

Board Enterprises proudly presents
Build Your Fantasy World in

Small Bites

The Avatar of Manoto

aka All About Warrior Priests



BUILD YOUR FANTASY WORLD IN SMALL BITES

First, thank you for checking this out! That old saying of “knowing is half the battle” is wrong! Showing up is half the battle, so you’re halfway there!

So what is this? Board Enterprises has been creating and publishing fantasy role-playing games and source material for over 25 years. We believe that the core of any good FRPG campaign is a good game world. We’ve created a good game world, and we’ve made it free for you to use.

<http://www.boardenterprises.com/fletnern.html>

But that’s not enough. Publishing a game world was never what it was all about for us. Throughout our books and blogs, you will see the ever returning concept of “Make it your own”. In order for you to run a great game, you need to be able to make things your own. If we handed you a fully developed game world, you might be able to use it, but it wouldn’t be your own. Only by being part of the creation process can you truly make it your own, and that is what we’re looking to do here. That would be “enough” for us.

So how do we plan to go about doing that? Glad you asked! We’re going to show you all about our game world of Fletnern, but in small bites. We want you to be a part of it! We want you to suggest, criticize, ask questions, and fully involve yourself in the process. We want you to help us make the world of Fletnern what you want it to be.

But you may not want to use Fletnern, certainly not in its entirety. That’s great!! Really! But there is still a great deal of value here. We’ve been doing this for a long time, but even our world isn’t complete. As we build a game world together, you’ll see things we do that will work for you. (Not everything, but some things will!) You’ll learn from us, and we’ll learn from you! This will be a collaborative effort, and we’ll all be better off for it. Rising tides raise all ships!

We would love it if you decided to use Fletnern as your game world, but even if you do, it can (and should) still be your own. You won’t run it the way we would. Your player characters will impact the world, whether in small or epic ways. The end result will be something that is uniquely yours, and shared with your players.

We invite you to check out this free first edition of **Small Bites**, and keep checking around for other pieces of the puzzle. You can find them on our website at the address above, and you can find them in our blog posts and in the Fletnern wiki. But please do more than read them - get involved!

(OFFICIAL) INTRODUCTION

Welcome, Welcome, Welcome!!! Welcome to the first edition of our **Small Bites** modules. This month our theme is Warrior Priests as seen clustered around the Avatar of Manoto.

But more importantly, what is this thing? Well, most people are seeing it as an e-zine published monthly. In many ways, it is that, but that’s not it. This is a way for the folks at Board Enterprises to share everything we’ve put out this month with you, our supporting audience. We’re going to pack it full of stuff, from characters to equipment (magical and otherwise) to rules to advice on how to build worlds and master games. Game Master - you know what we mean!

This is our first one and is also going to serve as a freebie that we use to try to explain what we’re doing here, so we really hope you like it! If you do, and want more of this kind of stuff, please visit our Patreon page and pledge your support. (more about that towards the end)

So what’s here? Well, let’s jump right in!

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FLETNERN WIKI

Years ago, Board Enterprises started a wiki for the World of Fletnern. As Fletnern was always intended to be free, we thought that rather than try to put out a huge massive source book, the wiki would serve to get content to the people more quickly, and even then we were thinking more about “bite sized pieces”.

But the wiki grew in fits and spurts. One of the main goals of this project was to focus more attention (from us and you) on the wiki so we could grow it faster and better. So here is our pledge: We’re starting at a guaranteed four posts per month (one per week roughly). As this project and the support through Patreon increases, we are willing to go at least to thirty-one per month (one per day). As this is our first bite sized piece, we figured we’re going bigger than four, but not yet to one per day.

All of these posts are out on the wiki as this is published and you can refer to them. We have gathered them here, because we think they are valuable in a group, and they all pertain to our theme for the month. All of them are also tagged as being in the categories of “Helatia” and “Warrior Priests” in case you are more comfortable using the wiki instead of this edition.

Avatar of Manoto

On Manoto 11, 652P, an unusual child was born to Apkeeta Emorphine, a priestess of Manoto. She was never an exceptional priestess, but her child was definitely something else. You see Apkeeta claimed that the god Manoto had come to her one night and impregnated her with his avatar.

This is not the first time a young woman has claimed that she was carrying an avatar, but when the priests (both those of Manoto and of other gods) questioned the omens and signs, they all seemed to indicate that this really was an avatar of the war god.

Apkeeta would never have survived the birth had it not been for some of Helatia’s best healers and midwives. The baby is rumored to have been about 30lbs, and Apkeeta is a thin framed woman. She named the baby Woatao, but nearly everyone simply calls him Avatar. His name means “provider”, though in an ancient dialect that no one uses anymore.

There is a great deal of question about whether or not this is truly the avatar of Manoto. Many question why he would choose a spindly girl to carry this avatar. Others simply don’t believe that an avatar could be real. However, those who have seen the avatar typically walk away believing that he is the real thing - a divine child in the mortal world.

Legend

GM Only

There is fair reason to question why Manoto would choose such an odd woman to carry a war god’s avatar. Several of the reasons include the fact that she was actually pretty, and he did not want anyone to question his tastes. He also did not want to sideline an active warrior priestess during and after the pregnancy. He feared for her sanity during the event and took the closest form to human he was able to, though he still appeared to her as an 8’ tall hulking goliath.

Upon achieving his full abilities (which may never happen), the avatar would be equivalent to a rating 4 war god using rock and wood as his tools. Manoto has foreseen a major religious conflict brewing in the future and hopes that his avatar will be able to lead his people (and the rest of the continent) against the threat or discourage the coming invasion. This is a very long-term plan, and Manoto is trying to protect his people.

During the avatar’s existence, Manoto will be reduced to a rating 5 war god. Despite his loss of power, he will be extremely active. He is certainly not helpless in his current state. He has an army of minions that he has created over the centuries, many of whom have barely acted. Flinda and Sinadatti agree with his plan and will attempt to protect him from divine attacks. The other gods of the pantheon believe that this action is too rash. They also believe that their followers would become more devout if faced with the threat of a crusade from another religion. Manoto’s quick action may postpone the attack and thus postpone the religious fervor that comes from those fearful of losing everything.

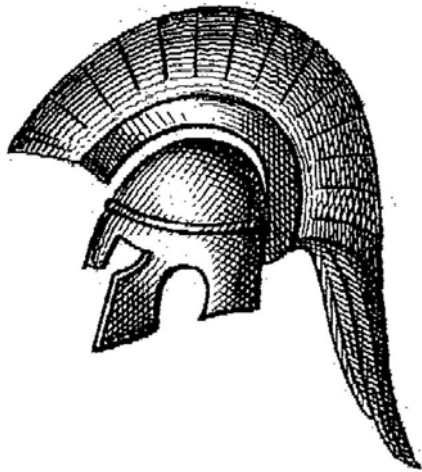
The avatar will require nine years to grow to his full size. At the ripe old age of nine, he will stand 6’9” tall and weigh about 350lbs. His attributes will be similar to a titan, even at this greatly reduced size. At this point he should not have the ability to use his own divine powers, at least not consciously. Manoto will have several minions around him, trying to subtly protect him. Sinadati and Flinda will keep a watchful eye out as well.

Constance of Fortitude

Group

The Constance of Fortitude religion (known primarily simply as Constance) worships Manoto by all four of his aspects: the powers of the individual, team-work, tactics, and defense. This religion is the most popular/common of the Manoto religions gaining huge followings in the major cities of the Dinshain pantheon. They believe that only through balancing the four aspects can a warrior truly achieve greatness, and so they praise historic generals and officers who led their armies more than individuals who may have accomplished valor on their own.

The Cathedral of Constance in Helatia has recently been gifted with an avatar of Manoto. Assuming this is a real avatar, the sect has incredible power in addition to



all of the donations that have been rolling in since the avatar was born.

Helatia, The Guard of **Group**

In Helatia, there are three different sets of city guards: Central City, Dock and Wall. The Cuggouiss are the central city guards. They wear burgundy tunics over their chain mail armor. They walk beats through the city armed with spear and shield. They are the most stereotypical city guards in Helatia. The Dumbresse are the dock guards. They are the least equipped wearing only sabers and having blue and white uniforms. They report to the harbormaster and are used as police and tax collectors. They are also customs agents and the city's defense against smugglers. The Abramno are the wall guards, dressed in uniforms of gold tunics over chain mail. Armed with spears and long bows, they protect the city's walls and gates. They are considered to be the city's defensive army. Helatia maintains a cavalry troop (green studded leather) and a navy (white uniforms) as well, but the Abramno is the main line defensive unit in the city or should the army take to the field.

Abramno **Group**

The Abramno are the wall guards of Helatia, dressed in uniforms of gold tunics over chain mail. Armed with spears and long bows, they protect the city's walls and gates. They are considered to be the city's defensive army. Helatia maintains a cavalry troop (green studded leather) and a navy (white uniforms) as well, but the Abramno is the main line defensive unit in the city or should the army take to the field. The Abramno are expected to be polite to visitors, though they are also expected to prevent enemies from entering the city's gates. While they drill with the cavalry, the two units are separate and have a strong, friendly rivalry.

Cuggouiss **Group**

The Cuggouiss are the central city guards of Helatia. They wear burgundy tunics over their chain mail armor. They walk beats through the city armed with spear and

shield. They are the most stereotypical city guards in Helatia. They act as constables, sheriffs and auxiliary defensive soldiers. They also run the prison and act as bailiffs in the courts (along with guards provided by the Cathedral of Justice).

Dumbresse **Group**

The Dumbresse are the dock guards of Helatia. They are the least equipped of the military units wearing only sabers and having blue and white uniforms. They report to the harbormaster and are used as police and tax collectors. They are also customs agents and the city's defense against smugglers. While they are often considered to be more carefree than typical military units, they also find themselves in brawls more often than their peers. This is because the people of Helatia are for the most part calm and civilized people. The same cannot be said for the sailors who visit her ports.

Helatia **City**

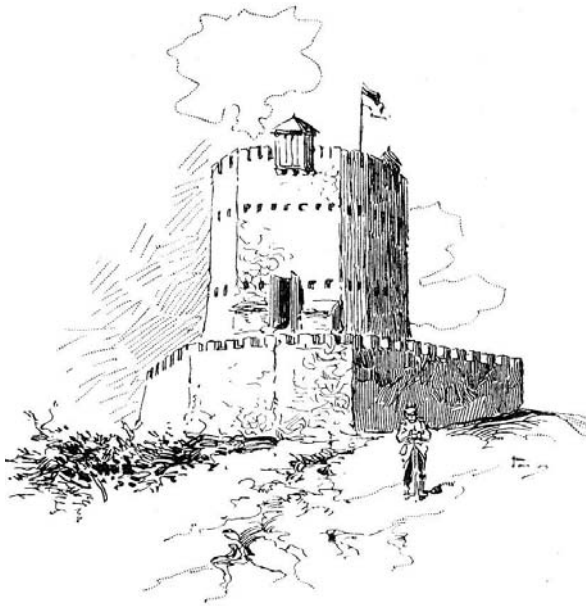
Helatia is the second largest human city and the chief trade port for northern Drentae. Culturally, it is similar to the height of Greece. The hills around Helatia can be severe, but they are most typically filled with farms, vineyards and pastures. The climate is wet, though typically not too cold and completely dominated by the ocean (best weather match on Earth would be Portland).

Helatia is a major trading port and one of the typical arrival points for trade goods coming from Hughhjen. It is also the center of the salt trade for the northern half of Drentae having both sea salt production and salt mines within its borders. While not a dominant military power, Helatia does have a strong navy. It is ruled by its Senate, a complicated representational governing body, too intricate to explain here.



Issac the Martyr, The Knights of **Group**

The Knights of Issac the Martyr are dedicated to the service of the god Jassper, patron of cities. Issac was a sergeant of the guard in a town between Helatia and Snobist. His town was attacked by barbarian raiders from the north, but he refused to leave his post. Although outnumbered and wounded, he continued to



fight on, until eventually with sundown, the raiders retreated. Reinforcements arrived eventually, but not until after Issac had died of his wounds.

The Order of Issac the Martyr was established to pay tribute to the honorable profession of city guards. Most of its members are nominated as an honorarium, and few of the members are devoutly dedicated to Jassper. One of the main uses of the Order is to grant title to city guard commanders, so that they can join the ranks of the lesser nobility.

The order does hold a small keep in the fjords north of Helatia. All members are required to make a pilgrimage to this keep shortly after they have been knighted. (They are also expected to bring a gift, typically donated by the ruler who knighted them.) The assumption this implies is true: a member of the order need not be involved in the knighting of a person into the order of Issac the Martyr. Any ruler has the ability to perform this ceremony. The order does have the right to refuse members upon their pilgrimage or for a lack of a pilgrimage. Knights of Issac the Martyr wear a bronze medallion in the shape of a small tower with two ribbons (pink and purple) hanging from it.

Order of the Divine Rampart Group

The Brothers of the Order of the Divine Rampart, or Ramparters, are a teaching group dedicated to the god Manoto. They were founded about 60 years ago and are a relatively young organization. Based out of the Bastion of the Divine Rampart, this group builds and staffs schools throughout the areas between Rhum, Snobist and Helatia. The areas where the sect has taken off are typically a mix of the Rhoric and Xandrian society. They may speak Xadras, but that is mainly because the traders out of Helatia offer them more. They

are a racial a mix of the two, and culturally a bit closer to the conservative Rhorics.

The Ramparters will typically come to a mid-sized town and offer to teach at a school, if the town will help them build one. The Ramparter will then set up shop and teach reading & writing, some mathematics and bookkeeping, and martial skills. The schools are for boys ages 10-15. Classes are typically from noon to dusk in order to allow the boys to finish their chores in the morning and be home for dinner. Half the time is spent in studies and the other half in practice drills. Each boy will learn wrestling and boxing, but they will also be taught a weapon. Each Ramparter will teach the weapon(s) he is most familiar with, and spears and bows are the most common.

Once the school has established itself, the boys will also begin building a rampart around the town. Often this work will be described as a project to keep the boys busy and improve their strength and feelings of community. This is certainly part of the project, but the ramparts are also being erected to slow down the centaur warlords. The centaurs are seen (by the Order) as the biggest threat to the general area, and they need to be contained. By training young boys and men and by providing a rampart, the Ramparters feel they are helping to make these towns much more difficult to attack, thus discouraging the centaurs from preying on them.

Parpheneus

Legend

Parpheneus was a priest of Manoto in or near Helatia. A giant sea monster had been plaguing the port city and greatly interfering with the sea trade. Parpheneus was visited with a dream from Manoto. He was instructed to go out into the woods and climb a tree. There he would wait and do battle with a dragon. Fearing for his life but faithful to his god, Parpheneus left on the trip. He saw a huge oak tree and knew this was the right spot. Parpheneus slept in the tree for three days when he was awoken by the tree shaking. A dragon had coiled itself around the tree and was attempting to crush the tree so as to bring Parpheneus down to ground level where he could be eaten. Parpheneus thought the dragon quite stupid and taunted the dragon for his futile attempts. For three more days, the dragon crushed the giant oak in its coils, until the tree had been squeezed into a thin pole.

Parpheneus was concerned that the dragon would eventually accomplish his goal, so he armed himself with his spear and prepared to do battle. Just as the tree was about to fall, Parpheneus leapt from the tree and drove his spear into the back of the dragon's head. The dragon struggled mightily, but it was exhausted from having just squeezed the tree for three days. Parpheneus clung to his spear and continued to work it into the dragon's head. Eventually the dragon died, but Parpheneus' spear was ruined from the acidic blood of the dragon.

Manoto again visited Parpheneus in a dream and told him to craft the tree trunk (now a thin pole) and the dragon's fangs into a harpoon. Parpheneus did as he was told hammering the fangs into the shape of a harpoon tip. With this weapon, he returned to Helatia and took passage on a ship. Parpheneus and his crew sailed for three days until they were attacked by the sea monster, a giant armored narwhale. Parpheneus threw his harpoon into the creature's head and then leapt on. The creature was unable to free itself from the barbed harpoon, and Parpheneus slew the creature in less than an hour. The crew saved Parpheneus from drowning as the creature went down. Upon returning to Helatia, Parpheneus gave his spear to the temple in case another sea monster should ever need to be slain. It hangs behind the altar in a smaller temple to Manoto in Helatia's dock district.

Semphesteus

Region

The Ocean Semphesteus separates Drentae from Hughijen. Named for an ancient Tandish god, it is most often referred to simply as Semphesteus. It is the most traveled ocean in the world, carrying traders back and forth between the two closest continents.

Helatia is the main trading port on the west side of Semphesteus, while Purity is the main port on the east. South of Semphesteus the sea becomes the Anglic Straits. Cartographers disagree as to whether the Anglic Straits are part of or simply next to the Ocean Semphesteus.

Supernatural Reconnaissance Office (SRO) Group

The Supernatural Reconnaissance Office (SRO) is a small unit of mages and mentalists within the government of the city-state of Helatia. It is their job to use "supernatural" (magical or mental) means to monitor enemies and other threats to the city-state. As such, they use their spells and proficiencies to look at enemies, but they also use these methods to monitor the seas and land to be forewarned of any natural disasters that might affect their region.

They are small in number, typically 12-15 active casters, but there are a much larger number of bureaucrats that make notes of everything they detect and keep extensive files. Though those files are not considered open, certain members of the Senate seem to have obtained access. There are many personal secrets in those files; many people hope they stay secret.

Warriors of the Faith, The

Group

Though they wish to be known as the Warriors of the Faith, they are most frequently called the Cult of Horroag. They "recruited" children from orphanages and trained them for war. As their band grew, they began taking bigger and bigger mercenary jobs. They

only take jobs that their priests agree to after consulting Horroag and the signs.

Raised their whole lives within the cult, the soldiers are devout and will actively risk their lives pursuing the desires of their god, as told to them by his priests. They fight with the confident belief that death in battle will send them straight to paradise. The god Horroag is a dashing knight, but also a disciplined soldier. He communicates mostly through dreams and visions sent to his priests. In this fashion, they know about the evils of the enemies and preach these to the cult before every battle.

The Warriors of the Faith are trained to fight with sword (infantry) or spear (cavalry). They all carry shields and wear armor. They typically travel in large numbers (8-24), even when not on missions. They will not hire out in units less than 15.

While there are several camps that move throughout the northern regions, the unit's main temple is Helatia. In 645, a new temple was established in Villai, but it is still reasonably small. The temples are the only two permanent bases of the religion.

GM Only

The cult does have a secret fortress on an island south of Helatia. Here they store religious artifacts and other war prizes. This fortress is solidly built and well defended. Deep within its cellars are some magical items of incredible power. This is also where most of the incriminating evidence about the origins of the cult is kept.

The Warriors of the Faith are essentially a mercenary force and as such they see battle differently than many other militaries do. Each unit has a commander and various sub-commanders beneath him. Additionally he has an Executive Officer. Formerly called the Logistics Officer, this officer is in charge of the "business" of warfare, though each handles that business in a different fashion. Some are feared by the men, some are loved, most are ignored or more likely endured by the men. The XO's can fight, but that is not their primary function. They handle the logistics of rations, paying the men, negotiating deals with employers, writing reports (to the home office), buying and maintaining livestock, etc. etc. They also handle loot and who gets it. For this they often have a number of the biggest soldiers to help them intimidate the rank and file in order to hold onto the best loot (as this is divided amongst the officers). XO's do not take over leadership of the unit if the commander dies, that is for the sub-commanders. Still, they are considered "second in command".

There are many levels within the organization. As a soldier advances in the ranks and through the officer corps, they are taken into deeper and deeper levels of the organization and its secrets. Those that the current officers do not believe can handle the ultimate secrets will never make it to the top levels of the organization.

THE SOUNDING BOARD

Again - This is our first edition, so we didn't want to hold back on the blog posts we included under this topic. While we are expecting four to six per month, we did not want to skimp as we started.

When Culture Leads to Combat

The Xadras people of Helatia believe in schooling. They have universities; they even have universities for things other than magic. In fact, the first university in Helatia was for the training of naval officers, so now (culturally) every university in Helatia trains their students in the aspects of sea faring. What does this really mean? Well the mages are typically taught astrology as the basis for learning about magic - astrology and star navigation. The mentalists are taught cartography and geography, because chances are they are going to wind up being relay telepaths. In knowing where the various cities are and the continent's lay out, they have a better chance of understanding how the different relay stations will work.

But are there other impacts? You betcha! If the culture believes in schooling, then if you plan to be more than a "regular" soldier / warrior / fighter, then you better get some training. What does training in the martial arts lead to? Specialization!

Standard soldiers in Helatia are taught to fight with spear and shield and might even be trained to perform maneuvers like shield walls and various formations. But that's about it. Within Helatia, successful (surviving) soldiers will typically choose a school to attend for further training, and each of these schools has a different style of martial art. Just as Asian martial arts follow different disciplines, so do these. But what do they do?

Helatia is a port city, and it was founded by people willing to travel the seas in order to find freedom. While the city is maintained by olive groves and other farming, they still look to the sea for inspiration. So rather than have their martial arts patterned after terrestrial animals, they pattern them after sea animals, especially scary sea animals.

As we get into these, please understand that in Helatia, soldiering is seen as an honorable profession among professionals. In this culture, these martial styles are seen as normal and even cool. Mocking a soldier because he has a shark fin looking helmet will be a slight against his honor and every other soldier who hears it is likely to help him defend his honor.

- Sharks (sometimes barracudas) - These soldiers see themselves as juggernauts in battle. They smoothly slide through battle sites, striking where they see opportunities, but always on the move. Obviously these types of soldiers do not work in units that use shield wall



tactics. While they are one of the rarer styles, they can be incredibly effective in battles that do not run in tight formations. They are often heavily armored and seem to prefer plate mail styles, with strong breastplates but lesser armor on their arms and legs to allow them to move more freely. They are experts in their armor, able to move far more quickly than would be expected in armor that heavy. Their armor is always custom fit. These are not standard militia soldiers issued a suit of armor, but instead connoisseurs who can afford far better. They are also infamous for having some of the largest helmets, feeling that once they see where their prey is, they need the protection over the ability to watch other portions of the battle. Those helms are nearly always decorated with some manner of crest, stylized to look like a shark's fin. This makes it easy for their allies to see them as they cut their way through a battle (since they don't stay in formation).

Sharks are most commonly dual weapon fighters. This allows them to move through a battle slashing from both sides as they close in on their prey. The "signature" move of a shark is typically a double weapon parry followed by a disarming move. This is often the only thing that will slow them in their movement around the battle, as stopping to block, double disarm, and then attack does take a few moments (or most likely at least two actions). They favor slashing blades and will not use piercing weapons as stabbing and withdrawing would slow down their smooth movements.

The most famous (and wealthy) sharks will often wear their breastplates with shark motifs etched into them, but then have some manner of exotic arm (and sometimes leg) armor. Since they want their arms armored, but still to have as much freedom of movement, they have been known to have dragon scale covering their arms, but steel everywhere else. While something

like nemean fur would seem to work better, they typically avoid the use of fur as it ruins the overall look.

A historic (and really famous) shark was Janos Barlarkik (thought by some to have been raised within the Xadras culture but actually of Rhoric blood). He lost his right eye in a battle with the Tanta Bosh. Afterwards, he tended to move his head in an odd fashion. It was his unconscious way of compensating with his left eye for not being able to see out of his right. While he was not considered a saint while alive, after he died, the priests found out that he was indeed favored by their war god and was quickly made a ranking officer in the celestial army. He is therefore often thought of as Saint Janos. While alive, he trained hundreds of soldiers; some he trained to be sharks. His sharks wanted to be like their hero, so they copied his odd head movements. Typically only by imitation, this odd head movement has become common amongst sharks. Many believe it is them trying to see better out of their great helms, and perhaps for some it is, but it is simply patterning their hero.

- Octopi - These soldiers are trained to fight back to back, most typically with a sword and a baton (or any parrying weapon). Obviously, they are not cut out to face archers, certainly not at any distance. The idea is that with eight limbs (like an octopus), the enemy never knows where the attack is coming from. They tend to strike out in unexpected ways, including blocking for each other so the intended target can get an attack in under the now blocked weapon. They are often trained to kick as well, especially if they can pull it off as a surprise.

They would often be considered to be wearing "medium" armor, most commonly chain mail, but often with added decorations (that will act defensively). Octopus shaped epaulets are often seen as are some truly spooky helms. When three octopi fight back to back to back, they are often called squids. As a normal course of battle, these teams call out to each other in coded phrases that allow them to shift around, further confusing their enemies as to exactly who they are fighting.

- Crabs - As might be expected, a crab fights inside heavy armor and relies on that armor to keep him safe, more so than most other forms of defense. They do tend to use shields, but smaller shields that will block melee weapons, because they typically are too slow to get out of the way. These are certainly "tanks" intended to absorb damage from enemies while others kill those same enemies. It is not uncommon for crabs to use weapons that are slow and ponderous, but if and when they hit, deal an enormous amount of damage. Their fighting style is often to wait for the perfect time to strike, even if that means that they don't attack as often as others might have.

- Eel - Eels are actually fighting mages, typically trained to have a spell in one hand and a weapon in the other. The idea is that they will fight in more of a

swashbuckler or dueling style with their weapon (most commonly a lighter, faster sword), and then when the time is right, unleash a devastating spell right into the enemy's face. Though lightly armored, they are not the glass cannons seen in other battle field mages.

We went on a little too long on this one, so we'll stop here, but we want to bring the point home: Knowing things about a culture, in this case that they prize schooling over experience and that they are romantic about the sea, can directly lead to knowing more about how they fight and what they will do in battle. As a GM you may not need to know this about your world, but your games will be a lot more engaging (fun) if you do.

Priests

I'm not going to talk about alignments. I have to keep telling myself that.

Priests - In **LEGEND QUEST**, healing magic is performed by mages who have power levels in healing magic or by wizards who can cast all six schools. Healing magic does not come from the gods. The main reason for that is that when I wrote LQ, I wanted each religion to teach things that made sense to that religion. Yes, the god of healing teaches his priests to be healers. But the god of evil magic teaches his priests to be sorcerers. And the god of war teaches his priests to be warriors. And the goddess of beauty teaches her priestesses to be artists, or possibly illusionists.

Not every priest should be a healer! OK, I only really know my religion well, but there are a billion of us worldwide, so I'm going to claim some common ground. We have priests who lead the parishioners. They preach, they hold services, they even counsel. But we also have those who work primarily as teachers - lots of those! We do have some who run hospitals (healers). We have some who pray all day long, often in seclusion. We have some who administer the workings of the individual churches or the larger regional or national or global communities - yes, bureaucrats. Most have other things they do. Some coach kids, some maintain the grounds, some cater to the poor or sick (by going to them, which is different than just being a healer). What about the ones who study the scriptures? These guys are historians, detectives and translators all wrapped in one. There are lawyers and diplomats, and I think I'm done going on and on. (Can add musicians? organists, singers, etc.?)

Here's the point: Are we supposed to assume that every priest, no matter who he or she serves, learns magic? So in order to run a decent sized church, you must be a powerful spell caster, likely with the ability to bring the dead back to life? What if you're just charismatic and have a great speaking voice? Can't minister to a flock of believers? How did all those high priests get to be high priests? Did they all wander the countryside slaughtering horrible monsters? Isn't that the only way to gain

experience points? I tend to think that while adventuring priests are fine, it isn't for everyone. Someone needs to stay home and tend to the faithful, the church itself, the books, etc. The adventurers and the missionaries (I forgot to mention missionaries?) can go out into the wilds.

Major Wars in RPGs

Years ago, I wrote a magazine article on this, but I'm guessing that most people reading this blog do not have access to some old out of print regional RPG mag. I wanted to give some reasons that major wars are great for RPGs - ALL genres of RPG, but I'll focus on fantasy.

First - governments spend more money on weapons and defenses during a war - huge money! For fantasy, this means the government paying for magical weapons to be created to give to their operatives or officers. This increases the number of magical weapons and defenses in the world, expanding the stuff people can loot. Plus, they tend to get more inventive during wars, so there will be different types of magical stuff than there might have been before.

Second - no war is going to be over quickly. That means that they serve as sub-campaigns within the overall campaign. I mean, that is where the term campaign was borrowed from. So these aren't one shot adventures, but instead developing sub-plots that can really hold the interest of all the players.

Third - the enemy should have so many men, that the player characters cannot simply go out and kill them all. If the PCs can slaughter the whole enemy army singlehandedly (and in the old rules, they really could), then you need to be playing a different game! The fun part of this is that some players have never actually met their match in battle. By putting them up against an invading army, even if they are six times better than the common enemy soldier, they will get worn down by the constant press of enemies until they retreat or die.

My last point (and I could really go on for hours), is that wars force GMs to develop different types of missions. Maybe the first thing is defending a wall. Does the wall hold or do they have to flee? As they flee, there will be skirmishes along the way to the next battle site. Are there raids against each other's camps? Do the players need to help with the logistics (maybe hunting some meat, gathering more militia, guarding a weapons shipment)? Do different styles of units need to be handled in different ways? (Wow, I hope so!) Can the players get involved in any of the negotiations, maybe simply as bodyguards or messengers? Are there any dirty tricks going on, either offensively or defensively?

Clearly the point is to develop the war as a major thing - tens of thousands of soldiers converging on a couple of spots, some drama leading up to the actual battles, reactions to the battles themselves, etc. I actually write out how the major battles are going to turn before playing through them, because I refuse to believe that a

small squad of adventurers can turn the tide of a major battle. A couple of times, I've needed to alter that course, which is fun too. By knowing how things are going to turn, I can write it up almost like it's a wilderness adventure with a series of encounters, which makes it easier for me to run.



What's a Professional Soldier?

Anyone checking deeper into the Council of Barons on Flettern will start to see that the "standing armies" of these baronies are listed at incredibly low numbers. Forsbury is listed as having 300 and this is considered the largest standing army in the Council. So if Baron Forsbury wants to invade his neighbor, does this mean that he either travels with less than 300 guys or brings a militia? Not necessarily.

So where do the rest of his troops come from? Well, Baron Forsbury is an unusual case. He is a Cattle Baron and as such has vast herds roaming his lands. Those herds are controlled by cowboys, all of whom have been trained for battle. Now they are considered light cavalry or even raiders in a military sense. These are not knights mounted on horses! But they are some of the most skilled horsemen and not too bad with their crossbows.

For the more "normal" noblemen, here are some thoughts: Most small towns are going to have sheriffs and deputies. These are trained military men, but they are not part of the "army". Similar comments could be made about the tax collectors, the jailors, the forest wardens, even the dog trainers and hunt master. Almost every able bodied man who is employed at the castle is likely trained at least to some degree in the ways of war. This may not be true for the cooks and butlers, but it might be.

The issue is that few lands can afford to have standing armies of great size where all the soldiers do is stand post. They have to be doing something that actively needs to be done. Now you might think we're splitting hairs. Is the soldier standing post at the border and

helping the tax collector part of the army? Not always. He might be a tax collector, a customs agent, a policeman, or any number of other jobs. When a modern army goes off to war, the border agents stay on the borders, but when one of my fantasy militaries marches, the border agents, tax collectors, and bailiffs suit up and march right along.

So what do I suggest you do? First, figure out what the army is expected to do. Are they the police as well? Do they guard the royals and the walls? Is the smith maintaining the weapons part of the army? Is he expected to fight in the field or just travel with them to maintain equipment? Why? because if you don't know what is expected of them, then you don't know what is expected of their leaders. If the General is in charge of only the standing forces, he may need to use politics to get the proper equipment instead of simply ordering his logistics unit to order or manufacture it. Does it matter? Yeah - Generals who worry only about training troops to fight are completely different types of leaders than if they need to manage the cooks and cobblers too.

I know - If you're playing a game where the "fighter" becomes a lord simply because he passed some threshold of experience and his army shows up out of nowhere, you may not care about things like leadership, tactics, or logistics. You don't care that the "lord" is a complete moron who can't even write his own name, as long as his strength attribute modifiers grant him extra damage. But the rest of us understand that there are different types of leaders. Some can manage the day-to-day business of an army, and some cannot. Knowing how to get an army into the field and properly fed is vastly more important than whether they have super strength, but I guess that's lost on some of the gold farmers out there.

Idea Sparks - Military Units

OK - I often describe myself as being an idea man. By this I mean that I can typically develop a ton of ideas in a short period of time. I can develop a "100" supplement (100 Towns, 100 Professions, 100 Bar Drinks, Gods & Demons) in a day, though it takes me a ton of time to finalize, edit and format it. I assume this is a combination of my ADHD and imagination, but I think most people who are drawn to being game masters have similar traits.

But even though I can typically come up with a huge number of ideas, I often try to find a device that will help me. Here's my most recent one: I need to establish more of Fletner's military units, both regular army and mercenary. So here's what I'm doing - I'm using school mascots. A unit is nothing without a cool symbol, so while I can come up with all manner of military units, I want cool mascots and symbols to give them some life. Here's what I mean:

There is a particular school that I don't like, but has a fantastic defense line. So these guys are going to be heavily armored, shield users, probably less than others with their spears and having a red "wave" as their symbol.

Their rivals I like even less, but they are still a decent team. I don't like them, so I am going to characterize them as being stupid and bullies, a dangerous combination in armed men. They are the tigers, so they will use a tiger on their emblem, and have striped patterns of steel and bronze on their shoulders, but their officers keep a small eagle as a pet. Not sure why, but I'm going to give them split armor (plate mail chest and shoulders, chain mail arms and legs). I'm going to give them swords (sort of gladius/leaf blades) and spiked bucklers.

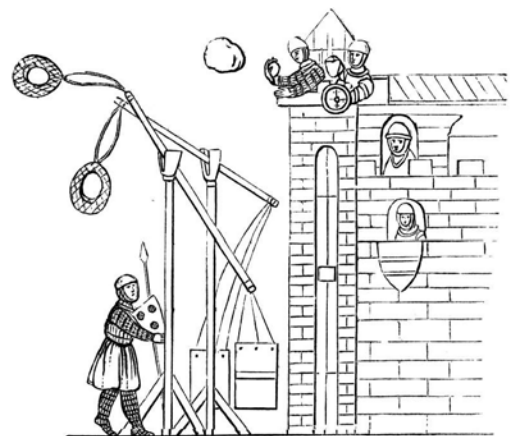
There's a pro team in a port city named for a sea mammal. My perception is that they have never been very good, but they've had some good QBs, so I'm going to make them a poorly disciplined unit with good officers. I'm going to give them fins on the top of their helmets to represent their mascot. Let's give them battle tridents, all the better to keep the enemy away from the greener troops.

I don't enjoy basketball, so taking the team from a city I hate, let's make them bandits. I assume they're all felons anyway. But they're named after a car part. How do I use that? Let's go with horseshoes. They use a horse as their symbol and actually sew horseshoes onto their leather gloves, where the iron will lead when they punch with their fists. Nasty, tattooed criminals quick to take advantage of anyone, dressed in horsehide leather armor.

I'm going to just keep going. I have college teams, pro teams, at least four sports to leverage - more than enough ideas to generate dozens of military units, if not a new 100 list. I can generate general personalities/cultures, general gear specs, and mascots/colors. What can you do with a start like this?

The Military Machine - Gear

Do you know what your militaries carry? I mean actually carry - not just "chain mail, spear, shield". We came out with An Army's Arms a while back, and to be honest, they didn't sell well. Each book is a detailed description of an army and their gear. I mean - really detailed. Well, that didn't work the way we wanted, so we loaded up A Baker's Dozen Tribes with a lot of gear notes. That did better, but with sales of Army's Arms low, we



didn't publish the others we were preparing.

But back to the question - Do you know what they carry? Does the army issue each soldier with his kit? Do you know what's in it? In order to know, you need to know how they're fed. If there is a chuck wagon that travels with each battalion, then they need a lot less than if each squad cooks for itself. The point today isn't really do you know what they have, but more to the point, Do you know who made it? If you think about all the stuff a soldier normally carries, even if it is just the combat system relevant stuff (armor and weaponry), who made it is very important. If you have an army of 6,000 swordsmen in scale mail, someone had to make all that. You need a lot more than a couple of blacksmiths to bang out 6,000 swords. Worse yet, if they all carry bows, then you need 6,000 bows and probably 120,000 arrows - not counting the ones they lose practicing. Who is making all that?

This is the way I build my worlds - I ask myself questions like this and then develop the answers. Depending on the place the army exists, there might be a weapons factory. If there isn't, then there are a series of weapon crafters and armorers - and they might be of different skills. Now very few of my soldiers carry swords, but you still need to figure out who crafted their spears, shields and armor, even if it is studded leather. By figuring out some of the army of smiths who were working for the military, you can probably figure out who the player characters would go to for theirs. It gives those guys a reason for existing, not just waiting on the couple of adventuring parties wandering around the city.

I love the Three Musketeers - I won't get into it, because this is already too long, but I love A. Dumas. One scene from the original book that I love is when they have to go to war. They're told to get their stuff together and show up in a few days ready to march. Well, the heroes have squandered their pay on booze, partying and women. They have no funds to go out and buy war horses, uniforms, etc. They wind up selling a diamond to get the money, but the concept that the officers and nobles had to supply their own gear from the pay they received (and that they typically didn't unless forced) entertains me. In that world, there must have been a host of tailors for military cloaks and uniforms, horse traders with steeds from nags to the finest, weapon smiths capable of etching coats of arms and other insignia, saddle makers, bag makers, scabbard makers, etc. etc. etc. No - You don't need to make up each and every one of these businesses! You could, but I wouldn't suggest it, unless you have players who love to role-play shopping. But you do need to have a handle on the fact that these folks exist and need to have shops in your world. I'll go so far as to say that you ought to have a portion of the city (near the garrisons) where a soldier could find all these shops within a few blocks of each other - a mercenaries' mall.

Maybe some of you have your worlds developed to this point, but I'm guessing few do. Maybe you just work off a price list - chances are it isn't enough. I strongly suggest that you find the happy medium - a place where your players believe that you have nearly everything developed, but you have not bothered to work on anything that is never used. Utopia, right? But beware - get too detailed, and you won't be able to remember it all anyway. Then you wind up stumbling during game sessions while you check your notes on that guy who sells the silvered armor.

Post Script

But knowing who built it may not be enough either. Do you know what the natural resources of each region are? Now Fletnern has international trade, so on one hand you could say that it doesn't matter what their resources are, they can always import them, but that is much more expensive. What do I mean?

Centuries ago during the Orc-Ogre Civil War, the ogres were the more established culture, but the orcs had been trained as soldiers. Once the orcs and their goblin allies rebelled, they lost contact with the copper mines and the bronze smelters. The ogres had some of the best forged bronze weapons, but the orcs had to make due with iron. Not steel, iron.

But that was centuries ago. If the Brinston army wants to import steel it can, right? Well, recently (in Fletnern), the Latvich army of Garnock had retreated during one of their historic empire building pushes. Garnock supplies its iron not by mining it, but by having hundreds of peat collectors out in the swamps bringing in bog iron. While this works, it is not a sure way to refresh a huge amount of lost steel armor. Plus, there was an embargo against them due to their aggressive war - so no imports. They passed a law that all ferrous metals were now the property of the government and sent squads of soldiers out to manors and farm houses to collect everything they could. Iron buckets, steel cutlery, even steel horse tack wasn't safe. All because I knew where their iron and steel came from and knew that they had to do something drastic.

OK, another proof that I go way over the top: I am working on how many of everything you need to have in a city. Believe it or not I started this project maybe 25 years ago by opening up a phone book and jotting down how many restaurants there were in a town of 40K so I could try and mirror that in Rhum. But here's the point on this: If your army's archers are wearing leather armor, where did all the leather come from?

This typically winds up being less about there being a shortage of leather and more about what type of leather it might be. For example, in Forsbury they raise (and eat) beef cattle. Most of the leather in Forsbury is steer leather. In Scaret, they farm every flat piece of land, so only the hills are open for pastures. They raise (and eat) goats; the sheep are less for mutton and more for wool.

So leather in Scaret is going to be goat. Garnock is between the two and has better leather processing factories, so rough hides are brought into Garnock and turned into artistic clothing, which in turn is sold back to the original breeders of the hides. So in Garnock, you can have just about any kind of hide.

Is there more? Well, yes. How long does a horse live? Well there are a lot of horses used in Forsbury, by cowboys, by caravans, and by simple riders. If a horse's useful life is about ten years, then 10% of all the horses in Forsbury are probably killed or die every year. That produces a certain amount of horsehide!

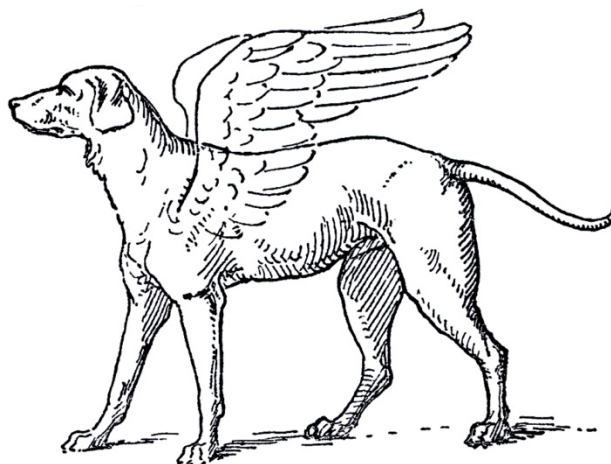
What's the moral of this story? Well, honestly, I think the moral is: Just buy Board Enterprises products, because they are the only ones crazy enough to think this stuff all the way through and then have their economies take it all into account. This is way too much nonsense for a normal (read "sane") GM to keep in his or her head.

Divine Alchemy yields magic items

I was thinking through some "divine alchemy". Should these pilgrimages include things like: put a dragon fang, a lit blue candle, the long sword, and a live chicken on the altar in order to enchant the blade? So I was thinking that these pilgrimages should have sacrifices associated with them. Not only does it make them harder to do (requiring more adventuring instead of just showing up), but these are gods - they like sacrifices.

Now I have all sorts of rules about sacrifices in my game. Chief among them is the idea that sacrificing a person to a god allows that god to require ten years of service from that soul before they are released to their eternal reward. Well, I was thinking of a dog breed I developed as a temple guardian for the main war god in Fletnern (Manoto, god of war in the Dinsthain pantheon). What if someone sacrificed one of these "sacred temple guardians"? I think we have too dark a concept of sacrifices. Since the vast majority of us are monotheistic, we don't see sacrificing in a good light. I am trying to role-play my NPCs, and I think giving a sacred dog to your god would be a good thing.

So here's what I've come up with: You find a "perfect" dog (unblemished and the right color, etc.). You raise it for a certain period of time, maybe six to ten months. You have to follow some rather serious restrictions on how you raise it, including what you feed it, etc. After that, you sacrifice the dog on Manoto's altar in a special ceremony. You have now created a dog angel that will serve Manoto in the afterlife. Manoto is a war god, so he has legions that battle other divine armies all the time. Not only did you just help your god, but when you eventually die, you get your dog back as a celestial war dog to work with you in the divine army.



Sounds a little sick to us modern folks, but not only do these folks have faith, but they actually have lots of gods around - gods that grant them spells and magic items. They can damn near prove that that the dog becomes an angel. Isn't that a good thing?

A couple of extra things. Some people who have done this ritual swear that the angel dogs must be following them around, because they have been awoken from sleep just before an ambush by loud barking that no one else heard. The ritual is typically done by younger people (teens) because it is pretty exhausting to train the dog in this fashion (too tiring for old men) and because the amount of time you spend with the dog is something a married guy just couldn't do. Lastly, or those of you still thinking this isn't for you and your more hack and slash campaign: A priest (maybe the one in your party) is contacted by one of Manoto's angels. It seems that there is a dog breeder who is not following all the proper tenets of raising these dogs. Because of this, young faithful men are going through all the work to create these angel dogs, but it isn't working. This breeder needs to be punished. Boom, your next mission. The breeder will have an extensive family of guys who are training fighting dogs (those guys do tend to be rather rough or at least nasty) as well as a herd of war dogs. Maybe there is some special dog on that breeding farm that they have to rescue. It might be destined to be a special temple watch dog or it may be destined for one of the party members.

You see, I like the gods being involved in the campaigns; I just don't like the gods being so predictable. Pray for X hours and get these spells. That's not for my style of play.

LIFESTYLES OF THE MAGICAL AND MUNDANE

About a year after the avatar was born, the priests of Manoto in Helatia felt that they were being too narrow in their focus on the avatar. This was a gift to the entire world and not just to the city of Helatia. So they reached out to the larger temples around the world and asked them if they had young warriors who would make good bodyguards for the young avatar. At the Temple of Manoto in Forsbury, only one young man stood out: Bartholomew Michael, chief Constable of the Baron's Guard.

Mikey as he's known jumped at the chance, but he needed to get the high priest to negotiate with the Baron and Baroness. He was eager to go, but he was committed to his obligations in Forsbury. Being a friend and a diplomat, the high priest was able to convince the rulers to give the young man a leave of absence. After all, it was only a year.

Mikey arrived in Helatia early in winter, ill prepared for the cold, wet weather of the sea port. He had a decent leather jacket and wool sweaters, but they didn't work with his armor and at first, he froze. He was the baroness' favorite, and she had given him some spending money when he left, so first things first, he got himself a good woolen cloak to keep the chill and dampness off his armor.

Knowing he was a "short timer", the local warrior priests restricted his access to the avatar. It was two weeks before he was even allowed to participate in one of the viewings. Here he saw what appeared to be a five or six year old child playing in a clumsy way with his mother and a mentoring priest. He spoke in a child-like way and seemed fascinated with his own body, staring at his fingers and laughing when his strength overwhelmed the priest. Mikey was fascinated, and from that moment, all doubts of the child's parentage fled his mind. Surely this amazing one year old was divine in origin.

As phenomenal as an avatar is, once you take up a sentry post, the avatar becomes a bit more common place. There were now warriors from around the world standing post for the avatar, and Mikey was only needed to "work" every third day. Fairly quickly, he was allowed to be a direct guard at the viewings, but again, only one of his work days out of the three, but these times were magical.

Standing watch at a viewing involved being there when the child was brought in, before the crowds. Seeing the child interact with his mother and the various priests, seeing things only a dozen people in the world were witnessing with this most important being in the world were everything Mikey had wanted but never

knew he wanted. Those days flew by, but the others were not so special.

Despite stories of other religions attempting to attack, assassinate or kidnap the avatar, nothing of the sort happened. Mikey wasn't a simple sentry, but the top officer of the city's police. Unable to lead or investigate, he felt himself starting to lose some of his edge. Plus his "days off" were just boring. Here he was in what might be the oldest human city in the world, with warriors and warrior priests from everywhere, and he was bored. Clearly he was doing something wrong.

By the first signs of spring, he had corrected his course, and this is roughly how his days would go. Waking in the temple dormitory, he would practice his morning routines. These local folks had some incredible facilities for bathing, but Mikey did a more quick clean up and hurried off to morning prayers. Every morning, he prayed to Manoto to give him the strength and devotion to accomplish all that was expected of him, and he typically felt his god had heard him.

Mikey had met an enormous number of warrior priests and had formed a small cadre of like-minded warriors. They would train in the mornings and take most of their meals together. The dorm they stayed in had been part of a seminary dedicated to Brakin the god of life and justice, but with the huge needs of the Manoto temple, the priests of Brakin had offered up the additional housing. This meant the martial trainings were taking place in gardens, but the fighting men tried not to damage any of the landscaping.

As weeks passed, Mikey learned more about these other men and their cultures, including some words from their languages. But it was his afternoons that he devoted to the most important training. Here at the cathedral he had access to warrior priests who were absolutely the greatest in the world, and he wanted to learn more. Mikey was a fairly standard "sword and board" soldier, but he was more board than sword. A skilled defense man, he wanted to know more.

All it took was asking the right local priest who the best shield man was, and Mikey was soon training with a priest considered untouchable in a duel. Mikey continued to work with him, but most of that training he already knew. Sensing his discontent, his shield master introduced him to the trainer of the local warrior priests. Knowing martial arts was vitally important, but these guys were willing to go the extra step and use magic in their combat styles. Training as though he were a complete novice, Mikey started to master the art of "sword magic", which would give him the edge he lacked on the offensive side.

Though he had intended to stay a year, word came to Mikey that the Baron was heading off to war to support one of his cousins. Further, the Baroness was about to give birth to her first child, and all the portents indicated this would be a son. Struggling to choose between his god and his homeland, Mikey felt he could continue to serve his god at home, but could not serve

the Baron from afar, so he spent the last of the spending cash the baroness had gifted to him and teleported home.

So why does Mikey's story work? Mikey could have stood post at the cathedral and been part of the force that confirmed that nothing bad would happen to the avatar. That is what most followers would do. But Mikey isn't just a "fighter". He is an officer and an investigator. His best investigatory tool is his friendly personality and his ability to come off in a disarming and courteous manner. Dull sentries would have stood guard and probably eaten well in their off hours, but Mikey formed friendships. He asked around about who people were and what they knew. He used the same social skills that allowed him to get citizens to talk freely to him to get the priests to tell him who could train him in different ways.

And he took the time to learn. Most masters of their craft enjoy teaching capable and interested students, but the student has to put in the work. Mikey was in the perfect spot to be able to work a few days a week and train the others. He was also open minded enough and humble enough to start over from the beginning in order to learn something brand new. He didn't ignore all of his old lessons, just learned the new and is still figuring out how to combine them all.

So is he a warrior priest - not really. He knows a trick or two of magic, but has no plans to further those studies. If we had to put him into the old rules, we might describe him as being a Lv2 cleric, followed by being a much higher level fighter. That would give him a couple of spells to use without really making him a "priest".

Is he the world's greatest shield man? No, but unless and until he can "up his game" (advance, gain experience, whatever you want to call it), he is probably as good as he is going to get for now.

Was it the right thing for him to do to race home? Well that depends. He is right - He can not only continue to practice his religion at home, but he can serve as a role-model for the younger generation while doing it. He can share stories of the avatar and help convince any doubters that the avatar really is the son of Manoto. Meanwhile, he has placed himself back in the good graces of the Baron and Baroness, especially with his hurried return because he felt that he needed to be there to guard her and her son (in some ways snubbing a demi-god for a prince). That's the kind of loyalty that gets returned.

The point of this was not necessarily to get as detailed as some of the future Lifestyle articles will get into how their lives are spent but to give a sense of some of the things that can come up outside of battle that still help to mold the character and craft their stories. It doesn't always have to be about how many monsters you killed.

OPTIONAL RULES



Shield Magic

Points=10

Materials=N/A

Accuracy=-10/+5

Area of Effect=1/+0

Casting Fatigue= $\frac{1}{2} \times \text{Pow}$

Min Power=1

Casting Time=50

Effect=+5DefxPow

Range=0/+0

Sustaining Fatigue= $\frac{1}{2} \times \text{Pow}$

Shield magic is a trick similar to the more common sword magic trick. Where sword magic allows a weapon to act similarly to an animated attack enchantment, shield magic allows a shield to act as though it had a defense enchantment cast upon it. This acts as both a physical and magical defense enchantment providing an additional +5 defense per power level used whether the caster is attacked by a weapon or a spell, and it lasts for as long as it is maintained, working against every incoming attack.

The caster must be holding some manner of shield for the spell to work. It cannot be cast upon a weapon or anything else, though it has been successfully cast upon items that would best be considered toy shields and still worked. Metal shields will not resist the casting of this spell, as the spell is in many ways cast over the shield not actually on it. The trick can only be cast upon a shield the caster is holding and will end if the caster loses control of the shield. While it acts like a defense enchantment, it will work in conjunction with other defense spells. It will not however work in conjunction with an animated parry enchantment. If this were to occur, the higher power level (between shield magic and animated parry) would be active and the other would be suppressed. Shield magic can however be used in conjunction with a melee weapon containing animated parry levels.

Wet Behind the Ears

Everyone has to start somewhere, and here we lay out what we think a starting character needs to look like. We'll give you some stats from a **LEGEND QUEST** point of view, but please rely on the narrative and not the numbers when making things work in your world or your campaign.

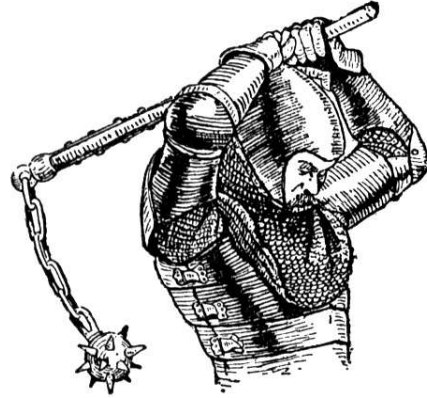
So what is a warrior priest? A warrior priest is an official member of the church's clergy, sometimes called a priest or brother or monk, not simply a member of the congregation. In most cases, warrior priests worship a war god, but there are other churches that will train some of their clergy to be warriors. While most religions rely on faithful members of the congregation to act as guards and protectors, there will often be things (sites, objects, relics, etc.) that are considered so sacred that only members of the clergy are allowed near them. In these cases, non-war related religions will still need warrior priests to serve as guardians.

So what's a holy warrior? Holy warriors are typically not members of the clergy, though they can be. Holy warriors are what some games/worlds refer to as templars or paladins. Holy warriors typically resemble knights and are most focused on the arts of war; warrior priests lean a touch more towards priest than they do towards warrior. In truth, the warrior priests are a more common, less pigeon-holed archetype, than the holy warriors. Holy warriors are typically cavalry, while warrior priests are typically infantry, but this is not a hard and fast rule that must be followed.

But they aren't the priest template either. While they typically can cast some manner of healing spells or at least defensive spells, they are also focused on battle and combat. Where a healing priest might hang back during a battle and heal any injured folks who come to him, a warrior priest is going to be out in the battle and only stop to heal when the battle has died down and he has no opponents near him. So in one view, a healing priest keeps people alive to continue the battle, while a warrior priest will save them from death if he is able afterwards.

As a split classed character, the warrior priest needs to be good at more than one thing. Typically this is fighting and spells, but how this works in different rules sets can fluctuate. Despite the "warrior" description, this guy needs to have some Willpower or whatever it's called in your game. With a relatively low Strength, the warrior priest can still serve as an effective "tank" as long as he has the ability to cast and wear armor. Killing other folks is not his job. His job is to fight and help his side win. While killing other folks does help his side win, staying alive is actually a better tool/goal.

Lots of words - let's get into it! We think a warrior priest's top attribute is Willpower. This helps him cast and sustain his spells, as well as allowing him to fight longer than his opponents who may tire too quickly. Strength and Endurance are important as well, but clearly secondary. Knowledge, Agility and Psyche cannot be too low, and should probably be at least in the "average" categories.



The defense combat skills are vital - both armor and shield. These can keep him from taking damage. He cannot be a complete fool on offense and will need to be competent in some melee weapons. Which? Well, the priest side of him should guide his weapon(s) of choice, probably whatever his god uses. If his god is the god of soldiers, then whatever they use, which is probably going to be a spear. He should be able to use his spear offensively, as well as defensively. Knowing how to fend off attackers allows him to stand above a fallen comrade and prevent any further damage to him.

On the spell side, the warrior priest is more likely to be looking at defensive spells more than healing spells. Remember, healing is something that comes later, after he survives the battle itself. The defensive spells are something he uses during the battle, most commonly on himself, unless he is specifically a bodyguard to someone else. You will see in our write up below that we gave our warrior priest example the Shield Magic spell from this edition's optional rules.

Other skills do depend on the style of this warrior priest. If he is expected to serve a community as a parish priest, he needs Politics and other social / public speaking skills. If he is a warrior monk who lives amongst others, things like Etiquette might be more important, so he doesn't act out. If he is amongst the people (or army) but not really in a leadership role, then social skills are probably less important. If he's an officer, then at least Leadership is needed.

Even more non-melee related skills: Again, it depends on the intent of the character and the design of the god. Some war gods are centered around steel, and this would probably lead to some manner of metal smithing, weapon craft or armory skills. Others are more

the berserker style, which might bring in some different magics (beast mastery, nature manipulation, etc.). Still others are more disciplined and major military, which would likely call for tactics or even senses as used to determine ranges and defensible positions. The Ramparters described earlier all have construction skills for building fortifications, which is not unusual either.

As with any heavy armor user, starting money is a problem. We see this warrior priest as a chain mail and shield user - at least at the start, but affording all of this is difficult at best. Rather than spend character points on money, we suggest the lesser starting armor and shield shown, with the character buying better gear as soon as they start to earn some money.

Last minute stuff? Add first aid, as a sub for healing, when casting isn't going to work (likely due to fatigue). Don't forget Theology and Reading & Writing. It's rare and odd for a spell caster to not be able to read, and a priest needs to have studied his religion.

What's not here? Tricks have replaced full blown magical abilities. We'd recommend the Aid trick later on as a better version of first aid. There are no missile weapons, unless you consider thrown weapons. Nothing wrong with throwing javelins, but this guy is intended to be a brick on the battle field, not someone dancing around behind the melee.

Warrior Priest: 250 character points - Strength 6 Knowledge 5 Endurance 6 Willpower 6 Agility 5 Psyche 4. Armor Group 1 (Mails 2) Etiquette 2 First Aid 2 Native Language 3 Read&Write Native 1 Running 1 Shield Magic trick 2 Shields Group 1(Large 2) Spears Group 1 (Spear 2) Streetwise 1 Theology 2. 100sc bought: spear, small shield, cloth armor, 20 extra silver coins.

What did we miss? The Willpower is a bit short, but starting a character with more than a 6 Attribute is too costly, especially when doing more than one thing. It would be nice for him to have better weapon skills, as he only has a base 75% chance to hit. He's more of a warrior monk and not intended to speak in front of people, but that's OK, he can learn those skills if he needs to. With only a 5 Knowledge, he's only 50/50 on the Shield Magic, so hopefully that's something that can be improved later on.

Once properly equipped, he has a 52 parry against a single opponent (using all his shield levels). Not shabby! That goes up to 62 if he has the Shield Magic running. Raising the Agility to 6 is 16 points and helps parry and initiative, but increasing Shields or Large Shield gets a similar parry at 10 points (though not if there are multiple targets).

HOW TO PLAY A ... Warrior Priest

We're actually going to keep this entry short for two reasons: First, we put a lot of it into **Wet Behind the Ears**. But second, there are just too many ways to go about it.

What we described in Wet Behind the Ears is a "standard" warrior priest - a defensive fighter with some protection and healing spells. This is exactly what we would expect from a warrior priest who answers to a war god. But what if the warrior priest is worships a different style of god? Here are some examples:

Berserker - The second most common warrior priest is the berserker priest. The god may be a god of strength, rage, bears, or whatever, but cannot be "god of soldiers" as these guys are as dangerous to their teammates as they are to the enemy. Instead these warriors rely on their "divine" magic to push their bodies beyond the normal physical possibilities and thus become even more powerful combatants. The problem is that as their rage grows to fuel their strength (and other attributes) their ability to differentiate between friend and foe declines rapidly. Great during the battle, but a real concern after it is over.

Berserker priests can be a bit easier to role-play because they tend to be pretty one-sided. They fight; that's about it. True role-players can get into some of the issues of regret (over things they did while they were not in control of themselves), but a berserker religion would have ways for them to rationalize these issues.

Inquisitors - While not a common player character archetype, you will see these as NPCs, and there is no reason a player cannot shape one. Inquisitors are warrior priests who are using their spells and magic to investigate. Quite often, inquisitors are using spells that detect lies in order to determine the truth and then punish the guilty. Being judge, jury and executioner tends to make these folks far less patient, and they should be feared for good reason.

It shouldn't matter if the detect lie "spells" are something other than spells. They could be mentalism or a magic item. No matter how he does it, an inquisitor will see himself as an extension of divine justice and therefore anything he does can be rationalized as the god's will. These are not people who can be reasoned with.

A close cousin is the inquisitor is the witch hunter. These folks see some aspect of magic (or all magic) as evil and in need of being destroyed. While they do need the detection style magics of the inquisitors in order to

find and identify the witches, they also need defensive spells or something that will allow them to “parry” the evil magic as it attacks them. These make for very good player characters because they have such an easy explanation as to what they are doing adventuring - they are out looking for evil magics that they can smite. They don’t belong in the city, but instead out in the field, unlike so many other styles of priest.

HOW TO GM A ... Warrior Priest

So we just got finished telling you that there were all sorts of ways to play a warrior priest, because there are so many types of warrior priests. So the same must be true for how to GM one. Nope! Actually, in many ways, they can all be lumped together and game mastered in a very similar style.

First off, a warrior priest has his faith. We define faith as his personal beliefs in the divine. This is all about him, what he thinks of his god(s), and how that controls his life. While GMs may wish to give the priest reasons to doubt his faith, this is a pretty exceptional thing and should probably be left until the warrior priest is a well-established character, and only be used in games with a strong role-playing element. In other words, this level of drama, does not fit into every game style.

Next most important is that the warrior priest has his religion. We see religion as the community of faith. A warrior priest may serve the war god, and have great faith in his god, but it is the church community that makes up his religion. Here there are other priests, most likely in a hierarchy, the laity (non-priest members of the religion), rules and traditions, churches and temples, art and treasures. Hopefully you’re getting the idea. Faith is internal, and religion is external. (oversimplified!)

It is the religion that the GM can most easily use to control, motivate and drive the warrior priest. Most easily, the people of the religion can be quest givers. Whether this is a member of the congregation coming to the priest for help or an order from his superiors, they make for easy explanation missions. Of course, the priest is going to want to help these people or feel obligated to follow instructions.

But perhaps more importantly, the GM can begin to build this community and allow it to support the character outside of missions. The war god’s congregation should include armorers and weapon smiths. These people would probably be happy to have a prestigious warrior priest using their equipment. It would serve as a sort of advertising. The same could be said of nearly any merchant or vendor, including tailors

(you can’t wear your armor all the time), leather workers, and even grocers and restaurants.

But to fully bring the priest aspect out, the warrior priest should have access to some full time priests who have more direct contact with their god. Did the character do something questionable on the last mission? The god may send a messenger to the high priest or local prophet with a warning. Something great happen? That can be communicated too. Does the god need something specific to happen? Having these messages communicated directly to the player character sends a message that this PC is special and incredibly important. That may not be the case. Having the god tell the high priest to send the character makes the high priest more important, and the PC more of a pawn to be placed on the board. This should not be seen as condescending, but instead more realistic.

This also offers the issues of: is the priest telling the truth? Not every high priest is a bastion of faith and piety. Some of them are highly political animals and the orders may actually be coming from the “king” and not the god. The orders may be coming from the priest or priesthood, especially if it is one of those “go retrieve the ancient sword of St. Whatshisname”. High priests tend to avoid getting their hands dirty, and having a lower priest go off and retrieve an artifact or relic will bring some honor to the priest who does the job, but more honor to the church that then proudly displays that important artifact.

For the missions that actually do come from the god(s), you need to figure out what it is the god wants. Gods have extremely long “lives” and therefore have plans that can span generations. They also have long memories and can carry a grudge better than any mortal. Typically a god is most concerned with receiving adoration, typically in the form of prayers. This means that they need worshippers, and who creates worshippers? Typically missionaries. High Priests may maintain the faithful the god already has, but it is the missionaries that are going to add new congregations, so it is these missionaries that the god is going to be most eager to see his warrior priests aid. We are assuming that a warrior priest is not suited as a missionary, because he lacks the proper skill set, but that is not a universal truth.

As GM, you can determine how structured the religion is. Few fantasy religions would be as structured as what we are familiar with today. This will determine if the warrior priest needs to check in with his order or if he can have pretty free rein. As we’ve mentioned in various spots, his home church should offer great benefits, not the least of which would be healing and shelter. Don’t forget that many religions are allied, so priests of non-war gods may still be available to him.

GOLD, SILVER, AND WHAT!?!

In keeping with our warrior priest theme, we've decided to give some examples of what some of the wide range of holy symbols these guys might carry could cost. We haven't strayed too far from some of the more normal aspects of what constitutes a holy symbol, but just because we haven't doesn't mean you can't. Anything can be a holy symbol, as long as the one using it understands the symbolism.

One of the more common alternatives would likely be something along the lines of etching the holy symbol right onto the warrior priest's breastplate. This may not be for the best, because if the breastplate takes real pounding during a battle, the holy symbol may not be recognizable. Do non-recognizable holy symbols work? Probably not.

One of our other ideas is a silver plated gauntlet. Assuming the god's symbol was an armored fist (certainly seems to find its way into heraldry, so why not), then such a "holy symbol" would simply require the warrior priest to raise his fancy glove in a fist. Crests or decorations atop helms can also be used, but they run a similar risk that the breastplate holy symbols do. Anything placed on a helm should either add to the safety of the wearer or break off with ease. Otherwise, some enemy is going to grab the priest by his helmet holy symbol and fling him around, or at least unhelm him.

There's a lot of jewelry here, but the ideas should be nearly limitless. In a society where multiple gods make themselves known frequently, there are bound to be symbols and devices beyond imagining. And gods can have multiple symbols. Don't forget that historic religious figures may have their own symbols and warrior priests may carry a holy symbol that marks them as members of a particular sect or order, rather than the more generic holy symbol of the god or goddess as seen by the world at large.

We think we've done a decently broad gambit of materials here, so hopefully you'll find something you can easily use for your game. But don't let anything stop you. Precious metals are easy; maybe the best holy symbols need to be made of rarer materials. After all, if a god is known to be a dragon slayer, a holy symbol carved from a dragon's tooth / fang would be better. A forest god may want her priests to weave a garland of vines for a holy symbol. If the vines turn brown, it may not be so holy, so the seemingly cheap and easy holy symbol may be a frequent annoyance to gather the materials.

<u>Description</u>	<u>Class</u>	<u>Com</u>	<u>Mats/ Base</u>	<u>Cost at Source (sc)</u>	<u>Cost in City (sc)</u>	<u>Notes</u>	<u>APP</u>
Bracer, leather, w/ 3"d bronze medallion (holy symbol)	Clothing		4.00	10.00	15.00	F	MET
Pitcher, porcelain, miniature (holds 2oz.) (holy symbol)	Clothing		-	1.10	1.65		POT
Horn, hunting, ram's, w/silver-plated steel chain	Furnishing		8.40	60.00	90.00		HNT
Horn, hunting, ram's, w/silver-plated steel chain, w/ holy symbol carved into horn (of an elk)	Furnishing		6.40	65.00	97.50	F	HNT
Statuette, alabaster, relief carving of seahawk, 6"l x 3"t	Furnishing		-	21.50	32.25		MAS
Statuette, mahogany, winged dog (angel), 5" tall w/ 15" wingspan	Furnishing		-	28.00	42.00		WOD
Blessing of ship by Marina priest(ess)	Service		-	-	25.00		SAL
Astrolabe, brass with gold plating, decorative, 3"d, holy symbol	Tool		0.50	12.00	18.00	F	GEM
Broach, cloud (sheepskin pillow ~4") w/ lightning bolt (faceted amber, 1.75", ~28 carats) (holy symbol)	Valuable		240.00	400.00	600.00		GEM

<u>Description</u>	<u>Class</u>	<u>Com</u>	<u>Mats/ Base</u>	<u>Cost at Source (sc)</u>	<u>Cost in City (sc)</u>	<u>Notes</u>	<u>APP GLS</u>
Broach, colored glass on steel pin, "torch": brown handle with yellow and orange "flames"	Valuable		-	7.50	11.25		GLS
Necklace, cable, gold (0.045"), 18"	Valuable		34.60	54.70	82.05		GEM
Necklace, cable, gold (0.07"), 18"	Valuable		77.15	118.50	177.75		GEM
Necklace, cable, silver (0.045"), 18"	Valuable		1.90	5.20	7.80		GEM
Necklace, cable, silver (0.07"), 18"	Valuable		4.20	8.70	13.05		GEM
Necklace, cable, steel (0.045"), 18"	Valuable		0.16	2.40	3.60		GEM
Necklace, cable, steel (0.07"), 18"	Valuable		0.35	2.60	3.90		GEM
Necklace, chain, gold, 18"/280 links, <1oz.	Valuable		6.00	31.00	46.50		GEM
Necklace, chain, gold, 18"/92 links, ~4oz.	Valuable		26.30	46.50	69.75		GEM
Necklace, chain, silver, 18"/280 links, ½oz.	Valuable		0.30	19.00	28.50		GEM
Necklace, chain, silver, 18"/92 links, 2oz.	Valuable		1.40	8.30	12.45		GEM
Necklace, chain, steel, 18"/92 links, ~2oz.	Valuable		0.14	5.80	8.70		GEM
Pendant, bronze, lightning bolt (holy symbol)	Valuable		2.00	4.20	6.30		MET
Pendant, carved oak, tree-man (holy symbol)	Valuable	c	-	6.00	7.98		WOD
Pendant, copper, flying fish (holy symbol)	Valuable		1.60	3.76	5.64		MET
Pendant, crystal, hollow sphere (holy symbol)	Valuable		0.10	8.00	12.00		GLS
Pendant, silver, angel wings, 3" wide (holy symbol)	Valuable		5.30	8.50	12.75	F	GEM
Pendant, silver, bow (holy symbol)	Valuable		3.00	5.20	7.80		GEM
Pendant, silver, heart, three dimensional (holy symbol)	Valuable		8.00	10.80	16.20		GEM
Pendant, silver, horse's head, 3"d (holy symbol)	Valuable		11.00	13.80	20.70		GEM
Pendant, silver, shield&spear (holy symbol)	Valuable		6.00	9.50	14.25		GEM
Pendant, steel, sword, 3" long (holy symbol)	Valuable		0.20	2.00	3.00		MET

Notes:

Note F: Fancy - This item has some manner of artwork or other fancy embellishment that considerably increases its value. The price shown factors this into the costs.

Mats/Base: cost if sold as raw materials. Ignores any craftsmanship of the item.

NEWS OF FLETNERN

Just putting some of the events discussed in this book into context for you. We're big believers that time lines make history far easier to understand. Here's the link to timeline so you can fit some of these events into the world as a whole.

- 593P Order of the Divine Rampart founded
- 610P Warriors of the Faith (Cult of Horroag) founded
- 645P Second cathedral of Horroag built in Villai
- 652P Manoto 1: The Avatar of Manoto is born in Helatia
- 658P The war god Manoto expects the holy war to begin. He hopes to stall the most important battles until his avatar is fully grown.
- 661P Avatar should be "fully grown". Up to this point, the priests and the faithful will be standing post to protect him from any harm. The point will come when the god communicates to the priests that the avatar is ready.

So what year is it now? Well, that's up to you! The play testers at Board Enterprises are currently playing in 655P, and some comments may slip through implying that this is the "true" or current date. But it doesn't matter what we're doing, only what works for you!

The Priestess Twists and Turns

Not everyone believes that this is the avatar of Manoto. Several conspiracy theories and motivations have developed in Helatia and around the world. (Yes, the birth of an avatar of a major god is news around the world.) Here are three "truths" that game masters should choose between:

1. She's telling the truth, and it's all real. The god of war took physical form, was with the priestess, and fathered this child with her. The avatar is half god and will be able to wield divine powers at some point. Most of this book assumes this to be the truth.
2. She's lying. She found herself pregnant, and due to embarrassment or in order to save her career, she decided to lie about the child's father. She had gotten her "job" due to her looks and had attracted the wrong attention from someone in power. In this scenario, she is likely attempting to protect him as well. Expect the allied churches to back the "avatar" at first, but as time goes on, they will seek to distance themselves, which may not be easy to do.

3. She thinks she's telling the truth. In this scenario, a being of great power (we're assuming a titan) transformed himself into the image of the god Manoto and fathered the child with her. She was visited by an 8' tall man who looked exactly like the statue on the top of the temple, so she had every reason to believe that he was her god. This scenario starts to get very odd, because she can pass any form of magical truth detection, because she is not lying; she believes what she is saying. However, since the child is not divine, there will be issues. But the child will still grow to the super-human aspects that will cause most folks to believe he is an avatar of their war god. Even the priests will have a difficult time telling a half-titan from a half-god.

But what are the motivations and nuances to this? These points can be used with multiple "truths", especially because no matter what the truth is in your world, some will believe and some will not.

- Manoto is putting out that he accepts the child, but those trying to interpret the signs and omens imply that he is adopting not creating.
 - This could be because he is embarrassed about his choice of mother (beauty over prowess)
 - This could be because he does not want to completely show his hand. He is expecting a holy war and is trying to stack the deck in his favor before it actually kicks off, but does not want to entirely show his hand.
 - This could be because the child really was the child of a titan, but Manoto is adopting the child as his own. He will support the child, but the child will never be divine.
- The whole thing was about money. As soon as the avatar was announced (before he was born), donations have been pouring into the temples of Manoto at such a pace that other churches have been slighted. Since the birth, this has only increased. Whether it is the mother of the avatar or the entire organization of Manoto's priesthood, the whole thing is a scam.
- The huge "baby" they presented was actually the child of a giant. But even that wasn't enough for them, so they have been substituting different children (typically giant children) to pretend that the child is growing at such an alarming rate.
- They have brought in the greatest weapons masters in the world to train the child (true), but he still remains a clumsy fool who can barely

hold a sword (false). {Despite his height, trying to train a three year old to fight is a difficult task. Though the avatar seems to be taking to weapons training fairly well (especially around and after his fifth birthday), not much should be expected from a three or four year old, even if he is an avatar.}

- Rather than admit to the minor scandal of one of their “fighting” priestesses getting herself pregnant, the entire Helatia Manoto religion has decided to try and pass off this enormous lie. Boy are they going to be embarrassed when this lie is proven wrong.
- Expect the avatar to be assassinated before he achieves adulthood.
 - Either the avatar is a fake, and they will kill him before that can be revealed
 - or he is the true avatar, but Manoto’s enemies will do anything they can to prevent him from achieving his full powers.
- The avatar was moved out of the main cathedral, because there were concerns that he was beginning to manifest his powers and may have been causing minor earthquakes. They have moved him to a villa where the walls and ceilings have been strengthened, just in case.

Prophets and Prophecies

Viesoaleedes is a divine creature of some manner, but as to whether it is a god or elemental, no one seems to know. It is most commonly described as a “vaporous pit” which many wrongly translate as a lava pit. More correct might be to say it is a boiling pool of yellow and orange mass. (you can see why people prefer to just say “lava”.)

In some manner Viesoaleedes is connected to the core of the planet, and this connection allows it to know what is going on in the world, now, in the past and in the near future. As such Viesoaleedes is the “god” of prophecy. “Her” followers contact her by performing the proper rituals at volcanoes and sacrificing certain rare metals. “She” is referred to as female despite being neither sex because she has been known to spawn “lava elementals”. Thus she is seen as a “mother”.

Viesoaleedes grants visions of different times to her followers. Many believe that they are simply breathing in dangerous gases from the volcanoes and hallucinating, but they are convinced these visions are divine in origin. One such priest / follower was Furytaer Dour. Furytaer has had many experiences with his patron and received many visions. He has written down these revelations and seeks to prove that Viesoaleedes is a true god of prophecy.

One of Furytaer’s visions showed the son of Manoto coming to live in Helatia. He wrote down

everything he could remember about the vision (which was not much) and sent the letter to a governmental official. The official ignored the “crack pot”, but as it was a letter delivered to him at his office, the official’s staff catalogued the receipt of the letter. After the avatar’s birth, Furytaer sent another letter and began preaching on street corners that Viesoaleedes had given him this vision five years before the avatar was born. After Furytaer was jailed for disturbing the peace, the official and his staff tracked down the original letter and saw that indeed, he had predicted the avatar’s birth five years earlier.

Those who believe in the avatar see this as proof - another god prophesied the coming of the avatar. Others are more skeptical. Both the re-discovery of the letter after the birth of the avatar and the fact that even a blind squirrel finds a nut once in a while are used to discredit both the avatar and Furytaer. Plus Furytaer is a kook. He’s just not the sort of person that inspires people to believe his ramblings. Further, after being released from prison, Furytaer has disappeared. No one knows where to find him. His jailors think he was saying something about assassins coming for him, but they didn’t think anything about it. Without the “prophet” around to question, his case is weaker.

The story of Furytaer and his visions will be part of the dialog after the avatar is born. Everyone seems to have an opinion, but none of them need to be based on facts nor even be consistent. Still, it makes for a good story and a lively debate, so it keeps coming up in taverns and inns.

News from the battle fields

Here’s a “news” story that will catch the attention of the bards and other travelling story tellers. Each will put his own spin on it, but it will become a myth or documented fact, depending on who is listening. Something to entertain the travelers as they settle into an inn for a long night’s rest:

The enemy was closing in fast on a group of soldiers who were desperately trying to evacuate civilians, but kept getting fouled up by bad (overly muddy) roads and civilians who are wounded or infirm. Most importantly, there was an officer amongst the retreating soldiers who knew some battle plans, including how a certain cache of weapons was being delivered to his side’s HQ. Had he been captured by the enemy and tortured to reveal this information, it would have been a serious blow to his side’s efforts.

Just as the soldiers were about to surrender as the enemy arrows begin to fall around them while pushing wagons through the mud, a platoon of immaculately uniformed allies showed up marching towards the enemy forces. There was no way this unit could have marched here in this rain and mud and look that good, it just was

not possible. Yet, here they were, and they were marching straight towards the enemy.

The enemy begin to truly rain down arrow volleys, but the new squad used a turtle formation to advance and the arrows were unable to hit and kill any of them. About 20 yards from the enemy, this turtle formation broke and they all ran into hiding behind trees and small hills. The enemy saw them and put away their bows to ready for a charge, but then was surprised by this odd change of tactics and they now also had to scamper off into the trees and hillocks seeking out the new squad. But they couldn't find them. Assumedly this new enemy had retreated, but without being seen, which seems impossible.

Was this some masterful illusion cast by one of the wounded who then died on the road to the next fort? Were these angels who were unwilling to fight mortals for fear of escalating the war further? Were they some mercenary band who really was this good at approaching a battle, but then melting away into the countryside? No one really knows. But in the time it took the enemy to attack the new squad, prepare for melee combat and then search the area for them, the retreating soldiers, the wounded and the officer all escaped.

Spouts Spotted

Priests of the sea goddess Marina are commonly trained in weather magic. Some others are trained in elemental magic, but all of them are trained in navigation. This is because they often serve as navigators on ships crossing the seas. Their spells and prayers help to guide the boats quickly and more importantly safely across open stretches of water.

For those ships not carrying a navigator priest, a blessing is performed before the ship leaves port. Some captains see this as an additional tax, but it legally must be performed. In Scaret, it is mainly a formality, but in Helatia the priest performing the blessing expects to be invited on board so he can see the charts and plans and possibly advise as to dangers that the captain should avoid. Shunning the priest is disrespectful, but not enough to get more than a disagreeable grunt from the priest as he goes off to find someone more willing to accept his valuable advice.

So with blessings being performed and paid for, it is not too surprising that when water spouts began showing up in the shipping lanes, captains began to get upset. Certainly weather patterns occur, and Marina cannot be held accountable for every wave or cloud, but an overabundance of water spouts concentrated in one area is enough to cause concern and even a little anger.

There is good cause for concern. Each one of the water spouts spotted in the area marks the arrival of a powerful water elemental. These elementals have come to search for the long lost tomb of Trowbrell. Trowbrell was an "ancient spirit", one of the "elder gods" who

ruled the world before the current gods came and put them down. These elder gods were extremely powerful and ruled the various races by fear, where the current gods work with the mortals.

Thousands of years ago, Marina and her siblings trapped Trowbrell in a deep water trench, and he remains there to this day. His prison is not weakening, and these elementals stand little chance of reversing what the gods did. If the elementals could free Trowbrell, he would have freed himself centuries ago.

In any case, these elementals are enemies of Marina's and causing all sorts of trouble. Think of them as water demons if you must. A single water spout can easily sink a standard merchant ship or whaling vessel. While Marina's priests are using their magic to avoid the spouts, not every ship has one of her priests, and not every one of her priests is powerful enough to anticipate the spouts early enough to avoid them. (Assume none of the priests are powerful enough to defeat these elementals.)

If one of these water spouts were to be encountered by a sailing ship on the open sea, it would take a nearly miraculous amount of magic to offset the water spout. Failing this (and all but the most extreme adventuring parties should fail this), the ship could try to out run the water spout. As the spout is not there to attack ships, this might be possible, but if the ship attracts the water spout's attention, it will attack out of spite. An attack from a water spout should overturn the ship simply by coming into contact with it. As it touches one side of the ship, the force upwards will overturn the ship. After the ship flips on its side, the water spout will change direction and wander off, leaving the sailors and passengers to drown or attempt to survive in the middle of the ocean.

Things that would attract the attention of the water spout include: being too close to it, less than a half mile; use of powerful magics, especially if they are elemental in nature; powerful prayers to "good" gods, or attempts to communicate with the elemental of the water spout.

The elementals will be searching the bottom of the sea. The water spouts are just a manifestation of the powerful elemental being there. There are likely 10-12 water spouts in a very large section of the ocean, so while any one ship would be unlikely to encounter one, some ships will encounter them, and it will be obvious to anyone putting the pieces of the puzzle together that there is more than one out there.

Should anyone determine that the water spouts are searching for Trowbrell, the religious leaders of the region will panic. Releasing Trowbrell would be monumentally bad - destroy entire port cities kind of bad. Marina is confident that Trowbrell is firmly contained and will not respond well to the pleas and cries of her people. She may take it as a lack of faith in her.

THE GOOD LIFE

Religious Charms

According to the customs and traditions of the religions followed in Helatia, money is a thing of mortal governments and has no place involved in religious ceremonies. For this reason, when members of a church or temple wish to donate to their religious institution, they must go and get a charm, instead of just throwing coins into a box, basket or plate.

A charm is a small token, often times similar in size and weight to a coin, but pressed with a religious image on it. Many sizes and shapes are used but most often they are crafted to weigh exact multiples of the local coins. This way, if a charm is made of silver and weighs exactly what a silver coin does, then it is pretty easy to figure out what the charm will cost.

Obviously, charms can be crafted from any metal, but as with coins are most typically copper, silver or gold. In some cases, such as the war god Manoto, they are also struck from iron or steel. By giving these tokens or charms, the faithful can donate to the church without donating mortal coins.

What the faithful don't get involved in is that after services, one of the clergy will bring the charms back to the charms dealers and sell/exchange them for coinage. The charms dealers pay a price similar to the base metal value and thus are making a profit for striking the charms. This is very similar to how governments actually make money by selling coinage. (Don't think about modern pennies or nickels though!) Because the charms dealers are actually reselling these same charms over and over again, they can make a good living having only struck the series of charms once.

Charms are crafted specifically for certain divinities or religions. They most often show images representing the gods or some important aspect. Some of these charms can be quite large, including one pound silver bars that have been struck with the image of a saint or of the cathedral itself. There will be multiple charms dealers, each with his own designs. The faithful will go to the dealers whose designs they like, thus creating competition to make the best looking charms. Charms dealers tend to cluster around the cathedral areas of the city. Some sell far more than just charms, offering live animals and other sacrifices as the religions consider appropriate.

Charms may be cast (one side) or stamped (double sided). Even when they are the same weight as the local coins, they may be of a different shape. This is commonly seen in round coins and square or diamond shaped charms. Weight comparisons are commonly easy

math numbers, such as equal to five silver coins or equal to twenty copper coins. But if the region has a "standard" wage, the most common charms will be whatever is considered the proper offering for folks making that wage. For example, if the standard wage is 10sc per day, the week is ten days long (so 100sc per week), and the standard tithe is 5%, then 5sc charms are going to be the most common. This is often to gently (or not so gently) nudge the members of the church to contribute what is "right".

Most charms are cast into artistically designed molds, though some are hammered for images on both sides. Unlike coins, though the images should be beautiful, they do not have to be identical. This allows the charm mold makers more freedom of expression than would be seen in a coin mold maker.

To the non-faithful, this may seem like a silly waste of energy - casting their own religious "coins" instead of simply using the one provided by the government, but to the faithful, mortal coinage is an affront to the gods. Mortal coinage has a value set by the local government, and the mortal government should not be allowed to dictate anything to the gods and their temples, not even the value of the offerings that their people bring in.

There is a bit of a racket here with the trading of the charms back to the charms dealers by the priests and clergies. This is most often done at the base metal value of the charms, which in some ways negates the mortals setting "limits" on the gods, but most of the charms merchants either donate large sums to the churches or they offer better than required exchange rates. They can typically afford to do this.

One difference in the charm makers business is those charms that are not intended as donations. Some of the charms they make are intended to be kept by the buyer and not sacrificed at the temple. These will cost far more than their coinage weight, as the charm maker will need to legitimately cover the costs of mold making and casting of each charm. If these are returned to the charms maker, he should give a much better rate to the church.

These charms are sometimes referred to as "home charms". They can take a similar form to regular ones, but more often they will have a hole that allows them to be worn on a chain around the neck, much like a holy symbol. Others might be small statuettes or figurines that are intended to be displayed at the home. Most buyers will understand the difference in the prices, and only buy the home charms for themselves and not for sacrifices, but there are times when someone wants to show off and will carry in a three pound silver statue to donate to the church.

MONSTERS AND OTHER MENACES

Characters with Character

Brother Aurius of Manoto

Aurius is a warrior priest of Manoto in Helatia. One of the top warrior priests, he was a devoted follower of the long sword. He has been practicing lately with a scythe. It is a huge unwieldy thing. Furthermore, he seems to be practicing sweep decapitations with the scythe. This is extremely odd, especially since he seems to be doing it covertly, such as only very early in the morning or in closed practice rooms. Many of the other warrior priests and priestesses have noticed this odd behavior.

About 70 years ago, a group of followers of Manoto were exploring the northern tundra when they heard the sounds of battle. They hurried to investigate and discovered a Lunderhonni (one of the goddess Shade's angels of death) locked in battle with a horrible creature. The creature was said to be a cross between a killer whale and a crocodile. The Lunderhonni drove the creature beneath the ice, and the explorers hurried to aid her. She smiled as she "died" and faded away. Through she left the world, she left her weapon behind, an enchanted scythe. Scholars suppose that she was either rewarding the explorers for trying to help her or trying to aid them should the beast return. They took the scythe and hurried back to Helatia. Not knowing what to do with a divine weapon, they gave it to the temple of Manoto. It did later slip out that the Temple of Manoto had a Lunderhonni's weapon, but the priests of Manoto denied the rumor and the priests of Shade were forced to concede that they had no proof. (The current priests of Shade rely on magic, so they are not very concerned, but they would be furious if they discovered that their "allies" have such an important religious artifact.)

Aurius is training to use the weapon. The High Priest of Manoto believes that the avatar is going to lead the priests on a crusade, and he wants to use every trick he has. Aurius was considered the best of the warrior priests and the best suited for changing weapons. The scythe he practices with is an exact duplicate (to his specifications) of the Lunderhonni's weapon, which has not seen the light of day in 70 years.

Clearly, Shade is aware that the scythe is in the hands of the priests of Manoto, but the priests of Shade are not. Shade's priests will be highly upset with the priests of Manoto when they find out. Shade is above that. She feels the weapon is where it will be used most effectively.

GM Only

The scythe acts as though it is enchanted with sharpness-vorpal, animated parry (+30), and soul

sucking. Any soul sucked will be considered sacrificed to Shade. (This is a standard soul suck and not a funnel.)

Uzzinnulla, High Priest of Manoto

Uzzinnulla is the High Priest of Manoto at the cathedral of Constance of Fortitude in Helatia. Known as Uzzi amongst his friends, and the children who cannot pronounce his name, he is both the leader of the congregation and the clergy. One of the older high priests in Helatia, Uzzi was 62 when the avatar was born. He had been expected to retire and spend his remaining years in peace with his wife, but with the activity and controversy around the birth of the avatar, he has been forced to stay on rather than leave the running of the church to a younger, newer high priest.

Uzzi joined the clergy in his teens and has been in the cathedral seemingly his whole life. In the early days, he was trained as a spearman and went on to be a training officer. Being a spearman, he was training lay members of the congregation and built relationships with an enormous number of soldiers. After about a decade as a training officer, Uzzi was also trained to train soldiers on artillery weapons, especially ballistaes. These are not common weapons within Helatia, but some of the naval vessels are equipped with them.

Uzzi has been married to Agglikli for 38 years. She was a bright scribe, but didn't show much promise. The two have turned out to be fantastic partners, as Agglikli has raised their five children and served as the high priest's wife for all social functions. Uzzi is at his root a scholar. Despite years spent training soldiers, he has always taken an intellectual, strategic approach to his training methods. This has allowed him to walk a thin line between the rough and tumble soldiers in his congregation and the philosophical politicians and clergy of Helatia.

Perhaps most importantly, he has been able to communicate the facts and stories about the avatar in such a way that more people have been able to believe in the avatar. Unfortunately, this has led to a huge inflow of donations to the religion and sacrifices to Manoto. With all the money involved, many have accused Uzzi of making the whole thing up, but it is far more the result of his skilled communications. He also brought the major religions of Helatia together early on in hopes of smoothing any jealousy or other issues.

The Uzzi of today is a wise and seasoned leader of his people. He does not have a warrior's build, being slighter in build. This doesn't mean he cannot fight, but he is not physically suited for it. If a war were to start, he would be better behind a ballistae, than a spear. This doesn't mean he is useless. He is a charismatic and well-loved leader, both in military and spiritual matters. His counsel is sought by the other religious leaders in the city and some Senators

CHURCH BELLS

Helatia is a cosmopolitan city. With its sea port and the travelers it brings, just about any set of beliefs can be found in the city. With its liberal attitudes towards religion, nearly any religion is allowed within the city. They have even tried to make accommodations for religions with human sacrifices, while barring the human sacrifices, of course.

Manoto is seen as the patron god of the city. He is believed to have protected and inspired the earliest settlers as they sought to build the city centuries ago. But while many would expect this to cause them to be aggressive or violent towards their neighbors, nothing could be further from the truth. Manoto, at least as he is seen by the people of Helatia, is a defensive war god. In many ways Helatia can be seen as similar to our Athens, with Athena (a war goddess) as their patron.

The most common religion of Manoto practiced in Helatia is the Constance of Fortitude (or most commonly Constance). Manoto is seen as having four aspects: the powers of the individual, team-work, tactics, and defense. Constance focuses on all four of these aspects, though not all Manoto religions do.

It is the cathedral of the Constance religion that received the avatar. To most of its members, this is proof that their religion is the true religion of Manoto and any others are faulty in some way. This attitude does not go over very well with followers of those other religions, but so far the only conflicts have been minor brawls in taverns.

The cathedral of Constance is only one of the churches following this specific religion in the city. Most of the priests at these other churches were trained at the cathedral, so the practice of Constance in Helatia is fairly uniform. There have been efforts to spread their brand of Constance across the continent and world, with the cathedral in Helatia seen as the center of the global religion. These efforts have not yet been very fruitful, though the avatar just might change that.

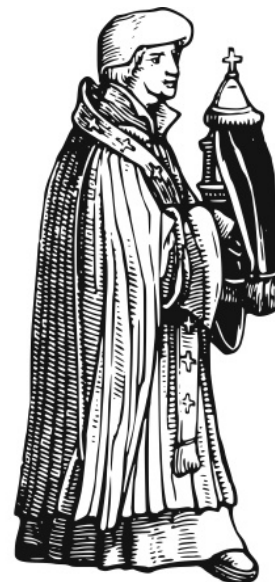
Not surprisingly, the soldiers of Helatia are amongst the most devoted followers of Manoto, but Helatia is not a military power, certainly not on the land. While some of the sailors and naval officers do show deference to Manoto, many of them follow Marina as goddess of the seas.

The largest religion of Manoto outside of Constance is Zanakta more commonly known as The War Twins. "Zanaktians" are more common outside the city, in the more rural areas, though there are several small Zanakta churches inside Helatia as well. In the Zanakta religion, both Manoto and his sister the goddess Shade are seen as war gods. This goes back to the

legends of the beginnings of the Dinsthain pantheon when Brakin (king of the gods and god of life and justice) brought Manoto and Shade into being in order to help him defeat the evil elder spirits (the Great War of the Gods). While other religions see Shade as the goddess of death, the Zanaktians believe these other religions are misunderstanding her place in the cosmos. Though she is a bringer of death (as a war goddess), she is not the goddess of death. They believe that death, being the absence of life, has no gods. How can there be gods to control an aspect of life where there is no life? Though often seen as a backward, rural / provincial religion, Zanakta is accepted by most in the region as a valid religion.

In these pantheon religions, mortals often attempt to shape the gods into "boxes" that they can understand. One of these devices to better understand the gods is the use of families. Manoto is seen by most theologians as having two sons: Hoam and Quimgrow. Most of the legends imply that these two were created by Manoto in order to become his smiths and armorers. As they grew into their own, neither wanted to serve as weapon maker to their father, and they both diverted from his original wishes - Hoam to become god of craftsmen and Quimgrow to become god of miners. Different religions treat Manoto's reaction to this differently with some believing that he supported their being their own gods and some believing that he retains bitterness over the "betrayal" of his sons.

However, more commonly found in Constance churches and cathedrals are shrines to "members of Manoto's family" that are not (by theologian standards) directly related to him. For example, in the cathedral in Helatia, there are "sacred alcoves", 10' across and 4' deep. Each holds a 6' statue of one of the "related" gods, such as Fissik (god of knights), Tackim (god of strategy), and Tomskin (god of cavalry soldiers). Much smaller



“mini-shrines” to other gods can be found around the cathedral.

While the priests may not preach and teach the wrong relationships within their own religion, they do very little to prevent their followers from believing these families exist. It is too often easier to link the gods of strategy and cavalry to the war god than to try and link the gods of craftsmen and miners. Difficult to understand religions are difficult to spread, while easy religions do seem to catch on far faster.

Another sect of warrior monks is the Champions of St. Sylvado. Sylvado is considered a saint because his followers believe that Manoto sent angels to encourage him to start the order as well as guiding him after he began the work of his god. Sylvado had been a Constance priest, but he was called to form a community of warrior priests that could serve as a militia or military unit for places that lacked their own.

The order was never intended to be restricted to only those who took the oath of brotherhood, but over the years, it became clear that the order could train lay people, but could not truly include those who were not fully devoted to the Champions in their ranks. The “Oath of Brotherhood” is now required of all who are to be ordained into the order, but is in reality several promises tied together. Amongst the oaths included is one in which the brother renounces his family ties in favor of the brotherhood within the order.

This oath has had far broader ramifications. Originally only intended to strengthen the ties of brotherhood, this oath has been analyzed by the courts of Helatia. By renouncing one’s family, the Champion gives up any lands and any inheritance. Many Champions over the years have used this to remove themselves from any family issues where there could have been problems determining the line of succession. Additionally, bastards have used the order to both gain a family that isn’t hostile to them and remove themselves from contention with more legitimate heirs. For this reason, the order has been referred to as the Holy Bastards, but never by the people they have helped.

The Champions of St. Sylvado are a well-armed and well trained group of crusaders, always willing to help in the rural regions. Unlike the Ramparters, the Champions tend to come and help, but then return to their monasteries, where the Ramparters come early and stay. The Champions will wear heavy armors, at least chain mail. Everyone in the order is trained to fight, though some of them are primarily smiths or other craftsmen instead of primarily being warrior priests. Like many of the others discussed here, they are shield users, but they do not typically favor one weapon over another. This works because they do not fight in formations.

There are currently four monasteries in the order, the first and primary one being in the hills west of Helatia. They live a communal life-style, what we might today call cenobitic monasticism. Most of their money comes from donations, either by those who like having the monks pray for them or from those who were saved by their activities in the past.

Other Manoto related religions include The Long Trail. Since practitioners often refer to themselves and each other as “travelers” they are sometimes called the Travelers of the Long Trail. This religion praises both Manoto and the god of travelers Ixaricks. These travelers are the soldiers and teamsters who travel the trade routes, typically with the major caravans. As they are away from home for such long periods of time, the religious community comes together to support each other and make sure the families have what they need. This is a smaller religion, but the members of each church community are fiercely loyal to each other. They accept faithful from other areas quickly, and the Long Trail churches may be the only way the family of a teamster new to town may be able to survive in the new location.

One of the smaller congregations that still makes its presence known is the St. Bevelius Demon Hunters. Oddly, members of the Demon Hunters come from both Constance and Zanakta, and they do not seem to feel that their religions are in any way at odds.

The Demon Hunters believe that any magic that has to do with conjuring is demonic. They believe every conjured creature is coming straight out of hell, and no matter what the intentions of the mage who summons the creature, allowing it to walk the mortal planes is allowing evil out of hell. For this reason, they have a crusade to wipe all knowledge of conjuring from the planet. In order to do this, they will frequently burn any books of conjuring they come across, though the core sect based in Helatia is stockpiling these records in the vaults beneath their church. They believe that they may be able to study these texts in order to better understand how to attack conjurers and conjuring in general.

The St. Bevelius’ Demon Hunters have several small chapters in the region, but they often need to meet in other religions’ churches (nearly always Manoto’s churches). They have made themselves known by their frequent attacks on temples dedicated to the god of magic. While they claim to have no problems with the sorcerers of these temples, the sorcerers typically side with the conjurers and as allies of evil, the sorcerers need to be taken out as well.

Not much is known about St. Bevelius other than the fact that he killed a powerful demon with a “blessed” spear. He did not found the sect, but has been chosen as their hero.

BY THE NUMBERS

Order of the Divine Rampart

The Ramparters are a holy order of warriors dedicated to the main war god of the continent. As such, they need to be portrayed as warrior priests. But how do you do that?

In that old rules game, I like these guys as clerics. Heavy armor, decent weapons (maces, flails, morning star, etc.), and a couple of spells. I really like that. They are defensive fighters, who like to use shields and earth works to defend villages against bandits, and sometimes centaur bandits. Give them a heal spell or two and some other defensive spell, and they should work pretty well.

I like the same thing in **LEGEND QUEST**. Load these warrior priests up with armor, shield, and the trick Aid. At 5 points, Aid is very similar to the First Aid skill, but there are a few differences. Both will close a bleeding wound. Aid will return a point or two of Life's Blood, but with a casting fatigue. First aid simply closes the wound, adding no LB but requiring no fatigue to perform (unless the character has already gone past their combat turns towards exhaustion).

One of the big issues here is that if a Ramparter follows the true mage role of Healer, they would be affected by the magic and steel rules, making it much harder for them to wear mundane iron and steel armor. Chain mail would give them a -30% on all spells cast, which seems far too heavy a penalty to deal with on a regular basis. The Aid trick is not affected by those same rules, and therefore allows steel armor, shield and weapons, as well as a tiny heal spell.

Whichever way they choose to go with healing, they should show it off. This is only a role-playing tip and therefore not By the Numbers, but it is important. Most commoners / peasants would interpret magical healing as divine in origin, no matter what the rules of your particular game are. The fact that these guys can heal magically would reinforce that their god is powerful and present - an incredibly important demonstration when trying to convert people to your religion. So every time a boy gets slightly injured while in classes or on the rampart, a warrior priest should be healing him in front of an audience.

There's a reason we included the Shield Magic trick in the optional rules - Because it is perfect for these guys. Just a touch of magic that can truly help out and affect those numbers as seen in the Wet Behind the Ears.

CAMPAIGN STARTER KIT

The Ramparters of Piottopia

A Campaign Starter Kit intends to be just what it says - a full introduction to a new campaign or sub-campaign that you can quickly use. The point of a CSK is not to hand you a series of modules with all the monster specs and treasure detailed, but instead to give you the background, the motivations, the setting, and the characters so you can set things up yourself. Oh, we'll give you ideas for the missions, but you'll have to jot down the numbers of coins and how hard the monsters are to kill.

If that seems like a cop out, please understand that we're trying to keep this generic and you can't be generic when you're constantly giving character stats. Further, most GMs have their own style of play. Some like the monsters to be incredibly tough; some like there to be huge numbers of lesser bad guys; some want to keep the magic items at the barest minimum. That's great! This will still work for you!

Plot:

The Ramparters have begun one of their schools in the town of Piottopia. As always, they mixed teaching the young men with building a rampart around the town. The problem arises when the current priest of the town begins to get jealous of the people moving towards the Ramparters and away from his congregation.

In order to run off the new religion, this priest decides he is going to kill the leader of the Ramparters. But just killing him isn't enough. He wants to sacrifice him on the altar the Ramparters recently set-up in order to permanently prevent the Ramparters from attracting the attention of their god.

Background:

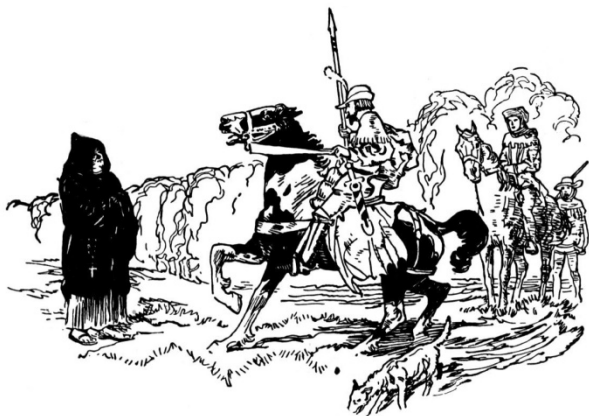
The bad guy is Reverend Panos Constandus. He has been a priest of Laenta, Lady of the Hearth. His family has been the dominant family in the town and the countryside. Not only are they unwilling to abdicate power, but they are likely the largest family around, giving them quite a power base.

The issue grows from Panos' approach to religion, his and all religions in general. As the third generation of priests in Piottopia, he sees their religion as his pathway to wealth. The family has been subtly milking the town for three generations. Since the Ramparters have come to town, many of their donations have been diverted.

Piottopia is a fairly standard farm town. The main crops include wheat, grapes, olives and livestock (goats). These are family farms, small but prosperous. The land

is good, and there is ample rain from the nearby seas. The summers are not as long as might be found in some other regions, but they do allow for enough crops to be grown. Salt and spices (mint, cloves, and vinegar) are the main preservatives.

In addition to the active violence against the Ramparters, the Constandus Family is also spreading stories about Manoto being an absentee god who doesn't care about his followers. These stories will be told during sermons, but also as "standard tavern talk". The negative bend of the church services has further alienated families who were starting to lean towards the Ramparters, though of course the Constandus Family refuses to believe that they are part of the reason people are leaving their church.



Characters:

The easiest player characters could be either Ramparters who came to town to help build the school and rampart, or some of the kids who were being taught at the school. These could be warrior priests as we've described them in *Wet Behind the Ears*. They could also be more traditional fighter / warrior types.

It is less likely to see a lot of magical types. Depending on how you want to play the warrior priest angle, there certainly could be religious spell casters, but massive battle mages just don't fit the campaign properly. This certainly leaves space for traveling minstrels (typically spell singers, though sometimes illusionists). Other magical types could easily be mentalists as Helatia produces the largest number of telepaths in the world.

Roguish characters are more likely to lean towards bandits, highwaymen and other "rural" thieves. Burglars, pickpockets and other more urban robbers may have moved down from Helatia, but are likely to stand out. Some of the more sophisticated rogues, like jewel thieves or forgers, really feel out of place in this campaign, but conmen and gamblers just might be passing through or laying low in Piottopia.

What else? Any wilderness or frontier folks can work. Hunters, trackers, bounty hunters, and explorers can make sense. One of the biggest threats in the region

is the centaur warlords to the south, so anyone specializing in battling centaurs or other "mounted" warriors would be welcome.

Let's go further out! Trapsters who mine areas with traps might be perfect against the centaurs. Miners and ditch diggers would have been attracted by the rampart project. Other builders and craftsmen might also be attracted, seeing Piottopia as an up and coming town that might be in need of their services.

What about non-humans? This region is the most cosmopolitan in the world. Halflings are nearby, and elves and dwarves are not unheard of. Ogres and half-ogres are not entirely uncommon, but would likely be seen suspiciously. About a generation ago, an army with many orcish soldiers was defeated in the area and the deserters were numerous. So were the offspring of some of the raping and looting activities. This means that while they are not welcome, half-orcs are not uncommon. The Ramparters have brought many of these half-orcs into their fold, finding them good warriors and converts.

Missions:

The campaign starts with the Constandus Family attempting to kidnap Brother Yanhus, the leader of the Ramparters in town. Brother Yanhus is a charismatic and friendly man of about 35 years. He served as a soldier (with the Cuggouiss) before joining the Order full-time. He has begun to serve as a mentor to many of the young men of the town, forming bonds with them and earning their loyalty. Panos wants him removed, first by kidnapping, and later by sacrificing him.

Panos will not be involved in the actual kidnapping. He will send six of his cousins to do the job. Early in the morning, when Brother Yanhus steps out of the Ramparters' barracks, they will put a grain sack over his head and carry him off to a waiting wagon. How the player characters find out about the kidnapping can help to justify why they are the ones involved in the posse to attempt to rescue Yanhus.

- If any of the PCs are Ramparters or being trained by them, they may actually witness the kidnapping by being awake early. (Brother Yanhus is always the first awake and out of the barracks in the morning, so he was a predictable target.) If not, then some very young trainees will likely be the witnesses.
- If any of the PCs can track, they will be summoned as quickly as possible in hopes that they can track the wagon. The wagon has thinner wheels than most in this region, which could increase the chances of tracking it along country roads. If need be, it may have rained a bit last night, making the tracking even easier.
- If any of the PCs are mentalists, they will be summoned to attempt to contact Yanhus via

telepathy. Even if the PCs are simply mage-types, they will be summoned because the locals do not fully understand magic and will not know what the mages are capable of. (Yanhus is knocked out shortly after being taken and is not able to be contacted by telepathy.)

- Any residents of the town, especially those with some manner of business, would likely have been on the streets or opening their shops. They would have been at risk for having been run over as the wagon raced out of town.
- Any character type could have either risen early and been looking out a window or have been up all night and have heard the commotion as the barracks is almost directly across the street from the local inn and tavern. This is the catch all category and not truly dependent on who the character is.

The kidnapers struck at dawn in order that they could carry out their attack, and then get back to their homes and appear to have been where they should have been all night. They will take Yanhus to an abandoned farm about six miles outside of town. This farm is considered cursed because the olive trees that were here caught some type of fungal disease and were burned to prevent the disease from spreading. The farmer was destitute with the loss of his olive trees and moved to the big city to die a poor beggar. Therefore, no one goes here, but the buildings are still mostly standing.

If the party attempts to fight the fleeing kidnapers, they should be met by four of the kidnapers shooting bows back at them. Between the horses, the head start, the bows, and there not being more than one or two witnesses (compared to the six kidnapers), there should be no way the party or its characters can fight the kidnapers at this time. The kidnapers are armed with bows and various pieces of farm equipment they can use as weapons (knives, daggers, flails, machetes, sickles, clubs, etc.).

The easiest way to find Brother Yanhus is to track the wagon. A wagon and three horsemen (three others were on the wagon) should be easy enough to track. The kidnapers are not professional criminals and believed that they could pull off their crime with no witnesses or at least no witnesses willing to risk getting involved. Clearly, they were wrong.

The kidnapers all wore masks - bandanas covering most of their faces and hats pulled down to cover their hair and eyes. No one witnessing the crime will be able to identify any of the kidnapers. The two kidnapers who will stand guard over the priest are family members

from another village. The locals won't know them. They brought the wagon (a two-wheeled flatbed), so no one will recognize it either. There were four horses, one pulling the wagon and three being ridden. The wagon horse was not a draft horse, but instead a riding horse, which may seem to be a clue. It just shows that they really did not know what they were doing, though they did rely on a faster horse to pull the wagon. Any character with ranching or animal handling skills will likely be able to pick that out.

This first mission is intended to feel like something different - an investigation more than a "wilderness adventure". But it is also intended to be relatively easy. If the characters can track the wagon to the "ghost farm", they can confront the two "guards", and a fight will likely erupt. These guards are jumpy but not exactly alert. This means that given the chance, they will rush headlong into battle. As they are aware of the intent to sacrifice the priest, they expect to be hanged if caught. As they are hiding in an old barn, they will be unlikely to have a chance to flee battle once it has been started.

The other four kidnapers are local Constandus thugs. They are farm hands on the various farms and will appear to be hard at work in the fields by the time anyone comes looking for them. They rode the four horses away from the ghost farm, so those horses will be at their homes. This should not be a clue, but the one used to pull the wagon may have some light injuries that would show it had been improperly used as a draft animal. This is not the kind of proof that could convict a Constandus, but it can help to clue the party in on who is behind this. The two-wheeled wagon will be at the ghost farm.

After being rescued, Brother Yanhus will have no idea who could have captured him. He struggled upon being grabbed, but during his struggles on the wagon, someone hit him over the head and knocked him out. He will likely need to be revived upon rescue. While he does wonder if Panos had any something to do with this, but he has too generous a heart to let anyone else know his suspicions. If either of the two guards survives, they will claim they were hired to help kidnap an evil priest who was turning the people to demonology. This is close enough to the truth that they should be able to tell it convincingly. They will claim they do not know who hired them, which is less true - they don't know exactly who hired them, but they were brought in by their cousins. At this point, the villagers will not believe that the Constandus Family had anything to do with the kidnapping, and party members who are too public with their accusations will be shunned. Things in Piottopia will quickly become mundane again.



If the party fails miserably to find the ghost farm, you can either supply them with a professional tracker or allow the kidnappers to bring Yanhus back to town in the middle of the night a few days later. They will attempt to drag him to the Ramparter's temple and kill him on the altar. Since he was snatched from the barracks, that is the building that will be more heavily protected, not the temple. Perhaps the party could discover the kidnappers at that point and battle them over Brother Yanhus.

The second mission should be a revenge mission of some sort. Some of the Constandus Family or their supporters will be angered at the party for killing their cousins at the ghost farm or for things the party might have said around town. A small number (probably two or three) will attempt to ambush one or two of the party members a couple of weeks after the kidnapping. This should be another mistake on the bad guys' part as they will likely confront the party members as they are leaving the tavern, not realizing that the rest of the party is in the tavern and ready to join the fight. The battle will be bowmen on horseback against the party when they are not fully ready for battle. Should any be captured, they will admit that they are distantly related to the two at the ghost farm and felt a family obligation to avenge them - but won't admit a familial relation to the Constandus Family.

Rather than give away exactly who the bad guys are, the party should be sent on some side quests:

- They are sent to Helatia to retrieve an important relic that will be installed in the Piottopia church. This will allow them access to any armor or weapons they might try to afford, or even trainers they could not find in Piottopia. Perhaps they can be given some manner of reward by the Order of the Divine Rampart for having saved Brother Yanhus. On their way home, they will likely be set upon by bandits, because they are carrying the relic in a silver

and gold reliquary. (The relic might be a lock of the avatar's hair.)

- A barn with six horses was rustled. The victims were distant members of the Constandus Family, which might bring the players into more contact with the rivals they do not yet know they have. A posse will want to track down and retake these horses. The reward for this should be tiny (no more than 100sc), but the bad guys should have some more valuable loot.
- One of the farms in the outskirts of town was hit by centaurs. A posse is needed to go after the centaurs. The centaur bandits have stolen something of modest value, but something vital to the survival of that family's farm (their seed for next spring, a plow, the harnesses for the plow or other equipment, etc.). There will be no reward from this mission as the victim family is barely making it now, but it will help to build the good will of the people in town towards the Ramparters. and the centaur bandits have some good loot!
- A ceremonial weapon of some kind is missing from the temple. Probably made of precious metals, the Order will be concerned that it could be melted down for its metal value. The only suspect is an odd peddler who came to town and now is nowhere to be found. The party will need to find him and get the weapon back. But he isn't a simple peddler, but a skilled bandit and fence, with some skilled bandit friends.

There can be several other styles of missions based on the Ramparters and those who worship Manoto. The god may wish the party to go on a pilgrimage of sorts in which they perform certain seemingly menial tasks that will result in an item of theirs being blessed by the god (blessed being +1 Strength, magical strengthening of their armor, stronger shield, better holy symbol, whatever works for you). Along the way, they will continue to help people out, performing some smaller tasks, such as killing a rabid dog that is attacking two small girls (watch out that the party doesn't catch the disease, or perhaps the priest at their next stop can cure it).

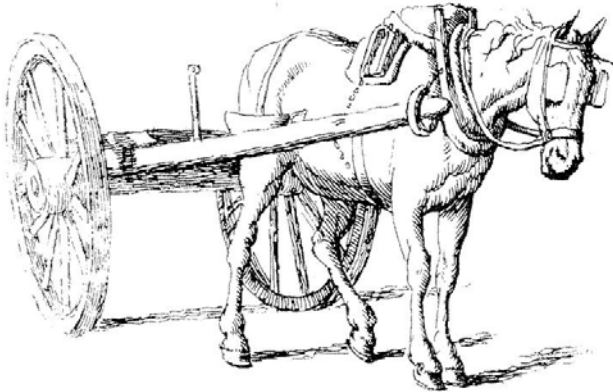
Any supplies being brought to the church will need to be protected, and the party can act as guards. While normal supply shipments will not be targets, the delivery of a ballistae or other siege weapon might.

Characters who worship gods other than Manoto might find themselves on quests for their gods or religions as well. The gods are very in touch with their mortal followers now and will want to cement loyalties as best as possible.

Building the Future:

Panos will either be abandoned by his goddess because of the kidnapping or will have been abandoned some time before it. He will however find himself a new friend, some manner of vengeance spirit / demon (spirit of betrayal?). Though they pretend to still be worshipping as they always have, the Constandus Family and their supporters will be converting towards this evil spirit who emphasizes selfishness and vengeance for perceived slights.

The town will become more and more polarized between the two religions, neither of which is what the townfolks were raised with. Even those who are now following the demon will not fully realize what they are doing. Panos will keep the worst of the new religion to himself by making sacrifices late at night when he is alone in the temple. What he is preaching to his smaller congregation is rationalizations for their feelings of envy and greed, telling them that these are fine feelings and OK to act on. He is clever enough to make these changes subtle, but they will continue to grow over time.



This is not intended to be an epic campaign on its own, but instead introduce the region and some of the religious activities going on. The intent is that eventually this campaign could get caught up in the holy war that is brewing. But until that happens, they can be involved in much smaller fights, often centered on the evil growing in their hometown.

With Helatia being so close, the campaign would likely move there as the small town will be unable to logically keep a moderately powerful party busy. Helatia offers far better shopping and training, as well as the port which can transport the party anywhere in the world. This should allow them unrestricted advancement.

When you're ready to get the holy war going (assuming you take that direction), the players and their characters should be happy and willing to return "home" to get more directly involved. They don't necessarily need to be there from the beginning. Sometimes it is more realistic to have them hear that there is a problem at home, but by the time they get there, things have already escalated.

Huge Adventures

While every campaign should have an overriding arc that ties it together, we think every campaign world should too. This means that there may be times that more than one, separate adventuring party gets caught up in the same event(s) because they are on the same world. These can be wars, natural disasters, religious movements, famine, plagues, whatever!

But every party doesn't necessarily have to be as involved as every other party. Maybe the war breaks out and one party has chosen a side and is fighting gallantly, but the other just needs to get through the territory where the war is being fought. Something as big as a major war should impact an entire continent, but that doesn't mean that every player character will be heavily invested in it.

That is what this is going to be about - major world impacting things, that could ripple through multiple campaigns, even if they don't get the PCs killed.



There is a reason that Manoto placed an avatar where he did when he did. There is a religious conflict brewing, between the Dinsthain Pantheon and the Jemmistake Pantheon of Myork. How big it becomes and what happens is not yet set, but the conflict is unquestionably going to come.

While many of his brethren have chosen to sit and wait, expecting that the conflict will drive their followers into a heightened sense of prayer simply due to their fear. But Manoto is actively working within his powers to prevent damage to his followers. He may not have chosen the best possible way, nor will his actions prevent the war, but he is trying.

In 658P, Manoto will be drawn into direct conflict with the Jemmistake gods. The point of this CSK is not to get anyone too deep into that holy war and the conflicts surrounding it. But the point is to let game masters know that this CSK can be the start of something far bigger - something we will be getting into in future issues!

SMALL TOWNS AND CITY NEIGHBORHOODS

A few notes on the village of Piottopia, either for use with the Campaign Starter Kit or for other purposes. It is a reasonably normal town in the region around Helatia and could be used in most settings.

The village is home to approximately 550 people. Villages and settlements are reasonably close together in this region, so there are not many additional folks that would be considered outside the village's boundaries but still belong to the village. This doesn't mean that all the farmers live directly in the town center, but they come there for church and to trade. There are other villages within five or six miles of Piottopia.

There are roughly 200 people who live in the town and would not be considered primarily farmers. These include the religious folks, the innkeeper and his staff, as well as some of the minor craftsmen. In this region there are many grape and olive producers, both of which need presses to extract the juice or oil from their products. Because of this, there are carpenters and wood workers in town who specialize in crafting and repairing these tools, as well as some of the other specialized needs of these farms. There does not happen to be a grist mill in Piottopia, but there are three within ten miles, all run by waterwheels.

None of the farms are more than 50 acres with the average being right around 30. Typically the farms growing wheat or other annual crops are longer and narrow. This allows for fewer turns of the plow during spring, and allows the homes to be closer together, as they often cluster at one end. The vineyards and olive orchards tend to be a bit more square, but rarely completely, just blockier rectangles. The "village boundaries" are approximately two miles by two miles.

Though there are cart trails leading from the farm homes to the village center, these are rough and unpassable (by vehicles) if there have been heavy rains. The only main road is barely better, but it does have bridges over the streams and gullies and is wide enough for ox drawn wagons to pass each other. This is the road that runs through the center of the village and contains the inn and churches.

When the Ramparters came to town, they needed space for their buildings. There were three spots that they might have used. They took the one off the main road for their barracks. This is to a degree "behind" the inn and had been used as an open field to graze horses kept at the inn's tiny stable. Being "unused" it was easy for the Order to get rights to it and build their housing.

The best spot on the main road they had saved for their church and school. This caused a bit more

problems for them as it had traditionally been used as a town square where they would sometimes hold harvest festivals, though these had died out in recent years and the lot was mostly overgrown. In order to tamp down the negative response, the Ramparters cleared a spot just a few dozen yards further away from the village center. This could now be used as a town square of sorts and was now in much better condition than the spot they took.

The temple of Laenta is now nearly directly across the street from the temple of Manoto. The Ramparters did this on purpose, hoping that parents would drop their sons off at the Order's church as they went in for their own services. This did work, but it also fostered the rivalry between the two temples.

Other than craftsmen and minor merchants, the only other main place in town is the inn. Simply known as the Piottopia Inn, it has stood for generations. It is the gathering place for locals and any visitors to the village. They will always have some manner of stew ready for travelers, but they serve very little food. The tavern room is full every night, but some of the locals bring their own drinks.

Leocracis "Leo" is the innkeeper, along with his wife and four daughters. He is the main seller of spirits in the town, so even if they are not selling drinks by the glass, he has typically sold the folks in his tavern room their bottles. His stable can handle up to six horses (manage them yourself), plus another four under an awning next to the stable. There are six minor rooms for rent (two cots each) and one "suite" (actually just a larger room with multiple windows and a bed with a feather mattress - queen sized). His daughters take up an additional two minor rooms, but will give up their rooms if the inn is full. In extreme situations, Leo and his wife will give up their room as well (identical to the suite).

The Constandus Family is spread throughout the region, in Piottopia and the surrounding villages. There are fewer than 100 of them in Piottopia, but likely close to 300 within 15 miles. While this makes them strong, it does not make them dominant. They are not one purely aligned family. There are several families that consider themselves to be only distant cousins to Panos and would be appalled if they knew what he was doing.

The rampart that the Ramparters are building encloses the village center but not the entire four square miles that is the village. Rather, it will enclose an oval over 500 yards long and roughly 300 yards wide, but with jagged edges. The jagged edges are due to property lines they needed to follow. They also had to build brick arches to allow the streams that run through town to continue to flow as they did originally. Though boys can get through the arches, centaurs cannot, so the Ramparters feel confident that they do not weaken the defenses. The space enclosed will be roughly 26 acres and includes a pasture of an acre and a half for any livestock brought in.

TAVERN TALK

My name is Guiseppe Vilvaldo O'Connerghy, but you can call me Guido, everybody does. My mother was Latvich and my father was Bortish, so naturally I grew up a little confused. I was comfortable in neither culture, so I went on the road. My father taught me the fiddle, while my mother taught me to sing. They may have performed calmly in churches and at festivals, but I learned very quickly to speed up the tempo and make them more tavern appropriate.

I cannot say I've been all over the world, but I've seen a lot of taverns and covered more miles than most. Does that make me the best person to tell you about these vital crossroads of cultures and happiness? Maybe not the best, but definitely one of the best! And that is what I hope to do - Tell you about the taverns so you can better understand the culture of the people who inhabit them every night.

Ah Helatia, that port of the exquisite and the exotic. Nothing can be normal in Helatia, not even the wine. Stroll into any tavern in Helatia and you will bump into the difference in smells. Their taverns don't smell like taverns. There's no scent of stale beer, or urine, or body odor, none of that. Seems great right? not always. You see they drink some strange stuff in Helatia.

One of their most common drinks has this licorice taste to it - anise I guess. But it also has wormwood for flavoring; what will these people think of next. OK, so it's not entirely awful, but it is weird, and weird isn't what you want when you come in off the road. What's it called? Well that depends on what bar you're in, because they all call it something different. The easiest way to order it is to ask for their "anise spirit", but expect a lot of differences. Some brew it from anise (I think), but most flavor some other alcohol with anise to arrive here. Some add sugar while others don't. Like I said, "Surprise!"

And don't freak out when they pour some water in and it gets cloudy instead of clear. It's not a magic trick or someone trying to poison you. The stuff just does that. I think they put sugar in the water, but I don't know if it's the sugar or the water that clouds the stuff up. Besides, getting nervous about clear liquor going all cloudy white is a sure sign that you don't know what you're drinking, and the bartenders will take advantage of you. The stories about it being an aphrodisiac are just that - stories. Broads drunk on this stuff are equally willing or un- as they are on normal booze. It's just that Helatia girls are pretty wild when they want to be, and

their idea of appropriate is way past what you'll find elsewhere.

They do drink wine in Helatia, and most of it is reasonably good. They favor whites to reds, something I don't always agree with, but these are fine wines. But they are "fine", as in not great but good enough. They drink wine with meals, certainly lunch and dinner, but I think they drink it in the morning too. But outside of meals, wine is no longer the drink of choice. That's when they turn to the hard stuff.

You'd think with the hard stuff going down, they would be a city-state of drunkards. Well, maybe they are, but nowhere near as bad as some of the others I've seen. The trick with their liqueurs and aperitifs is that they sip at them all night long. They don't really drink, just sip. Notice, I've never lived in Helatia, just visited, OK passed through.

They are one of the top producers of gin, and their gins are mighty fine. Pure, clear, these guys are fantastic chemists and distillers. You're waiting for the "but", but there isn't one. If you like gin, get your ass to Helatia. You won't find better. I will suggest that if you're importing gin, get it in small quantities. You can usually find gallon or two-gallon ceramic jugs. Those are far better than letting your gin swill around in some of those old barrels for a month or two while it walks its way to you on the back of some shabby mule.

So what else? You will find elderberry wines, along with some other fruit wines. Not my thing, but you never know. They are surprisingly good at meads, but about half the mead made in the city heads north to the Tanta Bosh towns where they love the stuff, so you may have a tougher time finding it. Lastly, those same distillers who do such a great job with the gins seem to mess up the brandies. The only thing I can think of is that they see brandy as something to cook with and not something to drink. In any case, you're better off avoiding them!

The best thing about taverns in and around Helatia is that you really will be made to feel at home! This isn't one of those places where the regulars get upset because you "stole" their stool - no sir! You sit anywhere you like and expect the regulars to start the conversation with you. "Who are you?" "Where you from?" "How long you in town?" It's great! They love music and musicians. The culture of universities and learning must completely permeate their culture, because they want to know everything. If you're from a place they've never been, they want to know all about it, and will call their buddies over as soon as you tell them something they find interesting. For those of us who love a great gab - it's one of the best places to be.

MASS MARKET MAGIC

North of Helatia there is a chain of islands known as the Oykiledrum Islands. (In the Tanta Bosh language, Oykiledrum means islands of the springs, so the additional "islands" is not necessary, but still often used in Helatia.) These islands are famous for their hot springs.

As the story goes, Hrarangr the Chosen was lost at sea and caught in the ice. He was dying of exposure and wandering the ice flows when he saw an odd cloud on the ground. After stumbling miles towards the cloud, he entered it, but almost immediately fell into a hot spring. The hot waters saved him from freezing to death.

Hrarangr eventually made it home, but he had mapped the way back to the hot spring and brought his tribe to their new island home. There they worshipped the spirit of the hot spring, and most assume the spirit had actually called Hrarangr to it when he was in danger.

Because of the people worshipping the spirit of the hot spring, other nearby hot spring spirits awoke from their slumber and called out to people as well. Most of those who went off to worship these spirits had at one time been members of Hrarangr's tribe, but some outsiders came as well.

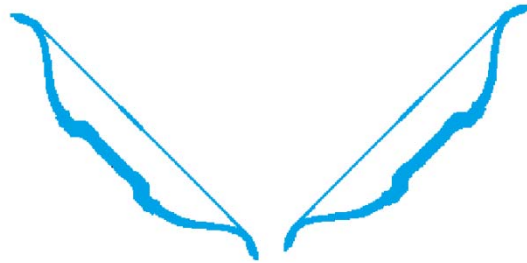
The hot spring spirits taught their followers to make a special type of bow that would trap the many wind spirits around the islands - trickster spirits who were responsible for wrecking many boats along the island shores. Once bound within their bows, the spirits would empower the bows with mystical energies, allowing the archers to shoot vastly farther than a non-magical bow should be able to.

Carving these bows takes an expert wood carver taught the secret of binding the wind spirits. The carving itself often takes a month, while the binding ritual is long and difficult, putting the person performing it in jeopardy from the wind spirits and any of its ilk that are around. For this reason, the bows are most commonly sold for around 750sc to compensate both the carver and the ritual performer for their time and risk.

Direct from the
Oykiledrum Islands

Oykiledrum Bows

Long
Bow
750



Great
Bow
900



Don't worry about how far your arrows will go,
let the power of elemental air push
your arrows to farther targets with greater strength.

Perfect for the warrior who needs to reach
his enemy before his enemy can reach him.

The people of Hrarangr have been living on these islands for a dozen generations and have captured so many of the wind spirits in this area that it is impossible to sail near the islands. The only way to move by boat through the Oykiledrum Islands is by oar. The people of these islands use long boats and canoes to move around and to fish, but the lack of winds keeps them relatively safe from any larger sailing ships.

Oykiledrum Bows: magical (spirit trapped-weak air elemental). Any arrow fired from these bows will have double the normal ranges. There will be a force of wind felt leaving the bow with the arrow, but typically this breeze is not enough to cause any additional effects. Long bow 750sc. Great bow 900sc.

A FUNNY THING HAPPENED TO ME ON THE WAY TO THE ADVENTURE

Mob Violence

Setting: Any generic 'you are walking along the road through a farming area' set-up.

Description: As you are traveling, you hear a lot of yelling and see men by a farm house with torches. As it is still bright day light, they are probably intending to use the torches for harm.

What's Going On: The leader of the men is jerk and a bully. The others with him are his buddies - bullies and jerks as well, but followers. The house they are intending to assault is owned by "a foreigner", someone not from here originally or of a different ethnicity or race. The leader has invented a grievance with the foreigner and is intending to burn his house down in retaliation for this grievance.

Twists:

1. The foreigner saw the lead bully beating his wife and stepped in. The wife is now hiding in the foreigner's house and the leader wants to burn it down with both of them in it. His buddies think they are rescuing their friend's wife from the foreigner and aren't thinking too clearly on what will happen when they set the house ablaze.
2. The foreigner is a much better farmer than the leader or his buddies. The leader has convinced them all that the foreigner is a witch (or something equal) and needs to be burned out in order to save their crops. "Obviously" the foreigner is doing something evil / magic to get such better results.
3. This is a simple case of racism run wild, and the bullies are planning on teaching the foreigner a lesson for having the gall to move into their town.

Threat Level: This is intended to be a simple encounter with the party fighting against commoners with torches. As such, there should be more bullies than party members, but not overwhelming. For parties with too much experience, this encounter is likely too simplistic and certainly too easy. Expect the foreigner to help during the fight.

Two serious threat alterations: 1) Killing these men will not be acceptable in this society. You cannot

just wander the roads killing people you think might be enemies. If a party member is going to obviously kill one of the bullies, the foreigner may shout, "Don't kill him. Please just drive him off." or something along those lines. It will be very difficult for the foreigner to find legal help if there is a pile of bodies at his door. Without legal help other bullies will show up next, and the foreigner will be run off.

and 2) The bullies could throw a torch and start the house on fire. At that point the foreigner will need to worry more about the house than the fight, and the party will need to do the same very quickly or the foreigner will lose his house and be run off.



Rewards: The foreigner will want to reward the party and probably ask them to watch his house while he goes to get the sheriff or equivalent. He knows exactly who the bad guys are, and hopefully the sheriff can help keep them from coming back. But the foreigner's rewards are unlikely to be coins.

- This could be used to introduce a new character into the party. Maybe the house does burn down, and the foreigner, now with nowhere to live, joins the party on their adventures. Possibly he is a druid, and that was why his crops were so much better than the local farms.
- The foreigner is an herbalist and that's why his crops were better. He will give the party the limited amount of product he has currently and offer them a 40% off discount for the rest of their lives.
- The foreigner is a normal farmer and cannot offer them much, but he will give them free shelter (and probably a good meal) every time they pass this way. The bully leader's wife may leave him for the foreigner, and so the party has made two contacts.

We envisioned this as a halfling being the foreigner, and yes, he beat up the bully, or at least got his wife away from him. The bully is in such a rage because he got beat up by a halfling. He cannot allow this foreigner to live to tell the tale of how he beat his wife nor how he was bested by someone literally half his size.

PULL BACK THE CURTAIN

Pull Back the Curtain is intended to give you some insight into how our chief game designer, John Josten, writes. How he writes games, how he writes Fletnern, and how he game masters. That is why it is only available to the Game Master level Patreon supporters.

Not all of what he has to say is going to make sense to all of you. For some of you, it may seem like common sense, something you realized years ago. For some of you, it may seem completely off base; while for others, you may just not follow it. That's because all of our games are different. Different GMs see things differently. Different players force GMs to act in certain ways. There isn't a standard campaign, just as there isn't a standard GM.

So are we warning you not to read this? By all means, NO! But we are asking you to filter it. The goal of **The Sounding Board** is to help game masters from all games and walks of life to create fun content that will engage their players and make those players want to keep coming back week after week, or how ever often you have gaming sessions. That is the point here too. With the more limited audience, we hope to be able to get into specifics that just wouldn't work in the straight blog.

This is also going to give John and our other writers a chance to respond directly to questions you ask, whether they come through email, Patreon or the blog. Just send them in. It make take us a bit to answer them here, but if you send in a question we plan to answer in **Pull Back the Curtain**, we'll try to get the answer to you as soon as we write it, even if it doesn't come out in **Small Bites** for a couple of months.

Mass Combat

Quite often, when we (modern folks) think of fantasy battles, we think of the epic battles depicted in movies like Braveheart and Excalibur (at least I do). These are not that different from some of the battles seen in movies depicting the American Revolutionary War or even the American Civil War. From my limited memory, these are quite similar to movies depicting the First and Second English Civil Wars. Big, epic, huge numbers in a huge field clashing in the middle.

But that doesn't work for role-playing games. When one player is controlling one character, huge battles are a nightmare. At the very least, that one character on the battle field is at risk of being hit by masses of arrows from archers he cannot individually identify. So what do you do?

Well, I have actually studied a lot of battles, though admittedly mainly in the American history. I strongly believe that for every huge epic battle, there are dozens and dozens of skirmishes, many taking place at the same time (generally) as the huge epic fights. This is where the player characters can and should be used (and I think would be used by any clever general).

First, what do I mean? As two armies begin to come together, they send out scouts to either locate the enemy or locate the enemy's weakness(es). Especially in the American Civil War, sending out your cavalry units for recon was both vital and often played a part in who won or lost the battle. I'm not going to get into all the details, but there is at least one famous battle where the cavalry went off to recon, but then decided to attack something they didn't have orders to attack. Because the cavalry was out of place and didn't participate in the battle, it was lost.

A game world example: The party is sent out to locate any enemy troops and if they encounter any enemy "spies" (other recon units) they are to engage and kill them to prevent any of "our" secrets getting to "them". These are great missions, because the party cannot simply blunder around in the forests. They need to be stealthy. They need to spot enemies before they are spotted. They need to see an enemy's ambush before they walk into it. Great challenges without relying only on melee might. Plus, the job is not to meet the enemy in a line and fight them, but to prevent them from escaping and carrying off valuable information, so the tactics must be different.

Another: A battle is brewing along the border. The massive military buildup has begun and military camps are in various places. The party is assigned a stretch of the border and must make certain no enemies cross into "our" lands. Do they post sentries, set traps, cast spells? What type of enemies will cross? If the enemy is magical, I like to have them utilize conjured creatures or other "monsters" by sending them across to test the strength of the lines, seeking a weak point where they can concentrate their attack. There are many examples from history of a river serving as a barrier between two armies and the trick is how to cross the river without being at the enemy's mercy while you're doing it. Another "thinking man's mission".

But why? Why must the party be kept away from the rank and file? Well, first off, because it is too hard on the GM to legitimately run a massive battle and still concentrate on the tiny number of player characters. But within the confines of the game, the generals shouldn't let adventurers inside their lines. Why? Because they are not soldiers. They have not been trained to fight shoulder to shoulder and shield to shield. I haven't met an adventuring party yet that used shield wall tactics, but most armies do. What do you do with the barbarian swinging the claymore? Or the short dwarf with the

battle axe? These guys take up far too much room and a proper military machine would cut them down. How? Unless you are using rules where the player characters frequently have 20x the hits to kill as the soldiers (which unfortunately many do), a shield wall of soldiers with spears could probably put three men up against a single claymore wielder, and three on one, they should be able to cut him down. If not, there are ranks of guys behind them to step up and keep the pressure going until they do.

Why else? Magic! The rank and file soldiers are probably not familiar with magic and could be put off by a sword that sings as it kills people and sucks their souls. The cavalry horses are probably not familiar with fireballs and thunderclaps and will likely bolt if a cloud of deadly magical gas slips by them. Adventuring parties should be a major distraction to drilled troops. Plus, as I said earlier, what adventuring party wants to be standing under a hail of arrows, never knowing when bad luck alone was going to skewer them?

The real point of this article is to get you to think about battles more like a Vietnam War movie where a patrol is moving through territory and encountering enemies instead of an epic battle. Some of the recent movies (too often based on actual events) work too, where the small band is besieged by a group of chaotic attackers. Here the PCs should probably have something to protect, something they cannot move or is too dangerous to move, and they must hold out until reinforcements come. These can make excellent missions, even if they cause the party to miss the big battle.

One last example from one of my most recent campaigns: The armies are gathering in the field, but the battle mages (only possessed by one side) are staying inside a castle. The party's mission is to sneak into the castle and begin assassinating battle mages before the big battle erupts, otherwise huge numbers of soldiers are going to be killed by the huge crowd control spells. But inside the castle, many of these spells are too dangerous to cast, so the advantage slips. I loved how this worked, because once the castle was aroused and began to counter attack, they proved to be too much for the party (one of the most powerful I've ever run). This forced the PCs to back out the way they came. Was their mission accomplished? Primarily yes. They had devastated the enemy battle mages, even though about 40% were still alive, and another 20% were able to be resuscitated. Plus there remains a public debate to this day - was there really an attack at the castle? or is that just BS from those who lost the battle?

The Blog and blog posts

So how do I write the Blog? This is what normally happens:

I get an idea that I either write down on a scrap of paper or I enter into my QUICKfile file. QUICKfile started about 15 years ago. Every once in a while I cut and paste as much stuff out of there and into the files where it really belongs, but even still, it's 366 pages right now. Yep - 366 pages of partially developed stuff. And they're crammed in there. This isn't one sentence on a page as a reminder.

OK - so idea. Then I usually mull over them while driving. Since it takes me from 15-55 minutes to drive to and from work every day, I have way too much time to think through them. At this point, some of them get split into multiple posts.

It usually takes me about 40 minutes to actually write a post when I sit down to do it. What I love about the blog is that I can write in the "stream of consciousness" style. I just write. It doesn't have to be professional; at least I don't think it does.

Then on Sunday morning, I go back and look at all the mostly or partially written blog posts I have. I pick the one that appeals, and I edit it. Here's the real info on me. What it takes me 30-40 minutes to write, it takes me about an hour to edit. I hate editing! What's included in editing? Spell checking (because Word cannot really spell check) and grammar check. If you are really relying on a computer to proof your work, you're doing it wrong. I also have to try to make it readable. My early posts got some constructive criticism on how I was presenting them, where they just looked like a huge block of words and turned people off, so I try to avoid that. I also have to do some fact checking (typically), even if it is spell checking the names of some of my cities and people (which Word really doesn't do for me). And I have to put in the links. That seems easier than it is, because with multiple places that people can go (various distributors, sometimes my own sites, etc.) I have to both balance where I send them while trying to put my best foot forward. Yes, that means that if one site has a glowing review of the product I'm linking and the other has nothing - I'm going with glowing!

Once edited, I typically set it to post Sunday evening. If I know I won't be around the next Sunday, I'll typically do another (pick a mostly done, and edit it). That way I typically have something posting most Sunday nights. Then again, there are those times when I realize at 8:00 on Sunday that I didn't do the post, I then rush the edit process and get something out there.

So what am I saying? I'm saying that I spend most of my Sunday mornings, while the family is asleep, editing blog posts so I can continue to keep Board Enterprises out in the public and hopefully somewhat relevant. and then I give them away for free. Thank you to everyone who does anything for me on Patreon. I would likely go insane without you!

Y? Y? Y!

Helatia was always meant to be “Ancient Greece”. Not Sparta! Far more like Athens. In some ways the intelligentsia of Fletnern.

Here in their marble city, they attend schools and lectures and are absolutely convinced that their way of life is superior to those other cultures in the world. The problem is that in some ways, they just might be right.

While there are universities in other cities, the schools in Helatia started out for knowledge’s sake, and not for some tawdry reason like learning to cast spells. In fact, their schools are highly philosophical and too often not very practical at all. They also believe themselves to be a democracy, when that simply isn’t the case. At one point, it might have been, but even their representational form of government has been hijacked by the wealthy land owners.

In many ways, that was why the Cult of the Avatar worked in Helatia - the city is run by philosophers and lacked the “Spartan” element. Though few believe that a holy war is coming, there is still a strong contingent that has turned to learning more about war and battle just because they believe the avatar is real and want to learn more about his religion. The warrior priests are doing everything they can to teach those open to training, before the major battles begin.

I really like the avatar scenario because I think it allows us to analyze the age old concept of “what would we do if a major religious event occurred today?” This is perhaps better for those without a religious bend, but I think they would have a very hard time understanding what would happen to people who believe. You can choose one of the variant versions as explained back in News of Fletnern, but assuming that the avatar is really a divine creature, what is the impact.

We’ve all seen preachers and cult leaders swear that they held some manner of secret power and then tried to use that secret to get money and donations. Assuming this avatar is real, then it is not a set-up. This sect really has the secret to immense power. They have a WMD that they could likely use offensively or defensively.

But the question remains - what do people do? Do religious folks of other gods wonder why their god hasn’t given them an avatar? Do they question why Manoto had to put this avatar down now and what is his end game? Do other Manoto worshippers in other cities believe or do they feel that if it were really an avatar, he would have been placed in their far more deserving community?

But what about the faithful in Helatia? Do they all believe? Do some of them doubt? This is a city of philosophers; surely they can’t all simply accept that an avatar has been born amongst them. This is part of the reason that there is so much stir about Apkeeta

Emorphine. No matter who Manoto had picked to be the mother of his avatar, the mortals would have second guessed his decision.

And you just cannot forget the money. I know this is a strange an unusual comparison, but I remember when a child fell into the gorilla pen at Brookfield Zoo just outside of Chicago. A female gorilla picked up the child and carried him over to the keepers’ door. I think it was \$3million that flooded into the zoo in donations from around the world. That was something like three years’ worth of donations. The same has happened here. People from all over the globe have been sending donations to the cathedral.

But it’s not just money. Works of art, relics, enchanted weapons, and above all else, tourism has been coming in too. Not all of this is simply beneficial. Some of these tourists believe themselves to be entitled to certain things, either because of the donation they just gave or “who they are”. Managing all of that is nearly impossible. To be clear, some of those religious folks jealous of the arrival spot of the avatar expect to be allowed to carry him off to wherever they are from, because of how important they are.

So there is now all this extra money for the temple and the city (in the form of tourism). But that has ramifications too. The other temples are not getting as many donations, because they don’t have an avatar. There are fraudsters all over the place (both in Helatia and abroad) who are now selling fake relics of the avatar. Within months, you could probably have purchased any number of avatar umbilical cords and his favorite blanket as well. As honorable as the warrior priests are, they would have had to worry about their own people smuggling such artifacts out. The temptation to steal the avatar’s pacifier would seem too much for some people.

Placing the avatar in Helatia forced me to think through more of the interaction between the gods and the mortals. No longer could I assume that the gods were not going to meddle in mortal affairs. Here was some serious proof that they were willing to meddle.

The fun part for me as a GM was that I never actually told my players whether it was true or not. In fact I implied to several of them that it was a fake. So there have been discussions amongst my players where some are convinced the avatar is a fake and others can’t believe I would have spent so much time putting a hoax in place in my world.

Since I started to write in the avatar, I’ve worked on a lot of religious “issues” in Fletnern. I’ve had to consider pilgrimages, divine “magic”, and how the various religions interact with each other. Most get along, but our history shows that the religions that seem the most similar are typically the ones who go to war with each other.

IN CONCLUSION

This has been our first edition, and we truly hoped you liked it. If you did, please check out our Patreon page and sign up! Not only will you continue to get great content, but you will also get a say in what is coming out next, because that is what this is intended to be - a conversation between a content provider and our customers. We need your help. Yes, we need your financial support, but we also need your feedback on what worked here, what didn't, and what you want to see more of.

This volume is honestly a little bigger than we expect to be normal. We got hugely eager and wanted to throw everything and the kitchen sink into this one. That was probably a good idea from the standpoint that it shows you a lot of what we're aiming for. But we don't want to try and trick you! We're shooting for an e-zine that on average will be a little shorter. As our base gets bigger, we hope to expand that, possibly consistently going to 40+ pages monthly, but let's be real - That's a **LOT** of content! We have it, but we don't want to over promise.



<https://www.patreon.com/user?u=4503957>

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The Secret Word is: Spirit

PATREON

So what's the deal with us and Patreon? Well, as we've said, we really want to increase the feedback and the two-way conversations between Board Enterprises and you our customers. We haven't done a great job of that over the years, but we're hoping to keep getting better.

Did you like the theme? Let us know! Did you like some of the articles? Let us know that too. Did you dislike an article? Yep, let us know that as well. Seriously, we want a two-way conversation. Constructive criticism? We can take it (the constructive kind, not trolling please).

So what are we asking of you? Well, if you want to support us, please pledge some money. Just interested in seeing where we're going with Fletnern and the wiki? Great, become a World Walker. It's only \$1 a month, and we'll give you new people, places and things around Fletnern. Interested in learning more about the world and getting all sorts of ideas for new characters for you to play and even ideas and strategies for characters you may already be playing? Become a Player Character, aka Player. It's \$5, and we will give you as much content as we can! Are you a game master? Are you building your own game world or using Fletnern? Then you want all the secrets and behind the scenes information. Then you'll want to sign up as a Game Master. GMs don't just get more articles; they get pieces of the articles that the Players shouldn't know about. GMs pledge \$10 a month, but we'll be giving you pieces of the world you can use in yours, giving you advice on how game worlds can or even should be built, and coaching you on GMing.

Confused? Pledge \$1 for now and see how things go. If after a couple of months you think we're falling down on the job, you can pull out and you've lost next to nothing - probably less than you paid for lunch today. But if we impress you, why not advance up to the Player or GM levels and become a fully active participant in building out this world.

Oh, and there is more! For every dollar that you contribute via Patreon, we'll give you a "Board Buck" that you can trade in for any Board Enterprises products, whether it be **LEGEND QUEST** or generic. It's a two-for-one deal!

Sample Character

Standard Warrior Priest

Warrior Archetype

S trength	6	Armor Group 1
K nowledge	5	Mail Armors 2
E ndurance	6	Etiquette 2
W illpower	6	First Aid 2
A gility	5	Native Language 3
P syche	4	Native Locality 2
		Read&Write Native LNG 1
		Running 1
		Shield Magic trick 2
		Shields Group 1
		Large Shield 2
		Spears Group 1
		Spear 2
		Streetwise 1
		Theology 2

Equipment: Spear, Shield (small), Cloth armor.
20sc remaining

Lifestyles

Warrior Priest	Monthly Cost
Income: Avatar's Bodyguard	+0
Room: Religious Dormitory	-2
Board: Barracks Meal Plan	-76
Morning:	
Mid-Day:	
Evening:	
Extras:	
Furnishings: Urbanite Meager	-29
Equipment:	
Clothing: Urbanite Average	-28
Laundry: Average	-12
Savings:	-147

As this is our first Lifestyle summary, it is important to note that few people could (or would) live this cheaply. These are devote religious warriors who have pledged their lives to protect the Avatar. Not included in this are things like night time entertainments (whether drinks at a bar or other), the upkeep of their equipment (because we don't know specifically what that equipment would be), and any other hobbies or extra-curricular activities.

So where does this money come from? Well, the temples of Brakin are handling the costs of rooms. The temples of Manoto are handling the costs of food and probably laundry. The cost of upkeep and replacement of furnishings and clothing is either coming from the warrior priests themselves or more likely their patrons or families.