51-60	Marriage is for life. Re-marriage is never allowed, nor is divorce.
61-70	Marriage has nothing to do with the creation and raising of children. Rather, marriage is about affinity and love. Same-gender marriage is normal.
71-80	Marriage between race is disallowed.
81-90	Marriage between caste or class is disallowed.
91-99	The wealth of a deceased partner passes only to the state; there is no inheritance.
100	Marriage is only allowed between races, not within.

Lifespan Ways

d100	Cultural Quality
1-10	Because they are naturally long-lived, members of this culture have a longer than typical adolescence and value adolescent rebelliousness.
11-20	Children are seen as easy targets for wicked spirits and are carefully monitored for problematic behavior which is vigorously corrected.
21-30	Elders are devalued in this culture. At age 60, they are exiled.
31-40	Elders become religious figures when all of their children reach adulthood.
41-50	Rites of passage between childhood and adolescence are important to this culture. These rituals are centered on notions of balance.
51-60	Rites of passage between adolescence and adulthood are important to this culture. They are exceptionally violent and war-centered. Failure at these rites means exile.
61-70	People in this society are unusually long-lived for their race, leading to a prolonged and valued elderhood.
71-80	People in this society are unusually short-lived for their race, essentially eliminating notions of elderhood and creating a kind of fatalism about death.
81-90	Once a person reaches sexual maturity, that person is considered an adult by the culture for all purposes.
91-99	It is considered proper to eat the brain and heart of deceased relatives.
100	Children alone are allowed to rule in this culture. When adolescence is achieved, they must step down from their positions of power.

Gender and Sexuality Ways

d100	Cultural Quality
1-10	The society has very strict definitions about what constitutes male and female and violently corrects transgressions.
11-20	Gender is fluidly expressed in this culture. It is normal for people to express themselves in different ways at different times in their lives.
21-30	Gender is well-defined in the culture, but their rules are outside the norms of their larger culture or society.
31-40	Children are thought to have no gender and only given one when the child decides what his/her gender is.
41-50	Women and men are considered entirely equal in this society.
51-60	Women have dominance over men in this society.
61-70	Men have dominance over women in this society.
71-80	Sexuality outside of marriage is considered a crime punishable by death.
81-90	Sexuality is strictly controlled by some kind of authority. Access to romantic partners is controlled by this authority.
91-99	Sexuality is wide open and free in this culture. The culture's values are "anything goes."
100	When leaders ascend to power, they take on genderless expressions of self.

Association Ways

d100	Cultural Quality
1-10	Criminal guilds are very powerful in this culture.
11-20	There are twelve guilds in this society, each associated with a noble quality (like justice). Members of these guilds all wear a unique and particular color when conducting public life.
21-30	If you've been accepted by a member of this culture as a friend, you are obligated to defend that friend's honor to the death.
31-40	Challenges to a person's dignity in this culture are confronted by ritualized combat.
41-50	Sports and games are very important in this culture. Teams and players you associate with can and do alter friendship patterns.
51-60	Every association group in this culture has its own pidgin language.
61-70	All association groups in this culture have esoteric lore that that assign great value to.
71-80	All economic activity in this society is conducted and regulated by labor guilds under the control of powerful bosses.
81-90	Families associate with particular groups and organizations and disassociate family members who don't conform.
91-99	Friendship groups are strictly associated with particular genders.
100	Networks are maintained across distances by means of scrying stones or other communication devices, each unique to an individual group.

Rank Ways

d100	Cultural Quality
1-10	The culture has very weak notions of rank. Not quite egalitarian, but only expressed in one aspect of its society (like intelligence or work).
11-20	The society has three different kinds of nobility, each based on a past historical era in the society. These nobilities are hostile to each other and to the non-titled. The most ancient is the most jealous.
21-30	The culture is rigidly stratified by rank with clearly defined noble classes and complex rules of interaction between these classes.
31-40	The culture has no notion of rank and is entirely classless.
41-50	Food is strictly associated with status. Preparations and recipes associated with one status are never served or shared to others.
51-60	Outsiders are considered to be the highest ranking members of this society and are given lavish gifts for which obscure obligations are expected.
61-70	Orphaned children are always adopted into the highest ranking families.
71-80	Caste is rigidly maintained by all members of society.
81-90	Religious organizations in society actively recruit from the lowermost classes.
91-99	Class distinction is maintained by social convention. Breaking these conventions results in being stripped of one's status.
100	Status changes as the society moves in response to environmental challenge. A person might be a noble in the plains and while hunting and a commoner in the city.

Order Ways

d100	Cultural Quality
1-10	The society punishes inappropriate use of language through public shaming (stocks).
11-20	These people use a guild of women warriors to maintain discipline in relationships between members of the society.
21-30	The society maintains strict business relationships and has complex courts to punish cheating.
31-40	The church controls the ordering institutions in this society with priests meting out justice.
41-50	Criminal enterprises determine the rules in this culture, ruling with terror if they are so inclined.
51-60	The society hires outsiders to maintain order and discipline, giving contracts to those outsiders along with the "rule book" for them to interpret.
61-70	Social rules are maintained through silence; the one who does wrong isn't allowed to speak and the people don't speak to that wrongdoer.
71-80	There is a complex system of clothing and sewn-on badges that cultural criminals have to wear to identify them to the rest of the culture.
81-90	Within the calendar of the year there are six different religious and civic periods. Each is governed by a different organization.
91-99	There are no ordering institutions...anything goes.
100	There are two civilizations living in the same physical space but having radically different values. An ordering organization exists to keep the two civilizations from interacting with each other.

Authority Ways

d100	Cultural Quality
1-10	The people are led by a hereditary monarch from a long-ruling family.
11-20	The society has recently replaced a hereditary monarch from a long-ruling family with a new monarch from an unrelated family, generating disorder.
21-30	The civilization is led by three monarchs, representing different communities within the society.
31-40	The society is led by an absolute monarch who is also the leader of a religious organization.
41-50	A charismatic leader runs this society, but that leader has no hereditary claim on the leadership.
51-60	The society is run by the military.
61-70	A merchant council dominates civic society while a criminal council dominates the economy.
71-80	The society is a republic with low class differentiation.
81-90	The society is a republic with high class differentiation; the rich hold disproportionate power.
91-99	The civilization is a democracy; people are obligated to vote daily on civic matters.
100	The nation is a colony run by a foreign power.

Freedom Ways

d100	Cultural Quality
1-10	People have no civil liberties in this society.
11-20	People have freedom of speech in this society, but not of association or worship.
21-30	Everyone in society is a member of one of 5 clans. The clans have full civil liberties and powers but individuals in these clans have none.
31-40	People do not have the right to make romantic relationships without approval of the appropriate committee.
41-50	People are at their liberty to worship any one of three state-approved gods.
51-60	Mothers can execute their own children regardless of other restrictions on their behavior.
61-70	Punishment for crimes is an exact mirror of the crime committed.
71-80	The society punishes criminals by locking them at the top of megaliths.
81-90	People in this society are only allowed to use metals associated with their family or tribe.
91-99	People have full civil liberties in this society.
100	There are no individual freedoms understood in this culture. All freedoms are expressed as freedoms/liberties belonging to groups.

Wealth Ways

d100	Cultural Quality
1-10	The civilization has fiat currency (paper money not tied to any other metal or thing of value).
11-20	The society places a great deal of value on wealth, believing it to be a sign that the wealthy are beloved of god.
21-30	The society punishes the poor as being beneath the dignity of civic society.
31-40	The rich in this civilization live entirely separated from the poor.
41-50	All property is owned collectively.
51-60	Hosts are obligated to celebrate all guests who show up at the door and fete them with lavish gifts.
61-70	Wealthy people are under great social pressure to give away their wealth.
71-80	The society has a rich tradition of gift-giving holidays.
81-90	The society views gift-giving as shameful and never does it.
91-99	Wealth is defined not by some tangible quality like gold but some intangible quality like intelligence.
100	The society is communist and has no notion of wealth.

Work Ways

d100	Cultural Quality
1-10	Most people in this society are subsistence farmers.
11-20	Most hard labor in this society is performed by an underclass of foreigners.
21-30	Slavery is common in this society with most hard labor performed by slaves.
31-40	Slavery is common with slaves distributed broadly in all kinds of work.
41-50	The society spends a great deal of its work effort creating luxury products for export.
51-60	There is a wealthy class with a specialized set of skills in this culture.
61-70	The culture values work and leisure equally, allowing for a 40 hour work week. It manages this by transferring wealth from the rich to the poor.
71-80	Everyone is embedded in a complex system of feudal relationships based on the work they do.
81-90	Castes are assigned to families based on the work they do and individuals are not allowed to leave their caste.
91-99	It is possible for a member of this society to become so poor that they become enslaved.
100	Everyone in this society is considered the property of the monarch.

Leisure Ways

d100	Cultural Quality
1-10	The society values individual athletic accomplishments.
11-20	The people are avid fans of teams that compete against each other throughout the culture.
21-30	The culture is super competitive, having contests in all sorts of aspects of the culture where other societies might not.
31-40	The culture is indifferent to competition, but does respect quality work well done.
41-50	The society values leisure time and has devised a host of different leisure activities that it values.
51-60	The society is obsessed with card games and gambling.
61-70	The society is obsessed with strategic board games.
71-80	Acting, puppetry and roleplaying are highly valued in this culture.
81-90	Athletic skill is a primary way to differentiate between the in-crowd and the out-crowd in this culture.
91-99	The people are not particularly interested in leisure activity.
100	Leadership in society is determined by success in either athletic or game competition.

Dress Ways

d100	Cultural Quality
1-10	The culture does not value clothing, preferring bland homespun.
11-20	The people in this culture are obsessed with hats of all sorts using them as a status marker.
21-30	Clothing in this society is elaborate and complicated.
31-40	Clothing in this society is organized first around comfort.
41-50	Body hair is abhorred in this society; all of it is shaved off.
51-60	Tattooing is common in this culture.
61-70	Body piercing is common in this culture.
71-80	People in this culture will pay through the nose for silk.
81-90	Elaborate broaches made from the relics of dead relatives are common in this culture.
91-99	Men are generally unclothed in this society.
100	Spun metals are the only fabrics known to this culture.

Food and Drink Ways

d100	Cultural Quality
1-10	The culture values seafood over all others.
11-20	The people in this culture have developed sophisticated distilling skills and have hundreds of different spirits for consumption or sale.
21-30	Veganism is the order of the day in this culture; meat is never consumed.
31-40	Insects are the primary protein source in this culture.
41-50	Sweets are deeply prized in this society, but are reserved for the very wealthy.
51-60	Certain meats are consumed only by priestly classes; consumption of them by non-priests is a death penalty offense.
61-70	Spices and herbs are considered tools of corruption and are never used.
71-80	Foreign food is considered a particular delicacy by this culture because these people love new things.
81-90	All food must be cooked in some kind of liquid because the gods prefer it that way.
91-99	Coffee and tea are highly prized in this culture; coffee and tea houses are everywhere.
100	The culture has experienced famine in its past. Almost anything that can be consumed is seen as food and can be processed to make it edible.

Language Ways

d100	Cultural Quality
1-10	There are minority languages in this society that thrive but do so only at home; they have no official sanction.
11-20	There is a written language used in this society that is different from its spoken language.
21-30	Women and men have different spoken languages learned from their respective parents or guardians. Children who don't learn these gendered languages are shunned.
31-40	A recent conquest means that the language of government and the elites is completely different from the language of the commons and this creates regular conflict.
41-50	The language of this society is infuriatingly general; its speakers make meaning through intuition. Its poetry is considered particularly lovely.
51-60	The language of this society is maddeningly specific. Every possible subtlety is managed by one or another prefix or suffix. Its poetry is considered unusually dreadful.
61-70	Three languages are vying to be the language of the majority in this civilization.
71-80	There are so many languages spoken in this culture that communication is facilitated by a highly generalized common pidgin language.
81-90	Trade guilds maintain trade specific dialects.
91-99	Vocabulary is highly class-specific, with poor people never choosing to use certain words they understand and vice versa for the rich.
100	There is no spoken language. All communication is by gesture.

Magic Ways

d100	Cultural Qualities
1-10	Magic is performed routinely and by even the poorly trained in this society. Hedge magic is common.
11-20	Magic is only performed by the unskilled; it is devalued by the majority culture.
21-30	Magic is taught in academies based on different schools of magic. Performing magic without a license is a crime.
31-40	Magic is taught in an academy that one gains access to by exam. Graduates are considered sacred by the rest of society and are feared.
41-50	Magic exists but its practice is viewed as shameful and lazy by the rest of society.
51-60	Magic is only performed by slaves in this culture. If you have magical skills, you are claimed by the rich families and put to work.
61-70	Magic is forbidden. If it is practiced, the practitioner can be put to death.
71-80	Magic is highly praised and valued in this society, but it is only practiced at festival times - important times in the calendar year.
81-90	Magic is only allowed within a spiritual framework and context. If unsanctioned by a spiritual organization, it is criminal.
91-99	Magic is routinely performed but only by one gender, never by the other.
100	Magic is performed, but only to harm others.

Supernatural Ways

d100	Cultural Quality
1-10	The society believes in pure reason to understand the way the world works. It has no gods or belief in the supernatural at all.
11-20	The people believe their ancestors continue to walk in the world as spirits.
21-30	The society believes that four times a year, the boundary between the spirit world and the world of the living is so thin that it can be breached in either direction.
31-40	Natural phenomena (like earthquakes) are the actions in the world of angry or benevolent gods who represent those forces.
41-50	Once a year, everyone in society is obligated to formally atone in public for what they have done to others.
51-60	Every morning, all members of society engage in 30 minutes of formal, ritualized worship. Failure to do so results in social ostracization.
61-70	The culture is monotheistic and violently suppresses religious traditions that don't conform to its monotheistic vision.
71-80	Relationships with the supernatural world are managed by a priestly class.
81-90	Relationships with the supernatural world are managed by elders in a family.
91-99	Relationships with the supernatural world are personal in nature.
100	The society's belief systems are presently in flux with a high level of social anxiety.

Self-reflection Ways

d100	Cultural Quality
1-10	The society is ashamed of the way it distributes wealth.
11-20	Many in society feel abandoned by the gods.
21-30	The society is coming to believe that slavery is morally wrong.
31-40	The people do not wish to be at war with their neighbors anymore.
41-50	The civilization is ashamed of a precursor civilization that engaged in genocide.
51-60	The lower classes want to have a share in political power and many in the upper classes agree, but don't do anything to help them.
61-70	A minority of members of the society want to end the power of an ordering institution but don't know how to change it.
71-80	The people are abandoning their gods, but not in their public practice, only in their heart.
81-90	The behavior of the society's military is considered shameful.
91-99	Gender relations are poisonous in this society.
100	The society is undergoing a revolution in some aspect of its values right now.

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