

How To Use These Templates

The following pages are provided simply as a convenience to designers who want a basic set of styles and objects with which to make a layout of their own. Experienced layout artists and book designers will doubtless be pained by the amateurish, clumsy, and blithely wrongheaded bits they find here, but in such cases they are encouraged to make up their own templates and objects for people to use for the sake of generally improved production values.

The first several pages simply include some basic objects, tables, and brief descriptions of their use. To use these objects in your own work, just copy and paste them into your InDesign document file. The styles they use will be automatically added to your document's styles list. You may need to rename or reorganize them to fit your own preferred style categories, however.

After these initial pages, the entire first chapter of *Spears of the Dawn* is appended in its raw form as a worked example, for you to hack around and meddle with as you please.

Nothing in this short document should be mistaken for a proper discussion of the principles of book design or RPG layout. The objects are provided as-is and with no representation that they are particularly good for anything. But they do work for my particular style of simple, two-column black and white book design, and they will likely work for you in the same way.

Whatever you do, I recommend you grab some basic books on design before you get too deep into the weeds. *The Non-Designer's Design Book* by Robin Williams is a reliable introduction to the field. I'd also suggest reading the publishing tips series at the Chaotic Henchmen blog at <http://www.chaotichenchmen.com/search/label/Publishing%20Tips> for some basic clues as to the handling of simple RPG product layouts.

CHAPTER HEADING PAGE

A basic **Columned Text** style object with a column-spanning chapter title at the top of the page in the **Chapter Heading** style. As a customary matter your chapters should begin on the left-hand side of the spread. In *Spears of the Dawn* I put a full-page illustration on the left-hand side of the spread and started the actual text on the right. The illos were intended to provide an easy visual bookmark for people scanning through the print volume looking for a particular section.

THIS IS A SIDEBAR

This particular style is rather plain, but you can use it to hold parenthetical digressions related to the page topic but not so germane as to put it in the body of the page.

Note that this sidebar object is single-columned. You can adjust its text frame properties to give it two columns when you want to make a wide, horizontal bar at the foot or head of a page. In that case, you may want to adjust the **Sidebar Heading** style so that it spans columns, giving you a nicely-centered title.

PARTIAL-PAGE SECTION

A **Columned Text** style object with a column-spanning **Subchapter Heading** style, this horizontal split can be used for topics that don't take up a whole column's worth of text. For example, suppose you have Topic A that takes up 2/3rds of a column, and Topic B that takes up a full column. You want to keep both on the same page since they're interrelated, but if you give each their own column you'll end up with an asymmetrical page. Instead, you can split things horizontally, giving the smaller topic the upper part of the page and the larger one the lower, adjusting the space between objects to even out the difference in content size.

A SIMPLE SHADED TABLE	
ATTRIBUTE SCORE	MODIFIER
18	+2
14-17	+1
8-13	No Modifier
4-7	-1
3	-2

Note the different text styles used in the different cells, and how they can be tweaked to fit available space. Don't hesitate to change font sizes to fit things in, but try not to mix tables with different cell header sizes on the same page if it can be helped.

You'll note the thinness of the table to the right. If you've got a table that needs a lot of columns, don't be reluctant to balance it with a table with correspondingly fewer columns and narrower horizontal width. The columns of the default text styles are a convenience and not a prison- you can break out of them to add visual interest to your page. This is particularly the case with illustrations.

AN ALMOST-INVISIBLE TABLE

You can use paragraph styles to control indentation and format for your text, but sometimes you need things done a little more elaborately. Tables can be handy for ensuring that a particular type of text object has its contents all in the right place. You'll want to make sure to turn off all the strokes around the cells except for those particular lines you want, however.

Text: A place to put necessary text.

A STRETCHED TABLE			
ARMOR	AC	ENC.	COST
Warding Amulets	6	0	Special
Leather Armor	7	1	20 si
Mail Armor	5	1	40 si
Banded Armor	4	2	100 si

You can stretch out a table so its foot evenly hits the bottom of the page or lines up evenly with another object on the page. Done to excess, this can leave the cells visibly distorted, however, and you may want to "de-stretch" the title cell if it's lined up with another table, so the two title cells appear to be of even size. Make sure you've centered your cell contents vertically if needed.

USEFUL TABLES

Copy-paste these tables in to fill some common needs in a game document. As always, you should be ready to tweak these examples to fit your own specific requirements.

MONSTER STAT BLOCKS

If you need a short-form statblock, use the style on the entry below. It automatically indents the body of the paragraph to set it off from the surrounding text.

Amber Guardian: AC 3, HP 25, Atk +4/1d8, Move 30', Morale 12, Save 13+, Skills +1. A *Nkisi of the Sundered Spell* or a marabout's *Banish Sorcery* will break the amber's enchantment, and cause the guardian to waste away to dust in two rounds.

SINGLE MONSTER ENTRY

No. Enc.	1d4 (1d8+1)
MOVEMENT	20'
ARMOR CLASS	6
HIT DICE	3
ATTACKS	+5/+5 claws
DAMAGE	1d6/1d6
SAVE	14+
MORALE	8
SKILL BONUS	+2

Use this table for those monsters that have a single type with no major variations.

A DEFAULT SPELL ENTRY

LEVEL	2	CAST TIME	6 hours
RANGE	Connection	COST	40 si
TARGET	One building	TYPE	Ritual

Add or remove rows if your own game has more relevant information to track about a spell. When using tables like this or the monster stat blocks, be careful not to split your table across columns or pages. You preferably want the entire description in the same column. If you must split it, split it in the description text- don't let the table get cut down the middle.

MULTIPLE-VARIATION MONSTER

	DREAMER	NOBLE	LORD
No. Enc.	1d4 (3d6)	1 (1d4)	1
MOVEMENT	30'	30'	30'
ARMOR CLASS	7/by armor	7/by armor	7/by armor
HIT DICE	1	7	10
ATTACKS	+2/weapon	+6/weapon	+11/weapon
DAMAGE	By weapon	Weapon+2	Weapon+4
SAVE	15+	12+	10+
MORALE	9	10	11
SKILL BONUS	+1	+2	+3

Use this one for monsters that have multiple types. Note that while this particular entry is only a single column wide, there's no reason you can't stretch a table like this horizontally if you need a little extra room for another column. You may need to put the table itself into its own object, however, to simplify the text flow for the columns it's set with.

ROLE	AC	MOVE	HD	ATK	SAVE	MORALE	SKILL
TRICKSTER SPIRIT	4	40'	2	+4/1d6 bite or claw	14+	10	2+
RESTLESS ANCESTOR	6	30'	1	+3/by spirit-weapon	15+	9	1+
GUARDIAN SPIRIT	4	30'	5	+7/1d10 bite or spirit-weapon	13+	11	2+
RAGING SPIRIT-BEAST	5	40'	4	+6/1d6 x 2 claws, 1d6 bite	13+	10	2+
SPIRIT OF DARK LORE	5	30'	6	+8/1d8 blight, or by marabout spell	13+	9	3+
TEMPTING SPIRIT	7	30'	4	+6/1d8 scourging touch	13+	8	3+
FALSE GOD	3	30'	12	+12/1d12 x2 divine smittings	9+	11	3+

If you need to provide stats for a large number of monster types, it can be most convenient to put them all in a vertical list like this., recording only the most important parts. If you plan on the list being printed out, such as for a quick-reference sheet in a module or game book, turn off the cell shading since it eats printer ink in a hurry.

Sometimes you have a list that doesn't subdivide neatly into 6/10/12/20 items. In those cases, you can use multiple dice to generate a different range of numbers- the table below picks randomly between 36 different results based on the combined rolls of a d6 and a d12, for example.

1d6	1d12	SAMPLE TROUBLES
1-2	1	A powerful nganga has a grudge against the lord
	2	Nests of terrible monsters are near a town or city
	3	A dire curse afflicts an important place
	4	Venal officials ignore the land's needs
	5	A bandit chief colludes with a corrupt noble
	6	A persistent disease plagues a town or city
	7	A powerful clan is contemptuous of the ruler
	8	Rebels seek violent secession from the domain
	9	An important local resource is running out
	10	The spirits are angry with the domain
	11	Uncleansed Eternal tomb-houses torment the land
	12	Religious zealots provoke riots and strife
3-4	1	Corrupt keepers regularly loot the treasury
	2	An important official is irreplaceable but a fool
	3	Crop failures are disturbingly common
	4	Certain customs are self-destructive to the realm
	5	A deposed ruler leads a slow-burning insurrection
	6	Witchcraft panics set the people into turmoil
	7	An important shrine is ruinously costly to keep
	8	Bandits or rebels threaten a vital trade route
	9	The current ruler's legitimacy is doubted by many
	10	Grasping merchants corner an important market
	11	The realm's armed forces are slack and corrupt
	12	The nobility is decadent and given to folly
5-6	1	Unearthed ruins send forth tormenting foes
	2	Recent suffering has left the people apathetic
	3	Rigid bureaucracy has paralyzed vital state actions
	4	Greedy tax farmers are provoking the people
	5	A charismatic general has dreams of personal rule
	6	An heir desires to hasten the succession process
	7	Impractical idealism induces foolish projects
	8	Savage infighting is going on over a resource lode
	9	A society of thieves and spies torments the capital
	10	Corrupt officials demand bribes for everything
	11	A court nganga's demands beggar the treasury
	12	No one trusts the lord or his officials

Most games should have a character sheet. The one to the right is in landscape format- and like any page you plan on being printed out as a resource, you should remember to Override Master Page Objects and delete the page number from the corner, too.

NAME															
STR	MOD	SCORE	SCORE												
		INT													
DEX		WIS													
CON		CHA													
MAX HP	CURRENT HP														
<table border="1"> <tr> <th>AB</th> <th>PHYS</th> <th>MENT</th> <th>EVAS</th> <th>MAGIC</th> <th>LUCK</th> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>				AB	PHYS	MENT	EVAS	MAGIC	LUCK						
AB	PHYS	MENT	EVAS	MAGIC	LUCK										

CLASS			
LEVEL	XP		
BACKGROUND			
<table border="1"> <tr> <th>CLASS SKILLS</th> </tr> <tr> <td></td> </tr> </table>		CLASS SKILLS	
CLASS SKILLS			

ABOUT SPHERES, IDAINS, ABILITIES AND NOTES			

SKILL	LVL	SKILL	LVL
ARTIST/		NAVIGATION	
ATHLETICS		OCCULT	
BUSINESS		PERCEPTION	
COMBAT/AXE		PERSUADE	
COMBAT/BLADE		PRIESTCRAFT	
COMBAT/CLUB		RIDE	
COMBAT/SPEAR		SCHOLAR	
COMBAT/MISSILE		SECURITY	
CULTURE/		STEALTH	
CULTURE/		SURVIVAL	
CULTURE/		TACTICS	
LANGUAGE		TRADE/	
MEDICINE		UNSPENT POINTS	

WEAPON	+HT	DMG	RANGE	AMMO
ARMOR			AC	

CLASS SKILLS COST NEW LEVEL+1 TO RAISE, OTHERS COST NEW LEVEL+2			
---	--	--	--

READY EQUIPMENT	(MAX ENC. = STR/2)	ENC
STOWED EQUIPMENT	(MAX. ENC. = STR)	ENC

COINAGE			

Sometimes you might need to provide a range of sample NPC stats for a particular class. The table below shows how you can use selective cell strokes and merges to create a thumbnail listing of NPC stats. Use cell strokes and shading to conceptually group relevant information together- the shades represent major unities, while the strokes set off finer distinctions within that main topic/

WARRIOR									
Lvl	HP	AC	AB	WEAPON/ARMOR	PHYSICAL EFFECT	MENTAL EFFECT	EVASION	MAGIC	LUCK
1	6	3	+2/+4	Runku (1d6+3) / No Armor	12	12	13	14	13
Skills: Athletics-1, Combat/Club-1, Combat/All-0, Culture/Meru-0, Navigation-0, Leadership-0, Occult-0*, Tactics-1 Idabuns: Blessed and Graced (AC3)									
3	18	3	+3/+6	Runku / No Armor	11	11	12	13	12
Skills: Athletics-1, Combat/Club-2, Combat/All-0, Culture/Meru-0, Navigation-0, Leadership-1, Occult-0*, Tactics-2 Idabuns: Blessed and Graced (AC3), Tireless (+1 Con mod)									
5	30	3	+5/+9	Runku+1 (1d6+6)/ No Armor	10	10	11	12	11
Skills: Athletics-2, Combat/Club-2, Combat/All-0, Culture/Meru-0, Navigation-1, Leadership-1, Occult-1*, Tactics-2 Idabuns: Blessed and Graced (AC3), Tireless (+1 Con mod), Born with a Blade (Clubs)									
7	42	3	+7/+12	Runku+1 / No Armor	9	9	10	11	10
Skills: Athletics-2, Combat/Club-3, Combat/All-0, Culture/Meru-1, Navigation-1, Leadership-1, Occult-1*, Tactics-3 Idabuns: Blessed and Graced (AC3), Tireless (+1 Con mod), Born with a Blade (Clubs), Honored Steps (+1 Cha mod)									
9	54	3	+9/+12	Runku+2 (1d6+7)/ No Armor	8	8	9	10	9
Skills: Athletics-2, Combat/Club-3, Combat/All-0, Culture/Meru-1, Navigation-1, Leadership-2, Occult-1*, Tactics-4 Idabuns: Blessed and Graced (AC3), Tireless (+1 Con mod), Born with a Blade (Clubs), Honored Steps (+1 Cha mod), Honed Skill (Tactics)									
An NPC warrior's default attributes are Strength 14 (+0), Intelligence 7 (-1), Wisdom 7 (-1), Dexterity 14 (+1), Constitution 11 (+0), and Charisma 11 (+0). All skills are class skills except for those marked with an asterisk; players can swap skills in and out accordingly. The listed attack bonus gives the base and the character's bonus with their listed weapon.									
Warrior Class Skills: Athletics, Combat/Any, Culture/Own, Leadership, Navigation, Perception, Ride, Security, Stealth, Survival, Tactics, Trade									

DON'T FORGET YOUR INDEX

There's really no reason why a game book of significant size shouldn't have an index if you're using InDesign. Tag your important terms after you finish each section, as you go along.

AND MIND YOUR LAYERS, TOO

Have a page full of art? Have multiple maps on the same page? Put them on their own layer and make sure to export your eventual PDF with layers enabled. That way your user will be able to turn on and off the art when it comes time to print, or selectively enable certain maps when he or she wants some extra whitespace to key the other map on the page.

SPEARS OF THE DAWN

BY KEVIN CRAWFORD

ILLUSTRATIONS BY

NICOLE CARDIFF ANDREW KRAHNKE
LUIGI CASTELLANI IAN MACLEAN
EARL GEIER SARA MIRABELLA
MIGUEL SANTOS

ISBN XXX-X-XXXXXX-XX-X

© 2013, SINE NOMINE PUBLISHING

CREATING A CHARACTER

Before venturing into the fearsome wilds of the Three Lands, two things need to be done- the players need to create characters, and the game master, or “GM”, needs to create an adventure. The details of building a sandbox campaign and assembling a good adventure are dealt with later in this book, but everyone needs to know how to fashion a suitable hero. Even the GM should take some time to read through this chapter in order to understand what manner of heroes they will be seeing in their adventures.

You shouldn't feel intimidated by the details of this chapter, as the process is quite simple. You roll up your character's innate attributes, pick a background from the list provided, choose the character class that best represents their heroic talents, and buy equipment with their initial funds. Experienced players can get it done in five minutes or less, and even your first time through shouldn't take more than fifteen or twenty minutes once you've read the options. Many players find it worthwhile to create two or three characters at once, the better to have a backup handy in case their first choice should happen to make some fatal error in the presence of enemy spears.

SPEARS OF THE DAWN

In the wake of the Long War, countless pockets of Eternal and their devotees were left behind by the collapse of the Sixth Kingdom's army. Even deep into the west, there remained buried tomb-houses and uncleared ruins teeming with foes that could neither be starved out nor waited out. One of the last mutual acts of the Five Kingdoms alliance was to assign certain elite military units with the responsibility for clearing these pockets of festering night. These grim heroes were known as the Spears of the Dawn.

In the forty years since, these poorly-supported units have unraveled into a loose mesh of allied groups, freelancers, and self-declared members. Anyone can call himself or herself a Spear, but such men and women are expected to fight evil and purge pockets of long-forgotten peril. So long as they carry out their old mandate, they are an accepted and respected element of society, if viewed with a certain apprehension for their unpredictability. They stand outside the usual bounds of custom and tradition, and minor crimes and broken taboos are often overlooked by a populace that needs their sacrifices.

Those who fail to live up to their title are forced to move on quickly. The line between Spear and bandit vagabond can be vanishingly thin, and few communities care to risk the danger of a useless, dangerous outsider lurking within their walls.

By default, adventurers are assumed to have declared themselves Spears of the Dawn or been appointed to it by an older mentor. It provides an easy explanation for why they might search out adventure, and gives a good excuse as to why a group of wildly-varying young freebooters might work together. Your GM may have a different campaign framing device in mind, however, so you should check with them before assuming too much.

Spears of the Dawn is built to support a style of play commonly known as “sandbox gaming”. In such games, it's the characters and their goals that will determine the ultimate direction of play, rather than relying on the GM to build plots and story lines for players to experience. If your characters have no goals and no particular motivations, you're either going to have a very dull game or you're going to force the GM to constantly prod you along toward adventure. As such, it's very important that your character have some sort of ambition or purpose, even if that's something as ordinary as “Become filthy rich”. Every character needs a reason to go out and interact with the world.

Still, just because your character has a goal doesn't mean he or she is actually going to succeed at it. Sandbox games are meant to respond reasonably and coherently to player character actions. If a PC behaves foolishly or recklessly he can expect to have an exciting but very brief life. There is no plot armor that is going to save him and no deus ex machina that will reach down and preserve him from the consequences of his gambles. Your character may have spent the past five years struggling to overthrow the usurper who massacred his family, but if he bulls in blindly to confront the tyrant before he is ready for the clash, he's probably going to die. The players make the story in a sandbox campaign, but sometimes that story is a sad one.

Still, if you show ordinary good sense and prudence in your play and have no more than common degrees of luck, you can expect a long and exciting adventuring career. Careful scouting, thoughtful weighing of risk and reward, and the keen sense of when to throw caution to the wind will bring your heroes the glory they deserve and the victory they desire. And even if the spirits should decree against them and bitter misfortune drag them down, quick-witted heroes can often escape an enemy's jaws that they might return later in vengeance and righteous flame.

WORKING TOGETHER

If possible, you should roll up your characters together with the GM and the other players in the campaign. That way it is much easier to tie your PCs' backgrounds together and make up a good explanation for trusting each other. Such group loyalty is important in *Spears of the Dawn*, as rogue lions and lone jackals are easy prey for the perils of the Three Lands. Teamwork is vital if a group is to survive the dangers that they will face, and PCs who do not trust each other are setting the group up for an ignominious end.

In the course of play, it's not uncommon for characters to find themselves with conflicting motivations- the nganga might want to plumb the ruins of a prehuman umthali city for ancient serpent-magic while the warrior might want to crush the tyrannical oba who drove the party out of his city several months ago. When no easy agreement is to be had, it can be best to let characters take turns in directing the group's goals. As in any matter of intra-party dispute, the PCs should take care not to let their quarrels threaten the good of the whole. Squabbling in a tavern is troublesome, but arguing in a tomb-house can be a fatal distraction.

ROLLING ATTRIBUTES

The first step in creating your character is to determine the character's six attributes. Attributes describe the character's aptitude in certain aspects- how strong, clever, perceptive, quick, hardy, or charming they might be. Attributes in a human range are measured by scores ranging from 3 to 18, with 3 reflecting a character barely capable of functioning as an adventurer, and 18 indicating remarkable natural gifts.

To generate your character's attributes, roll 3d6 six times and assign the rolls to the attributes in the order listed on the table below. Average humans have attributes in the 8 to 13 range; as such, you may choose to remove points from any attribute above 13 to raise any attribute up to 8. For example, if you've rolled a Dexterity score of 15 and an Intelligence score of 7, you might choose to take one point from Dexterity and raise your Intelligence score up to 8. No attribute so altered can be lowered below 13 or raised above 8. Attributes need not be evened out this way if you prefer to play the attributes as rolled.

Once you have determined your scores, you should write down the attribute modifier for each. The attribute modifier is a bonus or penalty that is applied to rolls related to that attribute. At many points in this book you'll be instructed to add a particular attribute's modifier to a roll. You should take care to add just the modifier to the roll, and not the entire attribute score. In the case of a particularly lackluster attribute score, the modifier might even be negative, in which case you should subtract it from the roll as a penalty. If your attributes change during the course of play, make sure to adjust your modifiers as needed.

Some characters don't look to be terribly promising material for adventure. At the GM's discretion, a character whose total final attribute modifiers sum to less than zero can be discarded and their attributes rerolled. Not all GMs prefer to allow this option, however. High attribute scores are nice, but they are by no means mandatory to make an interesting or playable character. Surviving the perils of the Three Lands depends far more on good choices than good attributes.

CHOOSING ATTRIBUTES

Some players just don't care for random generation of attributes, particularly when the dice produce a character wholly unlike what they wanted to play. Even with the chance to swap in a score of 14 into a prime ability of their class, it's just no fun for them to randomly roll their adventurer's attributes. This is by no means an unreasonable taste, but such players are encouraged to give it an honest try. Part of the pleasure of the game is surprise- surprise at the details of your character, surprise at the kind of challenges you'll face, and surprise at the possibilities that arise from your character's limits and ambitions.

Still, if you feel strongly about it and the GM doesn't object, you can simply put a score of 7, 11, or 14 in any given attribute, so long as you don't have more scores of 14 than you have 7s. If you take this option, you don't get the "free 14" you would otherwise be given in one of your chosen class' prime attributes.

ATTRIBUTE MODIFIERS

ATTRIBUTE SCORE	MODIFIER
18	+2
14-17	+1
8-13	No Modifier
4-7	-1
3	-2

THE SIX ATTRIBUTES

STRENGTH

Physical might and ability to carry heavy loads. Characters with high Strength are fearsome in hand-to-hand combat, smashing through enemy defenses with brute force.

INTELLIGENCE

Memory, logic, and the capacity to think quickly. Characters with high Intelligence are well-suited to coping with complex intellectual skills and handling the enigmatic mysteries of the occult.

WISDOM

Perception, strength of will, and judgment. A high Wisdom shows that the character is keenly aware of his or her surroundings, has a strong willpower, and a healthy fund of common sense.

DEXTERITY

Hand-eye coordination, agility, and reaction speed. High Dexterity is the sign of a nimble, quick-handed character with a lot of natural aptitude for archery and stealth.

CONSTITUTION

Hardihood, stamina, and the ability to withstand pain, sickness, and injury. High Constitution indicates a character that can take a lot of abuse before keeling over, whether or not they have an impressive musculature.

CHARISMA

Charm, persuasiveness, and capacity for leadership. Not every high-Charisma character is handsome or beautiful, but all of them have a way of making others take them seriously.

CHOOSING A CONCEPT

Once you've rolled your attributes, you're ready to pick a concept for your character. Your concept is a brief, general description of what your aspiring hero is about: "He's a Lokossan warrior who left his village to find adventure." "She's an olabon's apprentice from Meru who seeks Sun Faith relics." "He's a simple Kirsi maize farmer run off his land by a grasping lord." "She's a runaway Nyalan noblewoman who refuses to be married off for her family's advancement."

If you're uncertain as to which concepts might suit the game, you can consult the origin pages that follow to get an idea of some of the more common adventurous roles that exist in the Three Lands. In most new *Spears of the Dawn* campaigns, it's assumed that your character has somehow ended up as a Spear, whatever his or her former life, and you'll want to keep this in mind unless your GM has specified a rather different kind of game.

Part of choosing a concept is also choosing a motivation. Something made your character abandon their former existence and take up the potentially lethal role of a Spear or roaming adventurer. Does he lust for gold and the pleasures of a rich man's life? Does she

crave ancient secrets and the lore of long-dead ngangas? Perhaps he seeks justice for the downtrodden and oppressed- or he means to do a little creative oppressing himself once he's able to seize control of his natal city.

In the same vein, not every freebooter planned to have a life like this and many of them find themselves forced to take to the roads when their old life comes crashing down about them. These disasters can provide powerful motivations as the PC strives to avenge whatever injustice forced them out of their homely existence.

It's not necessary that your motivation be grand or implacably set, but you need to pick at least one. In a sandbox game like *Spears of the Dawn* your character needs to have some self-directed ambitions if they don't mean to be left at a loss by the open world they encounter. Your character needs to have a reason to go out and accomplish something, and if your motivation isn't something that can give you quick and easy direction you may want to rethink your choice.

CHOOSING AN ORIGIN

With your general concept chosen, you need to decide on your character's origins. The great majority of PCs will come from one of the Five Kingdoms, hailing either from one of the great cities of the west or one of the countless scattered villages that lie in the wilderness of the Three Lands. A few heroes might come from a minor tribe or lesser statelet left behind in the chaos of the Long War, but even these places often share many of the same customs and traits as their neighboring nations.

Each origin page includes a brief description of the culture, common details of appearance, and some likely ways in which a character from that background might become an adventurer. The descriptions are brief by necessity, and if you want more information you should check the Three Lands setting chapter to get a more detailed description. As in all things, the information given in the briefings should be taken to describe only the usual or most common facets of the culture. Individuals can vary widely even within the most rigid and tradition-bound societies.

Every origin also offers a selection of backgrounds. You should pick the one that best describes the PC's past before they acquired the special skills of an adventurer. Backgrounds reflect where your character has come from- they do not limit the class you might later choose for them. Just because a Lokossan was raised as a ngangas's apprentice doesn't mean he can't later become a mighty swordsman.

Each background package gives a list of skills. You should write these down on your character sheet as being "level-0", implying a basic, workmanlike familiarity with the skill. You'll later gain additional skills when you pick a class. Where the two lists overlap, the skills will rise to "level-1", indicating a long professional expertise.

Once you have an origin culture, you should think about a name for the PC. By convention, most names in the Three Lands consist of a personal name followed by a surname or clan name. In regions dominated entirely by one clan, descriptive terms such as "the Wise", "the Smith", "One-Leg" or other such are often appended to the personal name. Some souls driven to abandon their former lives take entirely new names descriptive of some physical characteristic or mighty deed, such as the famed Lokossan ngangas Ten Skulls or the Meruan Spear-hero known as the Fist of the Sun. The Resources chapter in this book contains example name tables.

Family and tribe are both very important in the Three Lands, but it's likely that your PCs will soon travel far beyond contact with their kinsmen. If you are playing a more geographically restricted campaign, however, take care to be aware of your responsibilities as a member of the family. Those men and women who fail to come to the aid of their kinsmen often suffer more than social shame for their neglect.

CUSTOM ORIGINS

If you see an origin that looks interesting in one culture but would prefer to play a character from a different kingdom, you can always just change the details of the background to suit your preferred culture. Some of the backgrounds are specific to a particular people, but even in those cases your GM should be able to give you the equivalent of what you want to play.

In the same fashion, if you're comfortable with the setting and want to make your own background you can simply pick any six skills from the Skills section and tie them together with a suitable explanation. Provided it sounds plausible to the GM, it will serve perfectly well.

KIRSI

The people of Kirsi (“KEER-see”) are warriors, the sons and daughters of the hard border lords that rule what was once the eastern frontier of the Nyalan Empire. Their armored lancers are famous throughout the Three Lands, and their iron-shod cavalry thundered through seas of Eternal soldiers in the days of the Long War. Even the least Kirsine peasant knows something of how to hold a weapon, and even the lords of Kirsi do not dare attempt to take the swords from the hands of the common people.

Since the Long War ended forty years ago the Kirsi have been embroiled in an endless succession of civil wars, internecine squabbles, and usurpations. The nominal king, the Dia, rules only the land beneath his horsemen’s hooves, and the common people suffer bitterly from the feuding of their lords. Many peasants have been driven from their villages by the fighting, and noble families have been left impoverished or scattered among the hills.

The Kirsi dwell in the north-central part of the Yellow Land, in the dry hills and scrubland that abut the Mountains of the Sun. Their cities are of adobe and scrub-oak, simple and square and sun-baked. The fortresses of the nobles are built of quarried stone, and some date back for centuries, back when Kirsi was still the eastern frontier of empire and its lords still had the wealth to afford Nyalan architects and artists. Ancient estates and ruined monuments still litter the hills.

The Kirsi are very dark-skinned, as dark as the Lokossans to the far southwest. Their features are straight and sharp, and their straight black hair is worn long by both men and women. The men braid it to better cushion their helmets or wear it up in colorful cloth turbans, while the women decorate theirs with bright ornaments and veils of dyed cotton. White robes split for riding are common to all, often worn over tunics and trousers for both sexes. The richness and color of the underdress is a sign of the wearer’s wealth and importance.

The Kirsi are proud, contumacious, and fierce. They recognize only their chosen lord, and that only so long as he continues to advance his warriors’ interests. Unlike some other lands, any peasant with the will and ferocity to stake out his own glorious name in the dry hills may come to be counted as noble as any other lord, if only he can hold his fame against those who would take it from him.

Most Kirsine adventurers are warriors in the tradition of their people. Many such soldiers are knocked loose from their lands after ending up on the wrong end of a war or from the sudden collapse of their patron noble house. Marabouts and griots are not unknown either, with the Sun Faith strong in the Yellow Land and every noble clan needing at least one griot to pronounce their virtues and mighty deeds. Ngangas from Kirsi are even rarer than usual, as few with the gift for manipulating *ashe* ever have the opportunity to learn the necessary skills to wield it. Those who do are often deep in the bush, far away from warriors who understand only steel. Some find it best to depart their home before they are condemned by some paranoid noble or mobbed by witch-fearing local peasants.

KIRSINE BANDIT

Whether an actual marauder or simply a soldier obliged to go freelance in unorthodox ways, the fast-riding bandits of Kirsi are a scourge on their neighbors. They strike swiftly on their sturdy hill-country horses and sweep away before the locals can muster a defense. Some bandits repent of their thieving ways and seek a more noble life, and others simply find the typical activities of a Spear to be more or less the same as their former employment.

Skills: Combat/Any, Culture/Kirsi, Perception, Ride, Stealth, Survival

KIRSINE NOBLE

You were of a noble clan once... you still are, really, if you want to be precise. But they lost a fight they couldn’t afford to lose, or you did something they couldn’t ever forgive, and now you’re cast upon your own resources in the world. It’s up to you to avenge their fall, redeem your name, or just forget what you once were.

Skills: Combat/Any, Culture/Kirsi, Leadership, Perception, Persuade, Ride

KIRSINE PEASANT

Warriors must eat, and the retainues of the nobles are too proud to till the earth, even if they weren’t constantly fighting. The peasants of Kirsi are tough, cynical, and often veteran warriors from their days as conscripts in a local lord’s army. Many tire of the endless struggle, and some decide to act on their weariness.

Skills: Any One Skill, Athletics, Combat/Any, Culture/Kirsi, Survival, Trade/Farmer

KIRSINE SCHOLAR

Kirsi is not famous for its scholars, but some historians have the patience and personal courage to track the constant shift of noble clans and borderlines within the kingdom. Others salvage the histories that would otherwise be lost to indifference, and remember the songs and chants that praise heroes long since gone down to the dust.

Skills: Combat/Any, Culture/Kirsi, Language, Medicine, Scholar, Occult

KIRSINE SCOUT

A sword must be directed to be of use, and the armored fist of the lancers is useless when a target is not to be found. These light-clad scouts cross the hills with speed and silence, capable of surviving unaided for long periods in the hills as they search for enemy troops. They are not expected to engage the foe directly, but only to find him and get away in time to alert their allies.

Skills: Combat/Any, Culture/Kirsi, Navigation, Ride, Stealth, Survival

KIRSINE SOHANKIT

The *sobankit* are the home-grown spirit healers, sorcerers and charm-makers of the Kirsi, most often found in remote villages and in the darker corners of the adobe cities. Their actions can easily be construed as “harming others through witchcraft”, and so most find it necessary to avoid the official notice of nobility, even if they fashion charms for them under the cover of night. Most have no actual magical abilities, though they often have some measure of occult learning.

Skills: Combat/Any, Culture/Kirsi, Medicine, Perception, Stealth, Occult

KIRSINE SOLDIER

Some commoners are “fortunate” enough to find a place in the permanent retinue of a Kirsine lord. These men- and a few steel-hard women- trade a lifetime of border skirmishes and sudden ambushes for the bread and beer of a soldier. Sometimes the loss of a lord or some unendurable mistreatment sends them looking for a different life. Their services are prized in other lands, though the climate and horse-sickening parasites of the southern kingdoms make it difficult to muster large bodies of cavalry beyond the northern lands.

Skills: Athletics, Combat/Any, Culture/Kirsi, Leadership, Ride, Tactics

KIRSINE SUNRIDER

Paladins of the Sun Faith, the Sunriders are stern-minded warriors for justice. Many of them are former soldiers who have sickened of the endless fighting and seek to defend the common people from noble depredations. Others are raised from youth to join the order, trained by older Sunriders who have settled in their villages or towns. A few are even cast out for some sin.

Skills: Athletics, Combat/Any, Culture/Kirsi, Leadership, Ride, Priestcraft

KIRSINE SUN TEACHER

The great majority of Kirsine are faithful devotees of the Sun Faith, revering the Sun as the supreme deity and following the Four Corners of the Mountain laid down by the prophet. Not every Sun Teacher is gifted with the talents of a marabout, but the people require teaching, prayer, and guidance all the same.

Skills: Combat/Any, Culture/Kirsi, Leadership, Persuade, Scholar, Priestcraft

KIRSINE URBANITE

The cities of Kirsi are not so vast as the sprawling metropoli of Nyala or the teeming market-towns of Sokone, but they are cities all the same. The people who dwell there must all have some useful trade to call their own if they are to earn their bread.

Skills: Any One Skill, Business, Combat/Any, Culture/Kirsi, Ride, Trade/Any

LOKOSSA

The grim Lokossans (“low-KOH-sah”) dwell in the thick southern jungles of the Green Land, standing fast against the constant incursions of the bestial Night Men from across the Akpara River. Their warriors are armed for battle by their mighty ngangas, and the greatest of these sages is enthroned as the Ahonsu, the sorcerer-king of Lokossa. No other land is so wound about with witchcraft as is Lokossa, and even the greatest of the Nyalan emperors could not overcome the sorcery of its mysterious lords.

The Lokossans live bleakly regimented lives. Commoners farm patches of cleared land within the jungle or harvest its fruits, game, and fish. Every village is the property of a noble clan, and its inhabitants are little better than slaves to the will of their lords. Some are literally so- slavery is more common in Lokossa than in any other land, not least because of the grim yearly rites of human sacrifice required by many of the most powerful ngangas. The “Traditions”, as they are called, are said to provide the ngangas with the strength they need to hold back the Night Men from overrunning the country. The people dread being chosen for such an offering, but most accept it as a sad necessity for their common survival.

The Ahonsu rules with a hard hand over his people, expressing his will through the numerous noble clans, each of which is marked by a magically potent bloodline. Commoners who show the talent for manipulating *ashe* are married into a noble clan and elevated to a higher rank, while the great majority of the clan that lacks mystical aptitude are set to officering in the army or serving as clerks and officials in the villages. A noble may have unquestioned command over his people, but even he is but a slave to the service of the Ahonsu, and none dare defy the witch-king’s commands.

Only in wandering is freedom. Those who flee their villages or noble palaces can live long lives free of another’s will, but they must keep moving. Too long a residence in one place will mark them as the property of whichever lord owns that land. The need for freedom has driven many Lokossans into pilgrimage far from their homes- and many more to leave their bones beneath the jungle’s eternal green.

The Lokossans are a very dark-skinned people, with dark eyes and tightly-curved hair that is often cropped short or kept in elaborate braids. Their features are more lush and rounded than those of the other Five Kingdoms, and many among them incise delicate lines of ritual scarification on their bodies as part of initiation rites or magical practices. Some among the nobles endure the excruciating use of certain rare plant dyes to give their scars brilliant, jewel-bright hues, both to announce their rank and to demonstrate their indifference to suffering. In the humid heat of the southern jungles, clothing ranges from minimal to near-nonexistent depending on the work that is to be done, though men and women not engaged in war or labor favor chiffon-light wraps of woven leaf fibers dyed in beautiful patterns and rich colors.

LOKOSSAN APPRENTICE

Some are born with the gift to channel *ashe*, the magical force that fuels the ngangas’ arts. This gift may come from a strong bloodline, from a supernatural mark at birth, from a life-changing event, or from the touch of a great spirit, but whatever its source it is prized in Lokossa. Every noble house is eager to gather as many potential ngangas to them as they are able, the better to enhance their sorcerous might. Not all apprentices prove suitable for mastering the ngangas’ red arts, however, and some students decide to take a different path to glory- whether or not their master approves.

Skills: Culture/Lokossa, Language, Leadership, Medicine, Occult, Scholar

LOKOSSAN HUNTER

What cannot be grown from the unwilling earth or drawn from the rivers must be hunted beneath the jungle’s boughs. Lokossa relies more upon game and jungle provender than do the other kingdoms of the Three Lands, and most Lokossans who are not peasants are hunters. These practiced souls are skilled at stealth and the downing of big game, but many find employment in the regiments of the Lokossan army to scout out the movements of Night Men warbands. Few such military scouts live long enough to retire to their richly-deserved honors.

Skills: Athletics, Combat/Any, Culture/Lokossa, Perception, Stealth, Survival

LOKOSSAN LAGREDI

In the Three Lands, those who defy the boundaries of custom or nature touch upon a dangerous power. The lagredis are those men who have partaken of certain potions and rituals, assuming the social and sometimes physical role of women. The process is believed to grant them unusual magical potency, and it is not uncommon for male nobility to seek them for wives. The Ahonsu himself is expected to have several such spouses, commonly entrusted with the subtle oversight and monitoring of important matters.

Skills: Business, Culture/Lokossa, Occult, Perception, Persuade, Stealth

LOKOSSAN NOBLE

Not every noble is in perfect harmony with their clan. Some prove... problematic, for one reason or another. Sometimes they incur the sorcerous anger of a more powerful kinsman, or fail in some great duty, or are simply an obstacle in the ascent of a more ambitious relative. These nobles retain their pride and their learning, but have little else when cast forth upon the world. Some families prefer not to have such disgraces sully their clan’s name with continued life, and hunt them still.

Skills: Athletics, Combat/Any, Culture/Lokossa, Leadership, Occult, Tactics

LOKOSSAN PEASANT

There are those with worse lots in the Three Lands than the peasants of Lokossa, but there are not many of them. These peasants labor as virtual slaves under their masters' rule, their only route to glory running through military service against the Night Men or talent as a nganga's apprentice. Some seek to make a different way for themselves in a more distant land.

Skills: Any One Skill, Athletics, Culture/Lokossa, Stealth, Survival, Trade/Farmer

LOKOSSAN PRIEST

The great majority of Lokossans are followers of the Spirit Way, giving particular reverence to the shades of dead Ahonsus in their palace-tombs. Others are servants of the spirits of the jungles, the rivers, or the sky, enlisting such aid as they can against the enemies of their people. Few have any true magical power, but their encouragement and their understanding of curses and magical afflictions make them useful to their people.

Skills: Culture/Lokossa, Leadership, Medicine, Occult, Persuade, Priestcraft

LOKOSSAN REAPER

Just as the lagredi is thought to gain mystical power by transgressing the boundary between male and female, the Reaper is said to obtain great martial ferocity by abandoning her femininity for the masculine role of warrior. Among these amazons number restless farm girls, dissatisfied wives, convicted criminals, and ambitious young noblewomen, and together they are some of the most feared warriors in all Lokossa. They have all the rights of men and an honored place in Lokossan society, but they buy it with fearsome bloodshed and their skill with the two-handed "great razor".

Skills: Any One Skill, Athletics, Combat/Blade, Culture/Lokossa, Survival, Tactics

LOKOSSAN SOLDIER

While the armies of Lokossa are officered by nobles, it is the common folk who make up the rank and file of their swordsmen. The short-bladed *ida* sword is the weapon of choice among them, the better to clear away brush and deliver brutal chops and thrusts in the close quarters of the jungle. Most are simple village conscripts raised by noble levies, but even those forced to the work recognize the importance of their duties. Without the armies of Lokossa to hold them back, the bestial Night Men of the south would be burning Nyalan temples within a year.

Skills: Any One Skill, Athletics, Combat/Any, Culture/Lokossa, Tactics, Trade/Any

LOKOSSAN RUNAWAY

Slavery is disturbingly common in Lokossa. Criminals, the impoverished, war prisoners, and even disgraced nobles all face degradation to slavery, and from their number are first chosen the sacrifices to be made at the yearly Traditions. Most slaves remain obedient out of hopelessness, fear, or family bonds, but some have the will to flee their oppressors.

Skills: Athletics, Culture/Lokossa, Navigation, Perception, Stealth, Survival

LOKOSSAN URBANITE

Lokossa is not abundant in cities, but it has its share of them fashioned of hard jungle woods and laboriously-quarried stone. Most such places exist as commercial and craftwork centers for the country, taking in the noble-gathered tribute of the countryside and transforming it into the host of goods and military supplies necessary to sustain society. Private commerce is more limited, but every citizen must be skilled at something if he is to escape the displeasure of the city's lord.

Skills: Any One Skill, Business, Culture/Lokossa, Language, Perception, Trade/Any

MERU

In the golden seas of grass that cover the southern Yellow Land the Meru (“MAY-roo”) are the masters of the land. Their great herds of cattle tread paths laid down by their forefathers in generations past, pausing only until the pasture is depleted. Their villages are temporary affairs of thatch, sticks, and piled thornbush walls, but these people maintain many secrets long since lost to others.

The Meru did not exist as a people until the start of the Long War, when their Sun Faith ancestors fled the kingdom of Deshur after the martyrdom of their prophet. They refused to bow to the Gods Below and preferred escape to the savannahs to the forced worship that was demanded of them. Once on the plains, the indigenous tribes recognized their need for allies in the war to come, and taught the Meru’s ancestors how to herd and live in their new home. Inter-marriage and assimilation of the far-fewer indigenes was swift, and now their culture exists only in a few isolated families and a small strain of Spirit Way faith among the otherwise uniformly Sun Faithful Meruans.

The Eternal King sent legion after legion into the savannah to kill the rebels, but the nomadic lifestyle and ceaseless wandering of the Meru kept them constantly ahead of the Deshrites. They learned the use of special weapons suited to crushing the bones of the immortals, and their *siare* throwing-clubs and great *runku* war staves are still symbols of defiance against the Sixth Kingdom. They are proud of their freedom, and the wandering families of the Meru are only loosely ruled by an elected Elaigwen, a “city-chief” chosen from among the patriarchs of the greatest Meru clans.

The Meru are a nomadic people. Their history has led them to shun lasting settlements, and many clans meet only at appointed times and places to trade, find wives, and renew old pacts. A few makeshift market towns and farming settlements of thatch and thornbush dot the savannah, but these settlements last only so long as the water and pasturage endure. In the days of the Old Kings the Nyalan Empire laid claim to the Yellow Land, but their legions often failed to even find the indigenous dwellers in the grass sea, let alone exact tribute from them.

The Meru resemble their Sixth Kingdom ancestors, with coppery, golden-brown skin and features less severe than their Kirsine neighbors. Those families with strong native influence tend to be much darker-skinned, though they usually retain the straighter black hair of other Meru. As with the other people of the Five Kingdoms, eye colors are varying shades of dark or hazel hues. Those with different hues are usually considered marked by the spirits in some way.

Meruan adventurers are most often young men and women who wish to make a name for themselves before starting a family. The gold they gather can buy them a bride-price or a herd of their own, or earn a girl the glory she requires to chart her own life. Their warriors are famed for their hardiness and courage in the face of Eternal foes, and their olabons preserve many secrets that their Deshrite ancestors brought out of the Sixth Kingdom. The Sun Faith also gives rise to many young marabouts who feel the need to spread the faith beyond the boundaries of the yellow grass sea.

MERUAN ARTISAN

The vast majority of Meru’s adult men are herders, and much of the craftwork and other necessary professions are carried on by women and those men without the strength to run with the herds. These artisans provide almost all of the leatherwork, bone-carving, woodworking, weaving, and other skills vital to any clan. Even these “sedentary” Meru are often marked by superb conditioning and hardy strength from their long journeys.

Skills: Any One Skill, Athletics, Business, Combat/Any, Culture/Meru, Trade/Any

MERUAN HEALER

The Meru retain many of the secrets of Deshrite medicine and know sophisticated techniques for dealing with the wounds and contagions inflicted by the Eternal legions. Their healers have cause to use their arts, not least on the precious cattle that are the great support of the wandering clans. Many healers are women, as Meruan custom credits them with a greater power to purify tainted spirit and flesh. Even when clans are feuding at their hottest, only the most degenerate will dare to harm a healer.

Skills: Athletics, Combat/Any, Culture/Meru, Medicine, Occult, Trade/Herder

MERUAN HERDER

Where the common folk of other lands are peasant farmers, the people of Meru are herdsmen. Their lives are bound up with their cattle- they drink their blood, eat their flesh raw in memory of their ancestors who had no time to kindle fires when they escaped the Sixth Kingdom, and make their clothing and tools from leather and bone. They eat no plant food they cannot gather while herding or take from the small gardens planted in their temporary villages and market-towns. Herding is traditionally a male role, but there are times when loss of men in war or simple necessity require a sturdy young girl to go out and protect the herds from lions and thieving strangers.

Skills: Athletics, Combat/Any, Culture/Meru, Navigation, Survival, Trade/Herder

MERUAN OLABON

Despite their lack of great cities or sophisticated physical technology, the Meru guard much ancient lore passed down from their Sixth Kingdom ancestors. Much of what they know has long since been lost beneath the black sands of the east, and they protect this knowledge carefully as a token of their ancestors and their right to be counted the true and faithful heirs of Deshur. Olabons often deal with supernatural conundrums whether or not they have the power of a full-fledged nganga.

Skills: Athletics, Culture/Meru, Language, Occult, Perception, Scholar

MERUIAN OUTCAST

Within the roving families of the Meru, the patriarch's word is law. Execution is almost unknown as a punishment, but exile is more common. These outcasts have done something unforgivable or incurred the anger of a tyrannical elder, and are now condemned to walk the savannah alone. Other clans might be persuaded to accept them only after they have proven that their condemnation was no true measure of their worth.

Skills: Athletics, Combat/Any, Culture/Meru, Navigation, Stealth, Survival

MERUIAN SCOUT

The clans must know what awaits their herds, and whether the grass is good or the water has dried beneath the Yellow Land's sun. Meruan scouts can run for hours without flagging and know every pace of the golden grass sea. Their skills are prized by those generals fortunate enough to have them in service.

Skills: Athletics, Combat/Any, Culture/Meru, Navigation, Stealth, Survival

MERUIAN SPIRIT PRIEST

The Meru are overwhelmingly followers of the Sun Faith and fiercely proud of their piety. The remnant are often those descended from the original inhabitants of the savannah, those who consider themselves Meru but who refuse to abandon the customs of their ancestors. These spirit priests serve the gods of grass and cattle and rain, appealing to the unseen powers to bring abundance and help for their people.

Skills: Athletics, Combat/Any, Culture/Meru, Leadership, Occult, Priestcraft

MERUIAN SUNSTAFF

Meru does not raise armies as the other kingdoms do. Every clan's herdsmen are expected to be able to defend both their people and their cattle as the need arises. Some Meruans are more skilled than others at war, however. These "sunstaves" take the great two-handed *runku* as their symbol, a weighted staff wielded by their ancestors to crush the bones of the Eternal.

Skills: Athletics, Combat/Club, Culture/Meru, Leadership, Occult, Tactics

MERUIAN SUN TEACHER

The priests of the Sun Faith have few fixed rites compared to the intricate rituals of the Spirit Way. The long wanderings of the Meru have discouraged them from requiring temples or specific edifices of worship. Instead, they provide prayer, example, and guidance to their fellow religionists, and are trusted for their superior understanding of the Sun Faith's holy scriptures. They do not lead the clans, but every patriarch is expected to have at least one as a trusted advisor.

Skills: Athletics, Culture/Meru, Medicine, Perception, Persuade, Priestcraft

MERUIAN TRADER

The Meru are not a mercantile people, especially compared to their Sokone neighbors, but they have need of goods from the wider world all the same. Their blacksmiths must have iron to work, their herbalists must have distant extracts to cure, and every clan seeks word from its neighbors in between their scheduled meetings to trade brides, cattle, and news.

Skills: Athletics, Business, Combat/Any, Culture/Meru, Navigation, Persuade

NYALA

The northwestern corner of the Three Lands is a rich and fertile domain of rolling hills, broad-leafed forests and well-watered meadows. The griots tell of many ages long past in which men fought over this good land, but in the age before the Long War it was the home of the Nyala (“nn-YAH-lah”) and the throne of their mighty empire. It was their inexorable advance that finally drove the Deshrites into the eastern mountains and goaded their king into pacting with the powers he found there. Their neighbors remember this, and the Nyalan Empire is not praised in their songs.

When the Eternal marched out of the black deserts of the east, the Nyalans were cast into confusion. For generations, they struggled more to hold their querulous provinces to obedience than to drive back the Eternal, and it was only in the reign of the final Emperor Kaday that their efforts to regain Kirsi and Sokone were abandoned and diplomacy was tried instead. The last emperor bound together an alliance that broke the Eternal at last, but he died in its doing, and since then the Nyalans have only dreamed of what their ancestors once ruled.

The cities of Nyala are famed for their massive walls and exquisite stonework, and the Nyalans are proud of their heritage of art and beautiful craftsmanship. Much was learned from the giants of the Mountains of the Sun, but since these titans turned in anger towards humankind the Nyalans have elaborated upon their own tastes and fashioned marvelous works of masonry and wrought metal.

Nyalans are often a haughty people. Their nobles cherish grand titles to domains that were lost a hundred years ago, and every peasant farmer in the realm can claim relation to some long-vanished prince. The griots of Nyala are renowned for the depth of their memories and grace of their art, though of late they have had little to praise. The king of Nyala is called the Mai now, and the Mai is a tired old man who knows he is not his father’s equal.

The Nyalans are slim-featured, tall, and straight-haired, with skin the color of polished mahogany. At times their line throws sports of coloring, most often among the nobles- white manes, jewel-toned eyes, or strange patterns upon the skin like brightly-colored tattoos. Tradition says that such marks show giantish blood from the ancient days in which Nyala learned the secrets held by the titans of the Mountains of the Sun. In clothing they make concessions to work by wearing dyed trousers and tunics, but prefer to be seen in intricate layered robes of rich brocade and delicate dyework, with sleeves flaring wide above the wrist. The wealthiest wear robes of native silk, a cloth that can be manufactured nowhere else in the Three Lands.

Nyalan adventurers are often forced into it by necessity. The Nyalans are proud, but their pride does not always match their purse-many families slump into ruin over the generations as they lose the lands they once depended upon. The commoners who remain are weighted with heavier and heavier taxes and find themselves driven by need to seek life elsewhere. And there are always those who can no longer tolerate the slow, sad decay of their homeland and seek to spark it into new life with their courageous deeds.

NYALAN ARTISAN

The crafters of many lands have grace and beauty in their work, but the artisans of Nyala are too proud to let even the humblest of their workings go unadorned with well-worked art. Whether expressed in elegant, simple lines or intricate engravings, the Nyalans insist on finding beauty all around them, and honor those who bring it forth with artistry and power. Bitter rivalries are quick to develop in such a climate, however, and belonging to the wrong artistic school of influence can be a potentially fatal error in the overheated confines of Nyalan politics. Some such artists find it wiser to seek inspiration abroad until matters cool at home.

Skills: Any One Skill, Artist, Business, Culture/Nyala, Persuade, Trade/Any

NYALAN CLERIC

While the Sun Faith is present in Nyala, the majority of its people are followers of the Spirit Way and revere the old gods of empire and their ancient fanes. The clerics of Nyala are all individually devoted to particular gods and spirits, but are expected to be able to perform other rites when necessity demands it. Few have the special friendship with the divine that marks a true marabout, but all of them have a solid grounding in the duties of a priest and the administration of a temple.

Skills: Business, Culture/Nyala, Leadership, Medicine, Persuade, Priestcraft

NYALAN COURTIER

The court of the Mai orbits a weary old man with little personal influence beyond the capital city, but the deals struck there among the great magnates can echo to the very borders of the kingdom. Even common-born men and women can aspire to profit by becoming useful ornaments to court or officials in the service of some great clan. Unfortunately for such climbers, the nobility is much more inclined to expend them than suffer the consequences of a failed scheme, and so many courtiers find it necessary to make sudden and drastic changes in their careers.

Skills: Any One Skill, Artist, Culture/Nyala, Perception, Persuade, Stealth

NYALAN HISTORIAN

The griots of every land sing the great deeds of past heroes and vanished kings, but the historians of Nyala make a less aesthetic effort at remembering. They once charted the surging advance of the Old Kings, and now they record the slow dwindling of Nyala’s glory. In the former times every noble house was expected to have its dry historian as well as its inspiring griot, but in these days compromises are made in supporting such luxuries. Some scholars are compromised right into a life on the road.

Skills: Any One Skill, Artist, Culture/Nyala, Language, Persuade, Scholar

NYALAN HOLLOW PRINCE

Nyala teems with “noble” houses that have nothing but a glorious past. For some, their land claims were abandoned by Emperor Kaday in buying the alliance that ended the Long War. For others, the collapse of trade and rise of banditry turned their farms and fields into wastelands. Some lost their titles to the grasping of greater nobles, and some simply drifted into a dreaming solitude that refused to acknowledge the truth until the last trade ingot was spent. Many of these “hollow princes” must grub their living beside their former peasants.

Skills: Any One Skill, Combat/Any, Culture/Nyala, Leadership, Survival, Stealth

NYALAN NOBLE

When Emperor Kaday abandoned Nyala’s claims on the breakaway provinces of Kirsi and Sokone, entire swaths of nobility were ruined overnight. They could no longer support themselves on subsidies to help them reclaim their land or claim the glory of domains that would never again be theirs. Those nobles that remained were left to fight over a suddenly-straitened domain, and beneath their Nyalan elegance is raw red savagery.

Skills: Business, Combat/Any, Culture/Nyala, Language, Persuade, Leadership

NYALAN PEASANT

In every land there must be someone to support the elite, and the peasants of Nyala are the base upon which rests the whole tottering edifice of the nation. The rich valleys and rivers of the northern Green Land fed an empire in the time of the Old Kings, and the peasants of Nyala are richer and more profit-minded than most. In these days, it only means that there is more to be peeled from them by rapacious nobles.

Skills: Any One Skill, Athletics, Business, Culture/Nyala, Survival, Trade/Farmer

NYALAN PLOTTER

No land is so thick with schemes as is Nyala, where the plots of ten generations coil and turn on themselves. They do not lack for schemers, secret agents, members of hidden societies long since forgotten by most of their own members, and partisans of causes that were hopeless in their grandfather’s youth. Some causes are noble and just, such as the extirpation of slavery or the advance of their nation. Others have purposes of more private benefit, and are willing to do whatever they must to satisfy long-forgotten vows.

Skills: Combat/Any, Culture/Nyala, Perception, Persuade, Security, Stealth

NYALAN SAGE

The learned of Nyala are wide-ranging in their interests, and many delve into the subtleties of the spirit world and the strange paths of the occult. These sages often vaunt of magical powers, but the number among them with the genuine arts of the nganga are few. Even those who understand the truth rarely have the gift necessary to manipulate *ashe*. Still, their limited knowledge remains useful to the desperate.

Skills: Culture/Nyala, Language, Medicine, Occult, Perception, Scholar

NYALAN SOLDIER

The legions of Nyala are not what they once were. In the former days they were a serried sea of armored spearmen, the iron of Kirsi and the gold of Sokone allied with Nyalan elan to form the spine of empire. Those that remain in this lesser age are often the mere playthings of some wealthy noble. Not all are content to live such a life, and some quit their former legions for braver work.

Skills: Athletics, Combat/Nyala, Culture/Nyala, Leadership, Survival, Tactics

SOKONE

Between Nyala in the green northern hills and Lokossa in the hot southern jungles dwell the merchants and tradesmen of Sokone, (“so-KOH-nay”) thick along the banks of the mighty Iteru River. The Sokone are the richest of all the Five Kingdoms, and their daring pursuit of gold and precious trade has made them exemplars to every merchant in the land. Those who have no hope in their own land come to Sokone to find riches. Some even succeed.

Sokone’s cities teem with artisans and traders, chaffering beneath dyed canopies in the shadow of domed buildings painted in reds and blues and golden yellow hues. Pungent spices from the hill plantations are heaped high on woven mats, and the cattle of Meru are sold next to exotic birds from the deepest Lokossan jungle. All things can be found in the cities of Sokone for those who have a discerning eye and a bulging purse.

Sokone was one of the first provinces of the Nyalan Empire to break away from the old rulers when the Eternal armies marched down the banks of the Iteru. Something about the free-flowing water was hateful to them, and the reed barges of Deshur were abandoned in favor of dry-shod legions. The Sokone were ravaged by their attack, but the Nyalan emperor was more concerned with succoring the border marches of Kirsi than defending their southern tributaries. In fury, the Sokone abandoned their fealty and determined to fight the Eternal without Nyala’s aid.

Their battle was long and bitter. The former capital was overrun and transformed into the Silent City that still squats by the Iteru’s waters, filled with remnant Eternal that no kingdom has yet dared to root out. The merchant-princes of Sokone duel each other with words and gold and sometimes knives in the dark, and some are beginning to find profit in the trade of human lives. Cults of a hundred fantastic varieties hawk their spirits in the markets, and some promise things that ought not to be promised from gods that

should never be named. All things can be found in Sokone, but some of them would prefer not to be discovered by the righteous.

The people of Sokone share traits of all the Five Kingdoms. The jewel-colored eyes of Nyalan noble clans can be seen on men with the ebony skin of Lokossa, and every other mix of nations has its presence in the markets. Clans form about businesses and trades rather than strict matters of lineage, and the Sokone think nothing of marrying outsiders if the strangers are capable and strong. Without the rigid decorum of Nyala, the grim oppression of Lokossa, or the clannishness of the Kirsi or Meru, the people of Sokone are by far the most cosmopolitan and individualistic of the Five Kingdoms.

But by the same token, those of Sokone are also least likely to aid their kinsmen and associates. Men and women are expected to stand upon their own feet, and if they cannot, it is a pity rather than a problem for their relations to solve. Many adventurers go forth for no more exalted reason than to make a living in a way more fascinating than spice-selling or a peddler’s pack. Some of them even live to glory in the wealth their bold choice brings.

SOKONE ARBITER

With so many traders, there must be law, and the arbiter is one expected to support such a need. He or she is versed in the complex body of Sokone mercantile law, and is hired by merchants to advise them and to arbitrate in matters of disagreement. Once an arbiter is mutually chosen, their decision is final, and there is often much pressure on them to choose “wisely” for the more powerful party. Some arbiters find it necessary to decamp in the face of potentially fatal disappointment from such a merchant.

Skills: Business, Culture/Sokone, Language, Perception, Persuade, Scholar

SOKONE ARTISAN

The craftsmen of Sokone make many things. Perhaps they do not make them so beautifully as the Nyalans, or with such expertise in armory as the Kirsi, or with so many secret sorceries as the Lokossans, but they make up in abundance what other kingdoms claim in excellence. Sokone artisans often work together in large workshops, each taking part of a task to speed the completion of the whole. It is profitable work, but tedious, and not all can bear the thought of such a life.

Skills: Any One Skill, Artist, Business, Culture/Sokone, Persuade, Trade/Any

SOKONE ENTERTAINER

Where there is free-flowing wealth, there are those ready to help in its spending. Entertainers can be found singing in the marketplace, dancing for rich merchants, performing feats of jugglery or clever storytelling, or conducting more carnal commerce beneath the shadowed eaves of painted buildings. The greatest are acclaimed as peerless artists or universally-desired courtesans; the rest make do on what their wit or body brings. For some, necessity leads them to seek the more illicit pursuits that clever hands and daring make possible.

Skills: Artist, Athletics, Combat/Any, Culture/Sokone, Persuade, Stealth

SOKONE PEASANT

All must eat, and the Iteru's waters cannot bring so many barges of rice and mealies as to feed an entire kingdom unaided. Sokone's peasants are often cruelly shorn by their merchant-prince patrons, but they also have access to goods and specialized equipment unknown in other lands. Their valleys and riverbanks are not quite so fertile as Nyala, but they get by- at least, those who do not decide to hurl down their hoes and find work less redolent of manure.

Skills: Any One Skill, Athletics, Business, Culture/Sokone, Survival, Trade/Farmer

SOKONE PRIEST

The marabouts of Sokone are notorious for their... versatility in spiritual matters. Just as the land is filled with every description of people, so it also teems with every variety of faith, and a priest who wishes to have a patron must often demonstrate a certain ecumenism in their beliefs. Sterner-minded Sun Faith partisans and Spirit Way devotees disapprove of this syncretism, but the Sokone give it little mind. So long as the gods are appeased, it does not especially matter what they are called. Sometimes a priest promises more than his god can deliver, however, or is called to bring a new spirit's glory to those ignorant of its sacred power. Such a life promises adventure, if not longevity.

Skills: Business, Culture/Sokone, Language, Medicine, Persuade, Priestcraft

SOKONE RIDER

One of the most precious commodities to a merchant is information- knowledge of distant prices, of far market conditions, and of new opportunities to be discovered before a rival learns of them. Many rich merchants employ riders to make regular journeys throughout the land, monitoring their affairs and watching for new possibilities. It is a more exciting life than some, but some of these riders find their talents more useful for adventurous ends. Others betray their patrons and feed hints to a rival's servants in a form of treachery that can be quite profitable, if unhealthy for a rider who is discovered in it.

Skills: Business, Combat/Any, Culture/Sokone, Culture/Traveller, Navigation, Ride

SOKONE RIVERFOLK

The mighty Iteru river is the spine of Sokone's commerce, and many men and women make their living on the barges and trade villages that rely upon it. Others dwell in the deep swamps of the coastal delta until need or ambition drives them forth.

Skills: Any One Skill, Combat/Any, Culture/Sokone, Navigation, Stealth, Survival

SOKONE SOLDIER

The Sokone do not have a famous martial tradition like the Kirsine or the Lokossams. Instead, they have money- much, much money. Even their common foot soldiers are better-equipped than the veterans of some other nations, and if much of their wealth is expended in useless ostentation, enough of it goes to practical ends to make them a dangerous enemy.

Skills: Athletics, Combat/Any, Culture/Sokone, Perception, Survival, Tactics

SOKONE THIEF

Where there are merchants, there are thieves, and the thieves of Sokone are notorious for their insolent daring. Even the most vigilant guards and most ingenious traps do not deter them from their ends, whether pilfering the merchant-princes' palaces or snatching a mango from a peddler's stall. While such deeds of daring make good stories in the marketplace, the harsh punishment for thieves in Sokone can drive many to seek lands where they are not so well known.

Skills: Athletics, Combat/Any, Culture/Sokone, Perception, Security, Stealth

SOKONE TRADER

The merchants of Sokone are famous for their willingness to go anywhere and deal with anyone in pursuit of mercantile success. The most cautious ones work mundane trades in the settled lands, brokering a bit of this for a bit of that. The more ambitious plunge into far lands to discover such wealth as must be theirs.

Skills: Business, Combat/Any, Culture/Sokone, Culture/Traveller, Persuade, Survival

CHOOSING A CLASS

Player characters are exceptional. They have yet to become true heroes or figures of renown, but they have the potential to be more than their peers can dream of becoming. From simple warriors, half-trained apprentices, tentative teachers, and beardless griots they may yet become the legends of a later age... assuming they survive their education.

Player characters each have a class, unlike most other people. Most men and women simply are what they are- soldiers, peasants, herdsmen, or others in the great mass of society. Not every soldier has the gifts of the warrior class, and not every village teacher has the divine friendship that empowers a marabout. Even at their most rudimentary level, those with classes have something special about their training or potential.

There are four classes- griot, marabout, nganga, and warrior. You must choose one of these to represent the unique abilities possessed by your PC, the special edge that sets him or her apart from ordinary souls. Each class has certain special abilities unique to it, and while anyone may learn swordplay or occult secrets or delicate musicianship regardless of their class, the unique martial gifts of the warrior or incantations of the nganga cannot be acquired by those who have turned their dedication to different ends.

Some origins naturally lend themselves to certain classes, but it is not necessary that they complement each other. A scholar may take up the spear in bitter fury after his school is destroyed by raiders, or a nganga's apprentice might turn from his studies to seek the friendship of the Sun instead of the mysterious powers of *ashe*. You may choose any class for any origin, though you will likely wish to think of a reason why your character's gifts have expressed themselves in such a novel direction.

Griots are the praise-singers, counselors and historians of the Three Lands. While they have ample artistry to entertain and delight, their greater purpose is to guard the societies they serve. They remember the customs and the laws, judging the deeds of the small and great alike by their praise-songs or castigations. If your concept has to do with defending ideals or a surpassing skill at music and speech, the griot class is a good choice.

Marabouts are the friends of the spirits, those souls touched with a special relationship with the divine world. Whether the sober teachers of the Sun Faith or the fervent devotees of the Spirit Way, these believers can call down favors from the gods they serve and act as channels of enlightenment to their people. If you wish to wield magic related to the spirit world, you should pick this class.

Ngangas are sorcerers, wielders of that subtle force known as *ashe*. *Ashe* is the potential within all things, the quality that makes it enact its substance upon the world. *Ashe* is the heat of fire, the wetness of water, the way through confusion to make a desire real. Ngangas wield dark and dangerous rituals and incantations to call up *ashe* and direct it to their will. If you desire to be a sorcerer-ant only upon your own powers, you should pick this class.

Warriors are the heroes of their people, the valiant swordsmen, canny rogues and brash adventurers who use their physical might to defend their chosen cause. Warriors are the toughest, hardest class, capable of enduring the most hardship and suffering before they fall. As they grow in expertise, they do not acquire magical abilities, but instead learn *idahuns*, "replies" that are special martial techniques. If your character concept has nothing to do with magic or a griot's eloquence, you should pick this class.

CLASS SKILLS AND PRIME ATTRIBUTES

Once you've chosen your class, add its listed bonus skills to your character sheet at level-0 proficiency. If you've already acquired the skill as part of your background, increase the skill from level-0 to level-1. You can use your "Any Skill" picks to choose a skill that already exists on your list, raising it to level-1, but a novice adventurer's skills cannot be raised higher than that.

You may also substitute a score of 14 for a single one of your prime attributes. Thus, if you choose to become a griot, you may replace either your Intelligence or Charisma score with 14. If you have been so fortunate as to roll higher than 14 on both of your prime attributes already, you need not use this option.

GRIOT

PRIME ATTRIBUTES

Intelligence and Charisma

GRIOT CLASS SKILLS

Artist, Business, Combat/Any, Culture/
Any, Language, Navigation, Perception,
Persuade, Ride, Security, Scholar, Trade

BONUS SKILLS FOR NEW CHARACTERS

Artist, Scholar, Any One Class Skill, Any One Skill

Every society needs its guardians- not only those who bear sword and spear, but also those who maintain the traditions and memory of the people. In the Three Lands, the griots are these guardians, those men and women who stand responsible for judging the good and the shameful. Through their praise-songs and castigations, they elevate the righteous and scourge the wicked, confirming the timeless truth of the virtues their people hold dear.

Most griots (pronounced “GREE-ohs”) are employed by noble houses or sheltered by their chosen village. They earn their keep by their memories, their praise, and their counsel. They remember all that has gone before and all that was once decided, and a chief or nobleman without a griot to advise him is sure to stumble. In Kirsi and Nyala, a noble family dares not show itself in ceremonies of state without a troupe of griots to sing their virtues, and a king without a griot vizier is no king at all.

Many griots are content to be fed and to say what their patrons wish them to say. These are small and careless men, quick to remember but slow to speak what they should. Others are less easily managed. They insist on naming the wicked and praising the good, whether or not it suits the great lords. Nobles fear such truth-tellers, for the words of a master griot can whip a city into a frenzy or raise a rebellion in the bush. The greatest of their number can strike a man dead with the blazing fury of their castigation.

GRIOT SONGS

As griots increase their skill and fame, their words gain an almost supernatural power to inspire and compel those who hear them. These songs may take the form of actual chants or lays or be performed as spoken oratory. Whatever the form, listeners soon recognize that something remarkable is being uttered and that the griot’s words are more than mere entertainment or idle opinion.

Griots begin play with the knowledge of any two minor songs listed in the Magic chapter. Every time they gain an experience level, they may add one song of a type they can use as a product of their own creativity. Other songs must be learned from other griots or from suitable ancient lore, and a griot cannot learn a song he is yet unable to use. At first level, griots may learn minor songs. At fourth level they may learn great songs, and at seventh level they may utter the mighty verses of the ancient songs of their elders.

Griots can learn songs they are skilled enough to use, acquiring them from other griots or from rare, exhaustive tomes. Most NPC griots will only teach good friends and proven allies. Mastering a new song requires one week for a minor song, one month for a great song, and three months for an ancient song. The griot may adventure normally while perfecting his or her mastery of a song.

Griots may sing or speak any song they know, but finding the right words for them is difficult. Expressions must be fresh, music must be suitable for the occasion, and wit must be sharp and well-aimed. A griot has a pool of Inspiration points that increase as they level. Each song costs a certain number of Inspiration points: 1 point for a minor song, 3 points for a great song, and 5 points for an ancient song. When the pool is exhausted, the griot can no longer find the right artistry to invoke their supernatural arts. A good night’s rest will restore all Inspiration.

The greatest of praise-singers are perfectly inspired that they may utter their most familiar songs without hesitation or effort. At 10th level, the griot may choose any two minor songs known to them. They may use these songs at no cost in Inspiration, as often as they desire. Once chosen, these songs cannot be changed.

GRIOT CLASS DETAILS

LEVEL	HIT DICE	XP NEEDED	CLASS POWERS	INSPIRATION POOL	ATTACK BONUS	PHYSICAL EFFECT	MENTAL EFFECT	EVASION	MAGIC	LUCK
1	1d6	0	Learn Minor Songs	2	+1	14	12	13	16	15
2	2d6	2,000		3	+2	13	11	12	15	14
3	3d6	4,000		4	+2	13	11	12	15	14
4	4d6	8,000	Learn Great Songs	10	+4	12	10	11	14	13
5	5d6	16,000		12	+4	12	10	11	14	13
6	6d6	32,000		14	+5	11	9	10	13	12
7	7d6	64,000	Learn Ancient Songs	22	+5	11	9	10	13	12
8	8d6	128,000		26	+7	10	8	9	12	11
9	9d6	256,000		30	+7	10	8	9	12	11
10	10d6	512,000	Song Mastery	34	+8	8	6	7	10	9

MARABOUT

PRIME ATTRIBUTES

Wisdom and Charisma

MARABOUT CLASS SKILLS

Artist, Combat/Any, Culture/Own, Leadership, Medicine, Persuade, Priestcraft, Scholar, Trade

BONUS SKILLS FOR NEW CHARACTERS

Persuade, Priestcraft, Any One Class Skill, Any One Skill

Every village has its elders and holy men, its people versed in the service of the spirits. Whole communities often partake in these rituals, as the maintenance of good relations with the gods is considered to be the duty of an entire village rather than the sole burden of a few specialists. Still, there are times when specific knowledge is necessary to guide the correct rituals and propitiations, and for these things a priest of some kind is needed.

Marabouts (pronounced “MAHR-ah-boos”) are more than simple priests. They are the friends of the spirits, those men and women gifted with a special relationship with the divine. Some labor their whole lives to attain this unity only to fail; others are born with it and do not even recognize the source of their own miracles. Marabouts can draw upon this bond to invoke wonders and marvels, and their powers are greatly esteemed by the people.

Most marabouts make their living as religious specialists, consulted by the common folk for advice and magical assistance. Few of them ever rise to any great power, but even their simplest invocations are wondrous to the common people, and useful in many circumstances. Those who attain a deep bond with their patrons can perform marvels to astound even heroes.

Some marabouts prefer a more active life, and go out into the world to do the work of their patrons. The marabouts of the Sun Faith honor the ideal of missionary work, and the Spirit Way

commends those brave souls who go from place to place aiding the needy and demonstrating the might of the spirits. Other marabouts simply want to see the world, and find their powers an excellent passport to a new and more exciting life.

Marabout powers are based upon their “friendships”, the powers with whom they have allied themselves. Different powers have different portfolios, and as a marabout grows more potent, they can

MARABOUT CLASS DETAILS

LEVEL	HIT DICE	XP NEEDED	CLASS POWERS	ATTACK BONUS	PHYSICAL EFFECT	MENTAL EFFECT	EVASION	MAGIC	LUCK
1	1d6	0	Pick two Spheres	+1	15	14	16	13	12
2	2d6	2,000		+2	14	13	15	12	11
3	3d6	4,000	Pick additional Sphere	+2	14	13	15	12	11
4	4d6	8,000		+3	13	12	14	11	10
5	5d6	16,000		+4	13	12	14	11	10
6	6d6	32,000	Pick additional Sphere	+5	12	11	13	10	9
7	7d6	64,000		+5	12	11	13	10	9
8	8d6	128,000		+6	11	10	12	9	8
9	9d6	256,000	Pick additional Sphere	+7	11	10	12	9	8
10	10d6	512,000	Signature Miracle	+8	9	8	10	7	6

MARABOUT SPELLS PER DAY					
LEVEL	1ST	2ND	3RD	4TH	5TH
1	1	-	-	-	-
2	2	-	-	-	-
3	2	1	-	-	-
4	3	2	-	-	-
5	3	2	1	-	-
6	4	2	2	-	-
7	4	3	2	1	-
8	4	3	2	2	-
9	5	4	3	2	1
10	5	4	3	3	2

befriend more powers. Marabouts of the Sun Faith always first befriend the Sun, but may later learn to channel different aspects of his celestial power much as do those of the Spirit Way.

Very few marabouts outside of the Sun Faith have an exclusive relationship with a single spiritual power. They may be primarily devotees of a particular god or spirit, but to neglect other powers of importance would be considered folly rather than fidelity. The spirits and gods require particular prayers and rituals. So long as they receive them, they are unconcerned about other offerings the marabout might make.

SPHERES OF SPIRITUAL POWER

The gifts of the spirits are divided into several spheres of spiritual power. Each marabout may choose two spheres of power at first level. These spheres will determine which miracles they are allowed to work, and usually relate to the dominant characteristics of their favored gods or spirits. Variance in this is not unknown, however- the spirits are deep and sometimes self-contradictory, and the gods may grant what marvels they choose to grant. As the character grows in power, they will gain access to additional spheres, one at 3rd, 6th, and 9th level. Marabouts of the Sun Faith must choose Sun as one of their first two spheres.

Each marabout then chooses one of their two spheres as a favored sphere, one characteristic of their most important spiritual relationship. This close bond grants an additional special ability based on that sphere. Relationships change and grow with time, and Spirit Way marabouts may change their favored sphere whenever

they rise in experience level. Sun Faith Marabouts must always maintain Sun as their favored sphere.

When invoking a miracle, the marabout may choose it from any sphere known to them, without any special preparation or prayer beforehand. Each marabout has a limit to the number of miracles of any given level they can invoke each day, but they may choose freely among their known spheres. The focus and discipline of the Sun Faith allows their marabouts to use their power more freely; they may invoke an additional daily miracle of every level they are able to cast. Spiritual energy refreshes after a night's sleep and a morning prayer.

The greatest marabouts attain such closeness with their spiritual allies that they may call upon their most familiar powers freely. At 10th level, the marabout may choose one first level spell known to them as a signature miracle. This spell cannot be one that causes a permanent effect, such as a healing spell, but it may be cast whenever the marabout desires without requiring any expenditure of spell slots.

Marabouts are gifted in their powers of maintaining spiritual friendships, and the gods are far from this world. Marabouts cannot imperil their spiritual powers by bad behavior. Some theologians say that powers of darkness sustain the marabout who turns from the right paths and give him the strength that his former friends no longer grant.

CHOOSING SPHERES AND PATRONS

The table below provides a list of the most common spheres of spirit magic and a brief description of the spell and gift granted by each. More detailed descriptions are available in the Magic chapter. For convenience, you should make note of a spell's effects somewhere on your character sheet to as to spare yourself from the need to look it up in the middle of play.

Some players might also wish to choose a specific god or spirit as a patron for the marabout. For the Sun Faithful, this is already a given, but Spirit Way practitioners often have their own favorite deities and patron spirits to follow. A description of the religion and the gods of the Three Lands is given in the setting chapter.

Choosing a patron is not mandatory for those who follow the Spirit Way, however. There are always those marabouts who are impartial in their friendships and who are willing to call upon any power able to aid them in a time of need.

MARABOUT SPHERES OF MAGIC		
SPHERE	FIRST-LEVEL SPELL	GIFT
Curing	<i>Hands of Succor</i>	Vigorous health, and immunity to all diseases both magical and mundane.
Death	<i>Find Mortality</i>	The ability to stay death in himself or his companions.
Herding	<i>Speak to the Herd</i>	A bonus of +1 to either the marabout's Strength or Constitution modifier.
Passion	<i>Kindle the Heart</i>	Grace at inciting passion in others and an increase of their Charisma modifier by 1.
Spirits	<i>Spirit Ward</i>	The gift of sensing unseen presences and communicating with the spirits
Sun	<i>Shard of the Sun</i>	Vision even in perfect blackness and the ability to glow brightly at will
War	<i>Warrior's Blessing</i>	Skill in a specific type of weapon, such as the runku or the long sword; +1 to hit rolls with it.
Water	<i>Call Spring</i>	The grace of breathing, moving, and seeing beneath water as easily as above it.

NGANGA

PRIME ATTRIBUTES

Intelligence and Constitution

NGANGA CLASS SKILLS

Culture/Own, Language, Medicine, Occult, Perception, Priestcraft, Scholar, Survival, Trade

BONUS SKILLS FOR NEW CHARACTERS

Medicine, Occult, Any One Class Skill, Any One Skill

Ngangas (pronounced “GAHN-gahs”) are masters of the unseen, adepts in the conjuring and channeling of the intrinsic force known as *ashe*. The heat of a fire, the cure within a root, the fear that bubbles within a brave man’s heart- they know how to call up these forces and rain them down upon those who displease them. All admit the power of the nganga’s arts, but they are often feared and shunned for the secrets that they know.

Ngangas emerge in different ways depending upon the culture that births them. All require an innate supernatural spark, as the gift of wielding *ashe* cannot be taught. Some are educated in the use of their arts in long, grueling apprenticeships that sift the gifted from the artless, like the olabons of the Meruan nomads. Others have their powers marked early by signs and portents at their birth, like the born-witches of the Kirsi. Some ngangas do not even realize what they really are, and channel forces to enact desires that are secret even to their waking minds.

Most societies tolerate the existence of ngangas as a necessary evil. So long as some of them are willing to use their powers to curse, afflict, and control other people, other ngangas will be needed to protect the community from such wicked sorcery. Unlike marabouts, the powers the ngangas wield are essentially amoral and indifferent to human life- they deal in potencies, in *ashe*, rather than in spiritual friendships and alliances. They may tap the darker

forces of the cosmos, but these beings respond blindly to the rituals that bind them, and form no affectionate ties with humankind.

Ngangas can rise to positions of great power and influence, but only indirectly in most lands. Common people neither trust nor understand the secrets that they hold, and even the least-skilled among them is viewed with a kind of salutary dread. The nganga can strike at a man in ways that no sword or shield can fend,

NGANGA CLASS DETAILS

LEVEL	HIT DICE	XP NEEDED	ATTACK BONUS	PHYSICAL EFFECT	MENTAL EFFECT	EVASION	MAGIC	LUCK
1	1d4	0	+1	16	13	15	12	14
2	2d4	2,000	+2	15	12	14	11	13
3	3d4	4,000	+2	15	12	14	11	13
4	4d4	8,000	+3	14	11	13	10	12
5	5d4	16,000	+3	14	11	13	10	12
6	6d4	32,000	+4	13	10	12	9	11
7	7d4	64,000	+4	13	10	12	9	11
8	8d4	128,000	+5	12	9	11	8	10
9	9d4	256,000	+5	12	9	11	8	10
10	10d4	512,000	+6	10	7	9	6	8

and such power brings with it a wide stroke of well-reasoned fear. They remain tolerated for the good they can do if properly propitiated, and for defense against other, less moral ngangas. Only in Lokossa are ngangas part of the formal structures of power, and there the mightiest of them rules as the Ahonsu, the witch-king of all Lokossa.

The arts of a ngangas require the wearing of specific charms, masks, pieces of clothing, robes, and other elements of mystically-significant couture. The precise nature of these items varies with the ngangas' traditions, but they preclude the wearing of armor if the ngangas intends to use any magic. Unwitting ngangas require no such tokens and may wear what they will, but they cannot control their magic without learning their proper dress and its meaning.

NGANGA SORCERY

Ngangas wield two types of magic: *ritual sorceries*, and *nkisi*, ("nn-KEE-see"). Ritual sorceries are lengthy, complex rites that require careful preparation and execution. Nkisi magic also takes time to prepare its effects, but the results are stored within a nkisi, or fetish, which may then be used to release the spell at an opportune time. A ngangas may use any of the ritual sorceries he knows as often as he has the time and materials to perform them, but the number and strength of nkisi that a ngangas can maintain is limited by his expertise.

If too many nkisi are empowered at once, the ngangas runs the distinct risk of losing control of the *ashe* and causing a catastrophic eruption of magical force. Instinctive or unknowing ngangas do not perform ritual sorceries, but their careless thoughts or wills can imbue even the ordinary objects they use every day with the power of a nkisi- and then release the energies when their secret selves desire it.

Ngangas magic takes time to learn, and requires either a tutor familiar with the details of the spell or specially-fashioned icons and tomes designed to teach of its power. Ngangas are jealous of their knowledge, and few will teach it without the inducement of substantial favors or a heavy payment in treasure. Even if a tutor can be found for a particular spell, it will require time to master the

NGANGA NKISI PREPARATION MAXIMUM					
NGANGA LEVEL	NKISI LEVEL				
	1ST	2ND	3RD	4TH	5TH
1	1	-	-	-	-
2	2	-	-	-	-
3	2	1	-	-	-
4	3	2	-	-	-
5	3	2	1	-	-
6	4	2	2	-	-
7	4	3	2	1	-
8	4	3	2	2	-
9	5	4	3	2	1
10	5	4	3	3	2

details of its use. A spell requires one week of practice per spell level before the ngangas may use a ritual or prepare a nkisi.

At first level, the ngangas may choose a total of three nkisi or rituals from the list below. Every time they gain an experience level, they may add one more spell to their list of a level they are capable of casting, reflecting their own studies and personal development.

The number of nkisi of a given level which can be prepared is based on the ngangas' experience level. At first level, for instance, he can maintain only one level 1 nkisi in readiness. Ngangas can maintain more nkisi if they so wish, but doing so is dangerous. Whenever they invoke a nkisi while having more than their maximum prepared, they must first make an Int/Occult skill check at difficulty 6, +2 for each nkisi in excess of their allowed maximum. On a failed check, every nkisi they have prepared erupts simultaneously, with all effects targeting the ngangas.

Rituals sometimes require magically-significant substances, herbs, and objects in order to fuel their power. Some of these things can be bought for gold, but most are more cheaply gathered by the ngangas or found in the course of their adventures. For this reason, most ngangas prefer to dwell apart from large communities, close enough to receive petitioners and deep enough into the bush to allow for easy harvesting of useful reagents.

FIRST-LEVEL NGANGA SPELLS	
RITUAL SORCERY	EFFECT
<i>Cleanse the Curse of Misfortune</i>	Break the power of a minor curse on a person.
<i>Fashion Charm of Soothing</i>	Create a magical charm that aids the sick
<i>Fashion Warding Amulet</i>	Create a long-lasting magical charm that protects a warrior from enemy blades
<i>Open the Hunter's Path</i>	Bless a hunter with great keenness to track or find a particular person or type of prey
<i>Rite of the Twisted Limb</i>	Curse a victim with misfortune if you possess a trace of their blood, hair, or other connection
NKISI SPELL	
<i>Nkisi of the Blessed Spear</i>	Enchant a weapon briefly, granting it +1 to hit and damage rolls and full damage against Eternal
<i>Nkisi of the Burning Brand</i>	Force a victim or object to resist your <i>ashe</i> or burst into flames
<i>Nkisi of the Deadened Mind</i>	Bewitch a human victim into a voiceless, dull-minded slave to your will
<i>Nkisi of the Evil Eye</i>	Subtly curse a victim with fumbling misfortune at their next skilled effort
<i>Nkisi of the Ngangas' Eye</i>	Perceive magical objects, curses, and other sorcery, but you are blind while this spell is in effect

WARRIOR

PRIME ATTRIBUTES

Strength and Dexterity

WARRIOR CLASS SKILLS

Athletics, Combat/Any, Culture/Own, Leadership, Navigation, Perception, Ride, Security, Stealth, Survival, Tactics, Trade

BONUS SKILLS FOR NEW CHARACTERS

Athletics, Combat/Axe, Combat/Blade, Combat/Club, Combat/Missile, Combat/Spear, Any One Class Skill, Any One Skill

Warriors are the bold young men and women who have neither sorcery nor spirit allies nor powerful words to aid them. They have only a strong hand, a brave heart, and a willingness to face peril for their ambitions. They are the hardest of the four classes, the best at feats of arms, and capable of acquiring special abilities related to their chosen focus.

Every society in the Three Lands has its soldiers, but a warrior is more than a simple fighter. They might stand in the forefront of the battle, wielding spear and sword with dauntless courage. They might be a veiled rogue deftly slipping over the sill of a merchant-prince's window to liberate him of his excess gems. They might even be some blade-wielding scholar of the Old Kings, ready to plunge into forgotten cities and long-buried tombs to find some morsel of the ancient past. Their one unifying characteristic is that they do not rely upon magic or supernatural speech to bring them success. They rely only on their own stout resolve, and often enough it is all that is required for victory.

Warriors receive more hit points, better saving throws, and a better attack bonus than other classes. They can also learn special maneuvers known as *idahuns* that grant them unique advantages in and out of combat.

WARRIOR CLASS DETAILS

LEVEL	HIT DICE	XP NEEDED	CLASS POWERS	ATTACK BONUS	PHYSICAL EFFECT	MENTAL EFFECT	EVASION	MAGIC	LUCK
1	1d8	0	Pick one idahun	+2	12	12	13	14	13
2	2d8	2,000		+3	11	11	12	13	12
3	3d8	4,000	Pick one idahun	+3	11	11	12	13	12
4	4d8	8,000		+4	10	10	11	12	11
5	5d8	16,000	Pick one idahun	+5	10	10	11	12	11
6	6d8	32,000		+6	9	9	10	11	10
7	7d8	64,000	Pick one idahun	+7	9	9	10	11	10
8	8d8	128,000		+8	8	8	9	10	9
9	9d8	256,000	Pick one idahun	+9	8	8	9	10	9
10	10d8	512,000		+10	6	6	7	8	7

IDADHUNS

At first level and every odd-numbered level thereafter, warriors may choose an *idadhun*, a “reply” representing a particular martial skill which the warrior has mastered for use against his foes. A great warrior knows several *idadhuns*, the better to have a suitable answer to the challenges he will face. Warriors do not require teachers to master *idadhuns*, as they are assumed to be training in them during their downtime between levels. An *idadhun* may only be chosen once, and it may not be exchanged once chosen.

BLESSED AND GRACED

Whether by virtue of an auspicious birth, potent charms, or specialized training, the warrior has no need of cumbersome mail to defend him. Their base armor class becomes 3 even when wholly unarmored. They gain no benefit from wearing armor with a worse armor class, though they can make use of a shield.

BORN WITH A BLADE

The warrior has an almost instinctive comfort with their favorite weaponry. They may choose one combat skill specialization; when using weapons of this type, they gain a +1 bonus to hit and a +2 bonus to damage rolls.

CHARMED STEEL

The warrior has been blessed by an accident of birth or the favor of some potent spirit. His weapons can always wound a foe for full normal damage, even if they are normally immune to the weapon or resistant to its damage. At 4th level, every weapon or armor he uses is treated as if it had a +1 enchantment if it does not already possess a superior virtue. At 7th level this bonus becomes +2, and at 10th level it becomes +3.

DEEP-ROOTED SOUL

The warrior’s life is strong against supernatural harm. He gains a +2 bonus to all saving throws against magical or uncanny effects and is immune to the experience level drain inflicted by some spirit foes.

DREADFUL SHADOW

Some warriors are so shrouded by echoes of the violence they have committed that even other soldiers draw away from them in unease. Enemies that face them in battle suffer an automatic -1 penalty to Morale, they gain a +2 bonus on all social skill checks that relate to intimidating a target, and they become immune to both normal and magical fear. This *idadhun* cannot be taken by those with the Honored Steps *idadhun*.

HONED SKILL

The warrior is remarkably talented at a particular skill. A thief might be superlatively Stealthy, an adventurer-sage might be a peerless Scholar, and a mighty general might be sublimely gifted at Tactics. Once per day, before rolling a check for that skill, the warrior may count the roll as an automatic 12.

HONORED STEPS

The warrior appears to be such a splendid example of prowess and capability that others are compelled to admire them. Their Charisma modifier increases by 1 and NPCs will instinctively consider the warrior to be fit for leadership positions. This *idadhun* cannot be taken along with Dreadful Shadow.

SAGACIOUS WARRIOR

Some warriors are less concerned with martial glory, focusing instead on different goals or aptitudes. The battle-prowess they develop over time is simply an inevitable by-product of their dangerous pursuits. The sagacious warrior may choose three additional skills to add to their list of class skills. If they have no expertise in these skills, they gain them at level-0, and if they are already level-0, they rise to level-1. More sophisticated expertise is not improved, but they still need only pay class skill rates to improve their rating when they gain a new level.

TIRELESS

The warrior is in such spectacular physical condition that they are all but impervious to mortal weariness. Their Constitution modifier increases by 1, augmenting their hit points, though their base Constitution score does not change. They can perform exertions constantly throughout the day, and during the four hours of sleep they must take each night they doze so lightly that they remain fully aware of their surroundings. This *idadhun* does not negate the penalty for wearing armor in hot climates.

TWO LIVES

The warrior is favored by the spirits or by blind good luck, and death will not lightly receive them. Rather than perishing from a mortal wound or bleeding out from an untended injury, the warrior falls unconscious for five minutes before waking with one hit point. If struck while unconscious or smote by an injury no mortal could survive, then the warrior will die. This *idadhun* cannot be used again until the warrior has spent at least a week in propitiation of their spirit guardians or riotous celebration of their continuing good luck.

ROOF OF SPEARS

The warrior is trained to protect their companions, and can even risk their own life to save a threatened ally. Once per fight, when an ally within 30 feet is struck by an attack, the warrior may instantly move to interpose. They may choose to do so after the attack’s damage has been rolled. The original target takes no damage and the attack is re-rolled against the warrior instead. The warrior can defend only against physical, tangible attacks, and not against magical afflictions or environmental damage.

WASHER OF SPEARS

The warrior is a friend to the battlefield, and knows no hesitation when faced with death. They gain a +2 bonus on all Initiative rolls and cannot be surprised.

SKILLS

Skills are measures of specific talents possessed by a character, ranging from level-0 for basic professional competence to level-4 for near-supernatural mastery. To accomplish exceptionally difficult feats, a character rolls 2d6 and adds the skill's level and their most appropriate attribute's modifier. If the total is equal or greater than a difficulty chosen by the GM, the attempt is a success. If the character has no expertise at all in the skill, they suffer a minimum penalty of -1 to the check and may not be able to accomplish it at all if the task is particularly complex.

Some skills involve a certain amount of overlap. The historical knowledge of Meru granted by the Scholar skill is the same as that given by Culture/Meru, and expertise in a particularly malevolent local spirit cult might be equally provided by Occult or Priestcraft. In such cases, the character may roll whichever of the two skills they prefer.

ARTIST (SPECIALIZATION)

The character is trained or gifted in a particular type of art. The character should select a specific medium when this skill is gained- Music, Dance, Sculpture, Painting, and so forth.

ATHLETICS

Running, jumping, climbing, swimming, and other feats of athletics or acrobatics are covered by this skill. It also affects the character's ability to wear heavy armor for long periods in the heat of the Three Lands.

BUSINESS

The character knows how to run a business and deal with other entrepreneurs. He is aware of common cheats and trader's tricks, and can identify valuables that might not appear precious to less educated eyes.

COMBAT (SPECIALIZATION)

The character is skilled in the use of a particular class of weapons. She must choose one of the following specializations, though this skill can be bought multiple times to master several different forms of weaponry. Combat skill is added to the character's hit rolls. If a character has absolutely no skill in a weapon's class, they will suffer a -2 penalty on hit rolls with it.

Axe: Skill with hatchets, war axes, and poleaxes.

Blade: Aptitude with daggers, swords, and throwing blades.

Club: Proficiency with throwing clubs, war clubs, and runkus.

Spear: Skill with glaives and spears.

Missile: Skill with bows, crossbows, slings, and thrown weapons. When using a thrown weapon, the wielder may use either this skill or the skill normally used with the weapon- blade, spear, axe, or so forth.

CULTURE (SPECIALIZATION)

Culture skill instructs the possessor in the finer points of tradition, history, law, and language for one of the major cultures of the Three Lands. Specialties exist for each of the Five Kingdoms and for the hateful ways of the Eternal in the desolate land of Deshur. Possessing level-0 expertise in a culture automatically grants outsiders a basic knowledge of their native language, sufficient to communicate ordinary travelers' interests. Aside from the major cultures, a character may also take the Traveller specialty, albeit at no more than level-0. This specialty provides a basic familiarity with all the Five Kingdoms such as a wanderer might have, though no extra linguistic talent is granted.

LANGUAGE

The character speaks more than one tongue. For every level acquired, the character fluently learns a number of languages equal to the skill level plus one. Thus, when acquiring level-0, they learn one language, level-1 teaches two more, and so forth. Each of the Five Kingdoms has its own language, as does the Deshrite tongue spoken by the Eternal. Knowledge of a language includes literacy in it if the PC wishes, though many common folk are unlettered.

LEADERSHIP

The character is trained in leading others in high-stress situations. Characters with this skill can keep the obedience of subordinates even in dangerous situations or when giving hazardous orders.

MEDICINE

The character knows how to treat difficult wounds and how to prepare a wide range of herbal remedies and useful healing-charms. Every warrior knows how to bind a cut or bruise, but one versed in medicine can handle even serious injuries.

NAVIGATION

The character can navigate by the stars, the sun, and dead reckoning. These techniques work for both land and sea voyages.

OCCULT

The character may or may not be a sorcerer, but they know how magic works and can identify much in the way of spells, curses, supernatural beings, and other matters important to ngangas.

PERCEPTION

The character has keen senses, and is often able to notice details or hidden objects that elude other people. This skill is used in conjunction with player attentiveness, rather than as a replacement for it. Even if a check fails, if the PC explicitly looks where something is hidden, that object will be found.

PERSUADE

The character has a knack for convincing others of the truth and sincerity of their words, and can persuade them to agree with their suggestions.

PRIESTCRAFT

The character knows how to perform the duties of a priest, whether of the Spirit Way or the Sun Faith. They can identify gods and rituals and knows of significant cults and other religious expression within the Three Lands.

RIDE

The character is a skilled horseman. They can fight on horseback and keep their seat even in the roil of battle. Someone with at least Ride-2 skill can even control an untrained mount in the middle of combat, guiding it as if it were trained for fighting amid terror and bloodshed. Prices and details of mounts and beasts of burden are given in the Bestiary chapter.

SCHOLAR

The character is learned in history, mathematics, geography, royal lineages, literature, and other academic matters. Specialties need not be chosen; this skill covers all the listed disciplines.

SECURITY

The character is familiar with bypassing the security measures of those who wish to keep her out. Whether in plotting the routes of guard patrols, picking locks, defeating Eternal tomb-house traps, or identifying weak points in a curtain wall, the character has a knack for going where they are not wanted.

STEALTH

The character is skilled at passing unnoticed, whether through the tall grasses of the Yellow Land or through the teeming streets of the great western cities.

SURVIVAL

The character knows how to survive without the help of a larger community. They can hunt, trap, gather wild foods, find shelter in the wilderness, and perform all the other necessary tricks to keep body and soul together without the help of packed provisions.

TACTICS

The character knows how to handle groups of warriors in combat. They can set and identify ambushes, recognize encirclements, plot successful assaults and otherwise manage the business of fighting on more than a personal scale. If they means to lead troops personally, however, Leadership is often required to maintain control during the more taxing situations.

TRADE

(SPECIALIZATION)

The character is skilled in a common profession. Some regular choices include blacksmith, herder, farmer, weaver, clerk, tanner, or any other profession not otherwise covered by one of the other skills listed here. Level-0 skill in a trade is enough to make a meager living in most places, but few adventurers are content to live such straitened lives.

FINAL TOUCHES

Your character is almost complete. Just finish up these last few steps, and you'll be ready to sally forth for adventure.

CHOOSE LANGUAGES

All characters speak the native language of their kingdom and Trade Speech, a simple pidgin developed by merchants out of a Sokone base flavored by mercantile loanwords from the rest of the Five Kingdoms. Any village that gets any trade worth mentioning will have at least one elder with a serviceable grasp of the tongue, though peasants in the field and commoners in other rural areas often know no other tongue than their own. PCs are literate if they choose to be, though most commoners do not have their letters unless they make a special effort to learn.

If your character has levels in the Language skill or Culture skill in a realm not their own they may pick additional languages now. Those with ambitions of culture often learn Nyalan for the sake of its cachet as the former tongue of empire, while those who plumb the secrets of sorcery prefer to learn Lokossan. Deshrite speech is shunned for its evil associations, though some tomb-house delvers find it useful to be able to read it. Meruan is the favored language of the Sun Faith holy scriptures, one related to Deshrite but intentionally altered by the Meru. Sokonese is the language of wealth and great affairs of business throughout the Three Lands.

ROLL HIT POINTS

Next, you need to determine your character's *hit points*. Hit points are a measure of your character's nearness to death. A PC with many hit points is strong, lucky, vigorous, and favored by the gods. One with few might be physically unhurt, but fated for death at the next well-aimed spear thrust. When hit points are reduced to zero, a character is mortally wounded and will swiftly die. Only quick aid from a comrade can hope to save them.

To determine your maximum hit points, roll 1d8 if a warrior, 1d6 if a marabout or griot, and 1d4 if playing a nganga. Add your Constitution modifier to this total, though a penalty cannot drop your hit points below 1. The result is your hit point maximum for now. You might lose points to injury or exhaustion, and regain them through rest or magical blessings, but there is no normal way to possess more than this maximum at any one time.

Don't worry if you rolled badly. Every time you advance in experience level, you gain an additional hit die and can re-roll all of them, taking the new total if it's higher. Thus, even if your mighty warrior rolled a 1 for hit points at this level, if he can survive long enough to reach second level he can then roll 2d8 to replace the misfortune. More importantly, your character's survival will depend much more on the good choices you make and a prudent eye for perils than it will rest on the size of your hit point total.

BUY GEAR

Finally, you need to figure out what equipment your character has been able to buy, borrow, make, or steal before beginning their career of adventure. Roll 2d6 and multiply the result by 10. That's how many silver trade ingots ("si") you have to spend on gear listed in the Equipment section.

When buying equipment, keep mindful of your allowed encumbrance. You can carry a number of readied items equal to half your Strength score, rounded down, and a number of stowed items equal to your full Strength score. Readied items are kept at your belt or in convenient pouches and may be used as part of any action that requires them. Stowed items are packed away carefully for easier hauling, and require a round's action to produce. Armor counts as a readied item, but not ordinary clothing. Some particularly large or unwieldy objects may count as more than one item for encumbrance purposes, and some objects might be so small and trifling that they add no appreciable burden.

Those with an eye for personal protection should note that while armor is quite beneficial in a fight, wearing it constantly will exhaust a warrior in the hot climate of the Three Lands. All classes can wear any type of armor at their discretion, but nganga cannot channel *ashe* properly through such unsuitable dress and so cannot cast spells in armor. They can wear warding amulets, however.

Once you've bought all you want- or can afford- you should note down the remaining silver on your character sheet. With that complete, you're now ready to seek your fortune in the desperate wilds and cosmopolitan cities of the Three Lands.

EQUIPMENT

WEAPONS					
WEAPON	DMG	RANGE	ATTRIB.	ENC.	COST
Axe, Hand	1d6	20/30	Str or Dex	2	4 si
Axe, War <i>f</i>	1d10	-	Str	2	7 si
Bow * <i>f</i>	1d6	120/175	Dex	2	10 si
Club, Runku <i>f</i>	1d6+2	-	Str	1	6 si
Club, Throwing	1d4	30/50	Str	1	3 si
Club, War	1d6	-	Str	1	4 si
Crossbow * <i>f</i>	1d8	160/240	Dex	2	20 si
Dagger *	1d4	20/30	Str or Dex	1	3 si
Fighting Bracelets *	1d4	-	Str or Dex	1	3 si
Poleaxe or Glaive <i>f</i>	2d6	-	Str	3	7 si
Sling	1d4	80/160	Dex	1	1 si
Spear, Heavy *	1d8	20/30	Str	2	5 si
Spear, Light *	1d6	40/60	Str or Dex	1	3 si
Sword, Great Razor <i>f</i>	1d8+2	-	Str	2	15 si
Sword, Long	1d8	-	Str or Dex	2	10 si
Sword, Short	1d6	-	Str or Dex	1	7 si
Throwing Blade *	1d6	20/40	Dex	2	4 si

Weapons marked with an asterisk inflict piercing damage, which is less useful against the unliving flesh of the Eternal and other animated constructs. Those with an *f* require two hands to wield them. Ranges are in feet and show average and maximum range. Shots beyond average range take a -2 hit penalty.

Most equipment on this list is self-explanatory, with a few exceptions.

Fighting bracelets are spiked or bladed bracelets used in close combat. The user may use his best Combat skill when attacking with them. **Crossbows** require an action to load. A **runku** is a two-handed war staff with a weighted head. A **great razor** is the two-handed, machete-like sword favored by the Lokossan Reapers. A **throwing blade** is a multi-bladed weapon not unlike a dagger with multiple arms.

Warding amulets are charmed bands that protect the wearer from harm in battle. They must be made specifically for a wearer by a skilled nganga. **Banded armor** is fashioned of heavy metal strips against mail or leather backing, and **royal armor** is a full suit of plate and mail protection found only among the wealthiest. Wearing armor in the heat of the Three Land can be debilitating. You should check the Encumbrance section of the Systems chapter for details on this peril.

Kits include a selection of items that are too small or numerous to be worth itemizing one-by-one. **Bush kits** include a knife, firestarting tools, fishhooks, packed tinder, a drinking cup, and other minor essentials that grant a +1 bonus on all relevant Survival checks. **Healer's kits** provide the same bonus on Medicine checks, but after each use they will run out of something vital if a 1 is rolled on 1d10. **Camp kits** include cooking gear, a hatchet, and other miscellaneous tools to make a comfortable camp. A **tomb delver's kit** includes those small trifles favored by adventurers- chalk, a candle, flint and steel, twine, a small bronze mirror, papyrus, charcoal sticks, a whetstone, and some soap. A **tradesman's kit** contains all the portable tools necessary for carrying on a particular trade, such as that of a blacksmith, carpenter, mason, or so forth. **Trade goods** are iron ingots, knife blades, small tools, and other goods more useful than trade ingots for bartering with country folk.

TRADE INGOTS

The standard currency in the Five Kingdoms is the "trade ingot" - an X-shaped metal token about two inches on a side. Ten copper ingots are worth one silver ingot, and ten silver ingots are worth one gold ingot. One hundred trade ingots count as one item of encumbrance. Few commoners see anything but copper, and country villagers rarely see even that.

ARMOR

ARMOR	AC	ENC.	COST
Warding Amulets	6	0	Special
Leather Armor	7	1	20 si
Mail Armor	5	1	40 si
Banded Armor	4	2	100 si
Royal Armor	3	2	250 si
Shield	-1	1	10 si

Warding amulets must be acquired from a reputable nganga. There are few reputable ngangas.

EQUIPMENT

ITEM	ENC.	COST
Arrows, 20, and quiver	1	3 si
Bedroll	1	3 si
Grapnel	1	5 si
Hammer or other tool	1	2 si
Iron Spikes, 12	1	1 si
Kit, Bush	1	5 si
Kit, Camp	2	10 si
Kit, Healer's	1	10 si
Kit, Tomb Delver's	2	5 si
Kit, Tradesman	3	10 si
Lantern	1	10 si
Oil Flask *	1	2 si
Pack	1	5 si
Rations, 1 day *	1	1 si
Rope, 50'	2	2 si
Sack	1	1 si
Tent	3	5 si
Torches, 6 *	1 ea.	1 si
Trade Goods *	1	10 si
Waterskin	1	1 si
Wooden Pole, 10'	1	1 si

Items marked with an asterisk can be packed into bundles of 3 like objects. These bundles count as only one item of encumbrance.