

GURPS[®]

CONAN[®]

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INTRODUCTION: CONAN THE MIGHTY

Robert Ervin Howard (1906-36), a gifted but ill-starred Texas writer of the 1920s and '30s, created the Hyborian Age, a fantastic fictional setting to rank with Baum's Oz, Carroll's Wonderland and Burroughs' Barsoom. In Howard's Conan stories, before recorded history, "... shining kingdoms lay spread across the world like blue mantles beneath the stars — Nemedra, Ophir, Brythunia, Hyperborea, Zamora with its dark-haired women and towers of spider-haunted mystery, Zingara with its chivalry, Koth that bordered on the pastoral lands of Shem, Stygia with its shadow-guarded tombs, Hyrkania whose riders wore steel and silk and gold . . ."

Conan, the greatest Hyborian hero, was born in the barbaric northern land of Cimmeria. After an adventurous life as a thief, pirate and mercenary, he literally crowned his career. He became King of Aquilonia, the richest and most powerful nation in the West.

Howard proposed that this age had glittered between the sinking of Atlantis, around 18,000 B.C., and the dawn of known history. A catastrophe wiped out Atlantis and Lemuria, whose survivors reverted to savagery. In time these peoples built new civilizations. By 15,000 B.C., the powerful empires of Acheron and Stygia, rife with sinister sorceries, had arisen in the western part of the main continent.

Northern barbarians, the Hyborians, overran Acheron. On its ruins, the conquerors raised Howard's "shining kingdoms." Another natural catastrophe later ended the Hyborian Age, whose history survives only in fragmentary form in myths and legends. Howard assured his readers that this was pure fiction, not a serious theory of human prehistory.



About GURPS

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Page References

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

An M page reference means a page in *GURPS Magic*; BY references are to *GURPS Bestiary*; SW references are to *GURPS Swashbucklers*.

About Curtis M. Scott

Curtis M. Scott is a software engineer with a wife, Mary, and son, Phillip, when he surfaces from the Hyborian Age. He has been a roleplaying gamer since 1976. *GURPS Conan* is his second major work for Steve Jackson Games; he is also the author of *GURPS Humanx*.

About L. Sprague de Camp

L. Sprague de Camp is a major figure in modern American fantasy and science fiction. He began publishing in the Golden Age of John Campbell's *Astounding* and *Unknown* and has been at it since. He has written science fiction, fantasy, historical fiction and non-fiction (including biographies of H. P. Lovecraft and Robert E. Howard).



Map of Hyboria

On pp. 36-37 is a map of the world of Hyboria. This map is based, first and foremost, on the sketches drawn by Robert E. Howard himself. Before the first Conan story was published, he obviously had a clear idea of the "lay of the land" over much of Hyboria.

Other areas, however, were left vague (perhaps purposely) by Howard, and it has fallen to his students to fill them in. For those areas, the present maps are based on a variety of sources, but most of all on the text descriptions in the tales themselves.

Robert Howard, alas, achieved no Conanian triumph. Howard lived most of his life in Cross Plains, a town of 1,500 in central Texas. This was as unpropitious a setting for a writing career as could be found. Save for a couple of helpful English teachers in high school, he was entirely self-taught.

Howard resolved upon a writing career while still a boy and plunged into it as soon as he finished high school. His first sale came in 1924 to the magazine *Weird Tales* which, of the many publications he contributed to, remained his best single outlet.

By 1928, he had mastered his craft and thereafter sold regularly to the pulp magazines. He sold boxing stories, detective stories, horror stories, tales of historical and oriental adventure, Westerns, science fiction, fantasy and verse. He earned around \$2,000 a year from his writing, which by the standards of the 1930s was quite a fair living — though the townsfolk wondered when he was going to give up writing silly stories and settle down to a proper job in a local shop or in the oil fields.

A great natural storyteller, Howard developed a distinctive prose style, using such poetic elements as rhythm, alliteration and personification. In the late 1920s, he specialized in boxing stories, in the early '30s in fantasy, and in the middle '30s in Westerns, although he wrote stories of all these types throughout his career.

Howard began the Conan stories, upon which his posthumous revival is based, in 1932. Conan is an idealization of what Howard thought he would like to have been: a footloose, lawless, hell-raising, irresponsible adventurer devoted to wine, women and violence. But, save for a big, powerful physique, a hot temper, and a chivalrous attitude toward women, Howard and Conan had nothing in common. Howard was shy, sensitive, upright, law-abiding, courteous, compassionate, reclusive, introverted, bookish and (though he denied it) intellectual. He did not attribute such qualities to Conan.

Howard suffered from isolation, minimal worldly experience, limited travel outside of Texas and a lack of access to big-city and university libraries. An even greater handicap was his family situation. Howard was excessively attached to his mother, who encouraged his slavish devotion. As a boy he resolved not to outlive her. In June 1936, after a long illness, his mother lay unconscious, dying of tuberculosis. Howard, aged thirty, with a growing circle of admirers, an adequate if not lavish income, and a promising career before him, shot himself.

In his lifetime, Robert Howard sold over 160 stories and left 100-odd unfinished or unsold. For 20 years after his death, his Conan tales remained the private enthusiasm of a small circle of connoisseurs. In the 1950s, an obscure publisher began publishing the Conan stories in small hard-cover editions; but it was their appearance in a unified paperback series, beginning in 1966, that set in motion Conan's current popularity.

Indeed, this paperback series, together with the simultaneous paperback publication of J.R.R. Tolkien's three-volume *The Lord of the Rings*, touched off today's enormous revival of fantasy. The present writer, who was mainly responsible for the paperback Conans, also with the help of collaborators, added numerous stories to the saga, following Howard's original plan, style and spirit as closely as possible.

For over a decade, Conan Properties, Inc., has controlled all rights to the giant barbarian and divides the profits from the use of the character among the Howard heirs and the living writers. Conan has appeared in countless collections and anthologies, comic books and motion pictures — although, ironically, Howard's literary rights were given no value at all in appraising his estate. Conan Properties chooses experienced contemporary writers to continue the adventures of the mighty barbarian.

— L. Sprague de Camp

CONAN'S WORLD: THE HYBORIAN AGE

1

History and Prehistory

The Hyborian Age developed from earlier cultures. Preceding civilizations have shaped its nations and peoples unmistakably. However, its history is half legend, the truth lost in the darkness that stretches from mankind's beginnings.

The Serpent People

Before mankind, there were the reptilian serpent people, whose empires spanned the jungles of the pre-human Thurian continent. Theirs was a world of dinosaurs, ancient demons and sorcery beyond that now known to men. Their empires ruled over slave races, some human, some less so. Their own pursuits were unfathomable to the "lesser" races.



Bibliographical Entries

As of this writing there are 73 Conan stories by Howard and his continuers. In the bibliography (pp. 111-115) the stories of the saga are listed in chronological order. For reference in the text of this book, each story has been given a three letter code; following is an alphabetical listing of these codes cross-referenced with the title and the chronological number of the story (Roman numerals are anthologies). The bibliography gives a brief plot outline of each story.

- BBR — "Beyond the Black River" (60)
- BCO — "Black Colossus" (38)
- BSN — "Black Sphinx of Nebthu" (70)
- BTE — "Black Tears" (44)
- CAQ — *Conan of Aquilonia* (IX)
- CAS — *Conan and the Sorcerer* (5)
- CAV — *Conan the Avenger* (VIII)
- CBU — *Conan the Buccaneer* (56)
- CCH — *Conan the Champion* (17)
- CCO — *Conan the Conqueror* (67)
- CDE — *Conan the Destroyer* (8)
- CDF — *Conan the Defender* (29)
- CFE — *Conan the Fearless* (12)
- CMA — *Conan the Magnificent* (9)
- CMR — *Conan the Marauder* (51)
- COC — *Conan of Cimmeria* (II)
- COI — *Conan of the Isles* (73)
- COM — "The Curse of the Monolith" (22)
- CON — *Conan* (I)
- COS — "The City of Skulls" (20)
- COT — "The Castle of Terror" (35)
- CRA — *Conan the Raider* (46)
- CRE — *Conan the Renegade* (40)
- CRK — *Conan: The Road of Kings* (30)
- CSG — *Conan and the Spider God* (24)
- CSS — *Conan: The Sword of Skelos* (7)
- CTA — *Conan the Adventurer* (V)
- CTD — *Conan the Defiant* (3)
- CTF — *Conan the Freebooter* (III)
- CTI — *Conan the Invincible* (10)
- CTL — *Conan the Liberator* (64)
- CTM — *Conan the Mercenary* (6)
- CTR — *Conan the Rebel* (33)
- CTS — *Conan the Swordsman* (X)
- CTT — *Conan the Triumphant* (31)
- CTU — *Conan the Usurper* (VII)
- CTV — *Conan the Victorious* (16)
- CTW — *Conan the Wanderer* (IV)
- CUN — *Conan the Unconquered* (18)
- CVA — *Conan the Valorous* (26)
- CVL — *Conan the Valiant* (23)
- CWA — *Conan the Warrior* (VI)
- CWL — *Conan the Warlord* (14)
- DII — "The Devil in Iron" (48)
- DOT — "Drums of Tombaku" (53)
- FGD — "The Frost Giant's Daughter" (27)
- GIB — "The God in the Bowl" (13)
- GIT — "The Gem in the Tower" (54)
- HOD — "The Hall of the Dead" (11)

Continued on next page . . .

Only on the continent of Mayapan did bestial humans survive unmolested, slowly learning the use of flint knives and fire-hardened spears and making the mystic transition from beast to man.

The Rise of Humankind

Although human progress was slow, retarded both by the climate and the occasional raids of the serpent men, it was inexorable. Over time, the humans of Mayapan spread eastward to Atlantis and the Pictish Isles, and westward to the Lemurian Isles.

These first explorers and settlers brought their primitive beliefs, and spread them across the world. Knowledge of the gods, demons and sorcery was mankind's birthright, discovered through dangerous experimentation and occasionally ripped from the oppressing serpent men.

Even in these early days, not all magic was benign. Among the cruellest abusers were the Khari, who ruled a large empire in central Mayapan. The details of their evil are not recorded, but outraged victims hurled them from Mayapan into the uncharted ocean to the west, never to return.

On Mayapan, the human empires fell, rose, and fell again, leaving the island colonies barbaric, isolated and ignorant of their origins. As they rose again, they spread outward, this time to the sea.



The Age of Atlantis

Atlantis stood on a great island chain in the Western Ocean between the Thurian continent and the Antillian Islands. Atlantis was the most powerful nation in the world, with magic far beyond that of the Hyborian Age. Her only rivals were Lemuria, half a world away, and the Seven Kingdoms on the Thurian continent.

Atlantis was ruled by religious factions who worshiped demonic beings from the Elder Night. One such faction was the cult of Xotli, Lord of Terror. They sacrificed thousands of slaves captured from more primitive portions of the world to their dark deity. Even today, remnants of the Atlantean cults survive in remote regions around the world.

Before the Cataclysm (see below), the Atlanteans established a large settlement on the western shore of the Thurian continent. The settlement exploited the raw materials which Atlantis lacked, and sent lumber, agricultural products and slaves to sacrifice on the altars of Atlantis' ever-hungering gods.

The Atlantean government ensured that the settlement was dependent upon Atlantis. Slaves and peasants were shipped to the colonies by the thousands, but no one with the knowledge of smelting ore or creating machines was permitted to emigrate. Atlantean troops protected the colony from attack by hostile natives and also acted as an armed guard on the settlement's population.

The Pictish Isles

Not all the Mayapanic colonies developed into advanced societies. One primitive yet forceful group was the Picts, who settled an archipelago between the Atlantean islands and the Thurian continent. The Picts were a warlike people, with powerful sorceries and a fanatical belief in their destiny as world conquerors. The other cultures of the period avoided the Picts, but they could not prevent them from spreading to the Thurian continent.

The Lemurians

Another island empire, Lemuria, was east of the Thurian continent. Lemuria developed powerful sorcery and a thriving culture, much as Atlantis had. It suffered, however, from an inability to further colonize. The Lemurians had lost the art of creating ships which could transport them east across the vast ocean, and could only visit the nearby Thurian continent.

Unfortunately, the Thurian coast was already occupied. The Khari, ancient exiles from Mayapan, had found a home on the eastern shores of the continent. The Khari were an insular people and had little use for commerce. Thus, the Lemurians were forced to travel slowly around the continental coast until they were able to reach the Atlantean seas.

The Thurian Continent

The Thurian continent was the home of several different peoples. First and foremost were the native kingdoms: Kamelia, Valusia, Verulia, Grondar, Thule and Commoria. These kingdoms shared a common heritage and language, and probably arose from a single people.

The Atlanteans had a colony on the shores of the Western Ocean; the Picts also maintained a small enclave. The entire region, however, was surrounded by unexplored jungles and wastelands, and just to the south brooded mankind's ancient enemies, the serpent people.

Foremost of the leaders of these Thurian kingdoms was King Kull of Valusia, with whom Conan was sometimes compared. King Kull drove the serpent people back from their domination of the southern human kingdoms, and the efforts of his armies (and those of his contemporaries) set much of the stage for the later Hyborian Age.

The Cataclysm

Four millennia before the time of Conan, seismic upheavals sank Atlantis beneath the Western Ocean, never to rise again.

The Cataclysm was not as sudden as portrayed in later legends. There had been rumblings for centuries before the final great paroxysm, but as has always been the way with man, these warnings were ignored. Some scholars believe that the gods struck Atlantis down for its worship of the demons of the Elder Night, but no one really knows what caused the Cataclysm.

The Cataclysm also threw up new mountains in western Thuria, devastating



Bibliographical Entries (continued)

- HON — "The Hand of Nergal" (19)
- HOS — "Hawks Over Shem" (37)
- JOG — "Jewels of Gwahlur" (58)
- LIW — "The Lair of the Ice Worm" (28)
- LOD — "Legions of the Dead" (1)
- MOB — "Moon of Blood" (61)
- PBC — "The People of the Black Circle" (50)
- PBO — "The Pool of the Black One" (55)
- POS — "The People of the Summit" (21)
- PSW — "The Phoenix on the Sword" (65)
- QBC — "Queen of the Black Coast" (32)
- RIH — "Rogues in the House" (15)
- RMZ — "Red Moon of Zembabwei" (71)
- RNA — "Red Nails" (57)
- ROE — "The Road of the Eagles" (42)
- SHD — "Shadows in the Dark" (39)
- SID — "The Snout in the Dark" (36)
- SIM — "Shadows in the Moonlight" (41)
- SIS — "Shadows in the Skull" (72)
- SIZ — "Shadows in Zamboula" (45)
- SOK — "The Star of Khorala" (47)
- TBG — "The Bloodstained God" (25)
- TFK — "The Flame Knife" (49)
- TIC — "The Thing in the Crypt" (2)
- TIG — "The Ivory Goddess" (59)
- TOE — "The Tower of the Elephant" (4)
- TRC — "The Return of Conan" (68)
- TSC — "The Scarlet Citadel" (66)
- TSS — "The Slithering Shadow" (52)
- TTT — "The Treasure of Tranicos" (62)
- TWM — "The Witch of the Mists" (69)
- VLW — "The Vale of Lost Women" (34)
- WBB — "Wolves Beyond the Border" (63)
- WSB — "A Witch Shall be Born" (43)

The Calendar

The Hyborian calendar is cyclic. Each year is named, and every eight years the year names repeat. Years are named as follows:

- 1) Year of the Lion
- 2) Year of the Sun
- 3) Year of the Wolf
- 4) Year of the Spider
- 5) Year of the Serpent
- 6) Year of the Eagle
- 7) Year of the Dragon
- 8) Year of the Horse

Three of the eight years have 13 lunar months; the other five years have 12 lunar months. Each year begins on the first full moon after the summer solstice. Days within each month are numbered. The months are named as follows:

- 1) Month of the Griffin
- 2) Month of Fire
- 3) The Golden Month
- 4) Month of the Maiden
- 5) Month of the Scorpion
- 6) Month of the Bear
- 7) Month of the Snow Ape
- 8) Month of the Fish
- 9) Month of the Rat
- 10) Month of the Sparrow
- 11) Month of the Hawk
- 12) Month of the Ram
- 13) Month of the Dragon (*)

(*) This month only occurs in the years of the Lion, the Spider and the Dragon.

For easier dating, years in this book are numbered from the year Aquilonia was founded. Conan was born in 1248 A.A. (Aquilonian Age); the Year of the Lion.

the continental civilizations. Strange beasts and savages, previously isolated from the Atlanteans by natural barriers, began to attack in force. Forced to manage without the metals of Atlantis, the continental Atlanteans were thrown back to wood and flint.

Even worse, the Picts, whose colonies in western Valusia had only been slightly shaken, invaded the Atlantean territories. The war was sanguinary. The Picts outnumbered the Atlanteans, but the settlers still had powerful weaponry. Five hundred years later, the two cultures had all but vanished, becoming "a nation of savages — the Picts — carrying on continual warfare with tribes of savages — the Atlanteans." ("The Hyborian Age," by Robert E. Howard.)

The Lemurian Isles also sank, and many Lemurians fled to the Thurian continent. The Khari (who had been comparatively untouched by the Cataclysm) enslaved the refugees. Over the centuries, all vestiges of the Lemurian culture were crushed, transforming the survivors into near-beasts. Those who dared rise against their masters were sacrificed to the Khari demon-gods; most preferred a quiet life of slavery to eternal torment.

The Khari

For 1,500 years, the Lemurians toiled for the Khari in brutish slavery. But eventually the Khari declined, as all civilizations do. Approximately 2,500 years before Conan, the Lemurians rose up and destroyed them. Those few Khari who survived fled west, eventually founding the kingdom of Stygia (p. 80).

The slaves quickly fell to bickering over the remains of Khari civilization, but without their masters, they were left to puzzle over their artifacts and try to unravel their mysteries.

Acheron, Hyperborea the Elder and Stygia

The Khari were forgotten, but not gone. They traveled west, stopping for a time by the shores of the Vilayet Sea before bursting on the primitive West and claiming it for their own.

The Khari found the West without a civilization. The Picts and Atlanteans had battled themselves into mutual near-extinction and stone-age technology. The serpent people, who had once been mankind's greatest foe, had faded into

their jungles, leaving only a remnant of their former glory in human-inhabited lands. Only in a few areas, such as the Valley of Zingg and the tribal lands of the Zhemri, did any human-ruled civilization remain. In this power vacuum, the Khari established their leadership.

The Khari kingdoms are known by every child of the West. They are the nightmare realms of the children's stories. Acheron dominated the north, covering much of modern Nemed and Corinthia. Ruled from purple-towered Python, Acheron was the most cosmopolitan of the Khari kingdoms. Although the Acheroneans were cruel masters, they encouraged the primitive peoples to come and join their kingdom, and thereby become part of their new slave races.



Hyperborea the Elder ruled the central portion of the West, covering modern Koth, Ophir and Shem. It was the weakest of the three nations and the magically poorest land, but it was protected from Pictish and Atlantean raids by the bulwark of Acheron.

Old Stygia, dark and brooding, was the most powerful of the three Khari nations. Where Acheron and Hyperborea the Elder had to create their own social order, Old Stygia conquered a civilization on a par with its own. That previous kingdom had been ruled by the now-fallen serpent men, and only a few members of that decaying race remained to hold the reins of power. The Khari first offered to serve the serpent men, then betrayed them, and have ruled this last bastion of pre-humankind ever since.



The Rise of the Hyborians

For over half a millennium, the Khari ruled undisputed. Their fall came by the wandering of a simple tribal people, whose warlike nature, conquering aspirations and unstoppable numbers were the downfall of the Khari empires. These people were the Hyborians.

The Hyborians were a light-skinned, northern tribal people who were forced out of the North by competition with other tribes in the region. Initially, those few pathetic souls who crossed the Graskaal Mountains into Acheron were treated as just another slave race, forced to work for the Khari masters.

To Hyborian eyes, however, the comparatively meager sustenance of a slave was a feast beyond imagination. Word quickly spread through the north that more was thrown away each day in Acheron than could ever be found on the icy plains.

The Hyborians came by the thousands. What had begun as a trickle soon became a migration, as word spread of the plenty to be found in the Khari kingdoms. When the Hybori became too populous, Acheron tried to seal its northern border, using troops to drive the Hyborians back to their icy homes. In the face of armed men, the tide of refugees soon became an army.

After a millennium of warfare, the Hyborians had obliterated Acheron and Hyperborea the Elder. Some small remnant of the spirit of that latter land remained in the icy north, in the form of the Witchmen of modern Hyperborea.

Conan and the Cthulhu Mythos

Robert E. Howard frequently corresponded with H. P. Lovecraft, originator of the "Cthulhu Mythos," and the two writers were often published in the same magazines, especially *Weird Tales*. Howard even wrote some Cthulhoid tales (most notably "The Thing on the Roof" and "The Black Stone") with Lovecraft's encouragement.

Although the Conan stories were certainly not imitative of Lovecraft, Howard drew background from Lovecraftian sources, and the Conan stories tie in to Howard's own Cthulhoid stories. Thus, in a sense, the Conan cycle itself is a part of the Cthulhu Mythos!

In the days of Conan, the Lovecraftian elder beings were little more active than they are today, but their worshippers were more open. Yog-Sothoth was venerated as the cannibal god Yog (see p. 35). The toad-god Tsathoggua had a temple on the Nameless Isle. Dagoth is mentioned in the second Conan movie. There are many other references, hidden like gargoyles within the architecture of the Conan saga.

The "Demons of the Outer Dark," from the evil night between the stars, occasionally appeared in Conan tales. However, Howard's view of the depths of space was not as nightmarish as Lovecraft's; the "elephant-god" Yag-Kosha, also a long-lived visitor from space, was a creature of good.

The complete Cthulhu Mythos is not within the scope of this work. For those who wish to add a horror element to their Conan campaign, the *Call of Cthulhu* game, from Chaosium, is recommended for extensive, well-researched information about the Mythos.





Technology

In Conan's time, most of the Hyborian Age is Tech Level (TL) 3 — very like medieval Europe. Some areas, such as Cimmeria and the Black Kingdoms, are TL2 or lower. Remnants of the old Atlantean and Khari civilizations even provide bits and pieces of higher technology.

Weaponry: Gunpowder is unknown. The finest hand weapons are made of steel; the best ranged weapons are the Hyrkanian composite recurve bows. The trained Hyborian knight in full plate armor is the ultimate fighting machine.

Travel: Those who can afford it ride animals; the others walk. The horse collar is unknown, but stirrups and horseshoes are common. Most cargo is hauled by ox-cart or wagon. Camels are common in desert areas. Ships are powered by oars or sails. Most sailors chart courses by lead-line and log; most navigation is by landmarks, bird-flight and seaman's instinct.

Medicine: Most surgeries are performed by "barbers" who pull teeth, remove warts, and perform amputations. Anesthesia and the germ theory of disease are unknown. Herbalists purvey various mixtures "guaranteed" to cure any ill. Magical healing is the most effective medicine, but it is very rare.

Communications: Horse couriers are used by the military and government services; others must trust their missives to merchant caravans. Some spy services (notably those of Turan and Zamora) use trained birds to deliver messages. Most people are illiterate and hire scribes to write and read for them.

Only Stygia was able to stop the tide of Hyborian warriors through the use of magics so potent as to nearly bring on another Cataclysm. The land of Stygia still bears the scars of that struggle, but the Hyborians were stopped.

The Coming of the Hyrkanians

The Hyborians have ruled the West for 1,500 years. Only within the last few centuries has any foe come which might have a hope of challenging these resourceful conquerors. This foe is the Hyrkanians.

The Hyrkanians are the descendants of the Lemurians who rebelled against the Khari over 2,000 years ago. While most of the slave races chose to remain in the Khari "homeland" and scavenge from the remnants of that civilization, the Hyrkanians chose to wander west and rule the huge, empty steppe.

Two centuries ago, the first Hyrkanian warriors rounded the southern tip of the Vilayet Sea. They conquered the hill tribes of that region and founded the empire of Turan. Now they have advanced to the very edge of Hyborian civilization, bringing new kinds of warfare and a belief in their own conquering destiny as strong as that of the Hyborians.

This is the world of Conan.

The Hyborian World

The Hyborian Age is 12,000 years before the modern era. In general, it resembles places and times from more recent history, due to parallel development and the necessities of a medieval technology. In some ways, however, it is quite different, thanks to its unique history and the influence of sorcery.

Customs vary wildly across the lands of the Hyborian Age. Many of the individual traits which distinguish the nations are described in the *Lands of the Hyborian Age* entry for each nation. However, the nations can be divided into several "families" which share common origins.

The Hyborian Nations

The Hyborian nations were created by the Hybori invasion which began 1,500 years before Conan. These northern peoples viewed themselves as a new wave, purging the world of the corruption of their predecessors. Something of that attitude of "manifest destiny" remains in their Hybori-centric world view, and in their constant encroachment into neighboring territories. Aquilonia, Argos, the Border Kingdom, Corinthia, Nemedia and Ophir all are part of the Hyborian hegemony, and Koth is at least heavily influenced by her Hyborian neighbors.

The Hyborian nations resemble most closely the Europe of the Middle Ages. The larger nations, such as Nemedia and Aquilonia, have developed a feudal system any vassal of Edward III would be comfortable with. In some aspects (particularly in warfare and philosophy) they have more sophistication, and the

set-piece battles of the Hyborians are just as Sir John Hawkwood might have fought them.

The Khari Empires

Most of the true Khari are dead now, but the lands they settled continue their culture and dominate much of the central West. Stygia is the greatest of the Khari empires, but Brythunia and Koth owe much to their Khari heritage.

The Khari have no direct analog in Earth's history. However, Stygia can be viewed as a decadent Egypt, with overtones of other classical "evil empires," and some of this taint shows in the other Khari kingdoms.

The Khari Successor States

The Khari successor peoples dominate the East. Khitai and Hyrkana (as well as the recently created empire of Turan) are all Khari successor nations.

Khitai, Hyrkana and Turan represent "the unknown East." The Conan tales are told from an essentially Hyborian perspective (even though Conan is Cimmerian) and to a Hyborian, these lands are filled with mystery. Vague rumors are known of these kingdoms (just as rumors filtered back to Europe about the Orient after the Crusades), but half of what is heard is a lie, and the other half is not always believed.

The Tribal Peoples

The tribal peoples comprise a number of groups with some common traits. Each has spread to cover a limited region, with little drift or expansion. Most of these peoples are relatively young, certainly no older than the Hybori.

The Northern Barbarians

These include Cimmerians, Hyperboreans (which, while Hyborian in origin, did not share in the Hyborian expansion) and Nordheimr. All of these peoples are TL2, and are well known for their strength and tenacity.

The Black Kingdoms

These include Darfar, Keshan, Kush, Punt and Zembabwei. They are all Iron-Age cultures, varying from city builders to pastoralists to hunter-gatherers.

The Vilayet Tribes

This group includes hundreds of tiny tribes, each with its own traditional lands, and with hundreds of years of feuding history. These tribes live in Iranistan and Ghulistan, and make up most of the citizenry of Turan. (The ruling classes in Turan are Hyrkanaian.)

The Picts

The Picts are perpetual barbarians. Their only use for civilization is as a provider of better weapons. In Conan's time, they are confined to a strip of land in the uttermost west of the Thurian continent.

The Iranistani

The troubled Kingdom of Iranistan is flanked by powerful and dangerous neighbors: Turan, Vendhya, Stygia and the Black Kingdoms.

The Shemites

The city-states of Shem are established on the great expanse of plain west of Turan. United, they would be a formidable enemy to the great powers. Usually, they would rather fight each other than strangers.

Magic

Most of the lands of the Hyborian Age have a normal level of mana; magic is strong, but uncommon. Perhaps one person in 500 actually can cast a spell or two; one in 5,000 is a true practicing "wizard."

There are exceptions, however. The Khari were able to enhance the mana levels of certain areas through sacrifice, increasing them to high or even very high. There are also naturally occurring magical areas, as well as comparatively "barren" areas.

One interesting aspect of Hyborian Age magic is that it seems dependent on the belief system of the subjects. Thus, Eastern magic, which is heavily dependent upon hypnotism, is less effective on Hyborians and other Westerners because they are not raised to believe in the power.

Just as strange, however, is the influence of a general belief in magic on spell success. Eastern magic is less effective in the West, particularly after the pragmatic Conan becomes King of Aquilonia, because the people no longer believe in the power and infallibility of mages. Given the number of mages Conan runs through during his career, this may be justified — and it affects the probability of spell success. In game terms, a mage may suffer a penalty of -1 to -3 on spell skill rolls if the type of magic attempted is not part of the general beliefs of the natives of the region in which the magic is being cast (GM's discretion).

For more information on magic in the Hyborian Age, see *Hyborian Magic*, pp. 95-100.



2

HYBORIAN
CHARACTERS

Hyborian adventurers can be built on either 100 character points for a "realistic" campaign or 200 character points for a "cinematic" campaign (see p. B183), at the GM's discretion. Cinematic campaigns are truer to the atmosphere of the Conan stories (especially the later imitations of Howard and the films), but many who are already familiar with *GURPS* campaigns may be more comfortable with a realistic style.

In most Hyborian campaigns, the PCs will be human. Howard made little use of nonhumans, as the Conan stories were in theory occurring on Earth. However, certain other races do appear in the stories, and are available should the player (and the GM) wish to use them.

Nonhuman characters are created using the same attribute table used for humans — but they may get *bonuses* or *penalties* to one or more attributes. These



bonuses and penalties affect the final attribute level, not the point cost. For instance, a degenerate man has a -2 penalty on IQ. That means that if he pays 0 points for IQ, he gets an 8 (i.e., 10 from the Basic Attributes table on p. B13 minus his penalty of 2). If he pays 10 points for IQ, he gets an 11 (from the table) minus 2, for a total of 9.

Nonhumans can have "natural" disadvantages. These do not count against the limit of 40 points for a character. To the nonhuman, these are normal traits.

Where not described otherwise, assume that other races are functionally identical to humans.

New Nonhumans

There are four non-human types described in the Conan saga — degenerate men, satyrs, serpent men and S'tarra. Of these, the first two can be used as player characters, but they are rare.

Degenerate Men

-25 points

The descendants of the pre-Cataclysmic peoples have not all thrived. Some have fallen further and further from their once-lofty civilizations, until they are barely recognizable as men. Degenerate men can be found in remote regions throughout the Hyborian world.

These bestial half-men live in caves or thrown-together shelters in stone-age communities, or in small nomadic groups. Their language (such as it is) consists of grunts indicating the presence of food, alerts of danger and expression of hunger and other bodily needs. Degenerate men are considered near-animals by the Hyborians, although particularly clever individuals, if properly trained, are as capable of human behavior as any Hyborian. They have only minimal mastery of such higher arts as the use of fire and tools.

Degenerate men are squat and bestial looking, with dark, matted hair, prognathous jaws, and long, spindly limbs. They are typically 3'-4" shorter than most Hyborians, but they are stocky so their weight is normal for their ST.

Advantages and Disadvantages: Degenerate men are IQ -2, ST +2, and HT +1. They have the Primitive disadvantage and are TL0.

Friends and Enemies: All true men (including the "primitive" Picts, Cimmerians, and Kushites) detest degenerate men (-3 on Reaction rolls). Primarily out of fear and confusion, the degenerate men return the feeling.

Satyrs

0 points

Satyrs are 4' tall humanoids with thin, fawnlike, light-brown fur and small deer-like tails. Their legs are covered with thick, wooly fur. Their pointed, deer-like ears are set forward on their heads above their faces. From a distance their ears look like horns. They spend their lives in the deep forests of the West, particularly in Aquilonia and Nemedia.

Satyr origins are a mystery. They may have been created by an Acheronian sorcerer who magically combined human essence with that of a deer. In support



Creating New Nonhuman Races

The only nonhuman races created by Howard were the serpent men and the degenerate men. Later authors added the satyrs and S'tarra. But the Hyborian world is wide and much remains to be discovered.

There is a point value for the "advantage" or "disadvantage" of being nonhuman. To compute this for a new kind of nonhuman, start by calculating the value of the species' attribute modifiers. Use the cost to a human (see p. B13). For instance, a +1 on any attribute is worth 10; a +3 is worth 30; a +4 is worth 45, and so on. Negative modifiers, of course, have negative cost.

Advantages and disadvantages have their normal point cost from the *GURPS Basic Set*.

Reaction bonuses or penalties can be ignored unless they apply to humans (as the dominant species). In that case, each point of reaction bonus is worth +5 character points, and each point of penalty is worth -5. Other attributes which affect reaction (e.g. Appearance) are treated the same way.

A nonhuman type may have other strong or weak points that don't have a direct comparison in the Character Creation section. GMs should simply allow a reasonable "cost" for these.



of this theory, various texts (and certain evil sorcerers) recommend sacrificing satyrs to gain magical power (MOB).

The satyrs are a secretive people, and many deny their existence. Nevertheless, legends of the woodlands of Aquilonia and Nemedia warn of straying too far into the satyr forests, as satyr magic can drive intruders mad.

Satyrs appear in only one story: *Conan the Liberator*.

Advantages and Disadvantages: Satyrs have ST -2, DX +1 and HT +1. They have the advantages of Acute Hearing +2, Magery 1 and Night Vision, and the disadvantages of Bad Sight and Primitive (TL1).

Satyrs can cast Fear spells (p. B164) with an innate skill of 15 by playing their bone pipes. Deaf characters, or those who plug their ears with wax, are unaffected. Multiple satyrs can combine their energy to increase the area of the Fear spell.

Friends and Enemies: Satyrs are unknown to most humans. Those few who have encountered them are slightly distrustful (-1 on Reaction rolls). The satyrs know humans well, and do not trust them at all (-3 on Reaction rolls).

Serpent Men

35 points

The serpent men ruled the world long before the advent of man. Their empires ranged from the Uttermost South to the River Styx, and from the Western Ocean to the Lemurian Sea.

Serpent men are humanoid, although their slender limbs and scaled bodies are easily distinguished from those of humans. Their most unusual feature, however, is their head, which is wedge-shaped like a snake's, with lidless, slit-pupiled eyes, fanged jaws and flickering forked tongue.

Advantages and Disadvantages: Serpent men have IQ +1 and HT +1. They have the advantages of Acute Taste and Smell +3, Double-Jointed, Magery 1, Peripheral Vision, and Toughness (DR 1). They also have the disadvantages of Ugly (to humans) and Hard of Hearing.

Serpent men can bite for cutting damage; use the bite damage chart in the sidebar on p. B140. They can also use weapons like a human. However, they cannot bite and attack with weapons during the same turn.

Serpent men also have the natural ability to project a human disguise; in a full magic campaign (see p. 95), treat this as an Illusion Disguise spell (p. M46) with an innate skill of 15.

Friends and Enemies: Serpent men are viewed with superstitious fear and loathing by most humans (-4 on Reaction rolls). Priests of Set revere the serpent men, and give them a +4 on Reaction rolls. Conversely, serpent men consider humans to be a lower form of life (-4 on Reaction rolls).

S'tarra

10 points

The S'tarra are another serpentine race, related to the serpent men. They may be degenerate serpent men, or they may be a servitor race. Whatever their origins, they now hide in caves in the Kezankian mountains, all but unknown to the human civilizations which surround them.

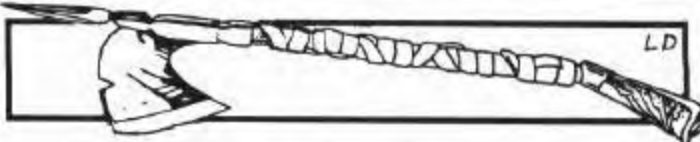
The S'tarra appear in only one story: *Conan the Invincible*.

Advantages and Disadvantages: S'tarra have ST +3, IQ -2, and DX -1. They have the advantages of Acute Taste and Smell +2, Double-Jointed, Peripheral Vision, and Toughness (DR 2). They also have the disadvantages of Ugly (to humans) and Hard of Hearing. S'tarra can bite like serpent men (see above). They do not have the magical ability to project a disguise.

Friends and Enemies: S'tarra are viewed as equivalent to serpent men (-4 on Reaction rolls). Even priests of Set have little use for these more bestial creatures. However, the S'tarra view humans with the same disdain as do their superior cousins (-4 on Reaction rolls).

Advantages, Disadvantages and Skills

This section develops the character creation information already presented in the *GURPS Basic Set*, with notes on special application to the Hyborian Age.



Advantages

Ally Group

varies

Some Hyborian characters have a loyal group of followers, each of whom is weaker than the PC, but who collectively form a support group for the character. For an example of this, see Bêlit's Suba warriors in the character descriptions (p. 125).

Ally Groups are composed of 50-point characters designed by the player (with GM approval). These characters are created just like PCs. NPC allies can have disadvantages totaling no more than 40 points, or one disadvantage of any value.

The player (or the GM) can give the individual members of the group distinctive personality traits, of course, but each member of the group is treated identically for game-rule purposes. If you have a group of identical people, plus a more powerful sidekick, handle the sidekick separately.

Frequency of appearance of Ally Groups is not the same as for allies. They are expected to be with their leader.

Appears almost all time (roll of 15 or less): listed cost;

Appears fairly often (roll of 9 or less): half cost (round up);

Appears rarely (roll of 6 or less) quarter cost (round up).

Each member of an Ally Group must pay the points to have their PC as a Patron, with the same Frequency of Appearance as the PC has for the Ally Group. For a 200-point cinematic mode PC, this will cost 15 points. The members of the Ally Group can also owe the PC a Duty (or feel a Sense of Duty), and will share in the PC's Enemies. These count against the 40-point limit.

In order to have an Ally Group, the character must have

spent at least as many character points on Status, Charisma, Leadership or an appropriate reputation as on the Ally Group. Thus, a Status 3 character (who spent 15 points on Status) may have an Ally Group of up to 20 people (see table below). These points can be combined. A character with Status +1, Charisma +1 and Leadership at IQ +2 could also have an Ally Group of up to 20.

A PC should receive no character points for any session in which he betrays, attacks or unnecessarily endangers a member of the Ally Group. If the betrayal is particularly severe or blatant, the whole group may desert!

If one of the group dies through no negligence of the PC, another member with the same abilities can be gotten from the "home base." Thus, for example, when Bêlit returns to the Southern Isles, those Suba warriors who were slain in her raiding are replaced by new warriors. However, since they're Suba warriors, she cannot get new group members in Asgalun! If a majority of the allies in the group die before replenishment, or if their deaths were caused by a cavalier "sword fodder" attitude, the recruits may stop showing up as word gets around (GM's discretion).

To determine the character point cost for an Ally Group, see the following table:

Number of Members Character Point Cost

2-4	5
5-10	10
11-20	15
21-50	20
51-100	30
100-200*	40

* over 200, + 10 per additional 100 (round up)

Remember that this character group is composed of *allies*, not slaves. They're loyal, not stupid. They are also loyal to each other. Ill treatment of one of them affects the loyalty of all of them. They can be just as obstinate and difficult to deal with as any single more powerful ally — if not more so!

Legal Enforcement Powers

10 or 15 points

Nearly all police forces in the Hyborian Age act not only as an agency for capturing criminals, but also as an informal court and instrument of punishment. A guardsman who captures a thief may just beat him rather than bringing him in for trial.

Most countries have a network of agents reporting to an unofficial member of the government, the spymaster. His agents have great power and effective legal immunity, but death is the usual penalty for a blown cover.

Lightning Calculator

5 points

See *Mathematical Ability*, p. 16.

Literacy

10 points

The Hyborian Age is a TL3 setting, with some countries having an even lower TL. In all cases, Literacy is an advantage costing 10 points; no character receives Literacy for free.



Even characters with Literacy cannot read quickly. Since there is no printing press (or standardized spelling), the reader must adjust himself to the handwriting, grammar and spelling of the author of the document.

As a rule, a *GURPS Conan* character with Literacy can read a number of words per minute equal to twice his IQ. Thus, an average character can read 20 words per minute, while a genius (IQ 16) can read 32 words per minute. A character can purchase Speed Reading (see Skills, below) to improve this rate. Really crabbed and difficult manuscripts can force even slower reading times (GM's discretion).

Mathematical Ability

10 points

The people of the Hyborian Age have no concept of higher mathematics: trigonometry, irrational numbers, or even negative numbers are unknown to them. Even if a Hyborian character is a lightning calculator, he will not be able to use these mathematical techniques.

Patrons

varies

There are many possible patrons available in the Hyborian Age. PCs can serve the spymaster of a country (15 points — or more), a powerful noble (10 points), a mage (20 points), a major

priest (20 points), or a military or mercenary commander (15 points). If patrons are used, GMs should pay special attention to the Drawbacks of Patrons on p. B25.

Psionics

varies

Psi powers are not at all common in the Hyborian Age. No psionic advantage or skill should be taken by *GURPS Conan* characters without consultation with the GM.

Status

varies

Status hierarchies for the Hyborian Age are given in Chapter 5, *Lands of the Hyborian Age*.

Wealth

varies

Standard starting wealth for *GURPS Conan* characters is \$1,000. The GM may allow PCs up to Wealthy to spend all their money on personal "adventuring" gear; it is easy to spend \$5,000 on a horse, armor, and weapons. Adventurers who are Very Wealthy or Filthy Rich may only spend 20% of their starting wealth on items to be used directly in the campaign; 80% must be tied up in a home, furniture, clothing, etc. Of course, this wealth may also form the down payment on a ship, should a mercantile (or pirate) campaign be of interest.

Disadvantages

Alcoholism

-15 points

Alcohol is legal nearly everywhere in the Hyborian lands. The only exceptions have been when various rulers have gone mad or been sorcerously influenced; such rash acts have been known to bring on rebellions! Note that distillation is unknown in the Hyborian Age, so sufferers from this disadvantage will have to make do with beer and wine.

Bad Sight

-25 points

Bad Sight is not correctable in the Hyborian Age.

Code of Honor

-5 to -15 points

There are many Codes of Honor in the Hyborian Age.

- *Code of Honor of the Nemedian Knights*. Never break your word; always fight fairly and never take undue advantage of an enemy; never abandon your lord or your allies; if captured in battle, always pay your ransom; never ignore an insult to yourself, to a lady or to the Dragon Throne. -15 points.

- *Mercenaries' Code of Honor*. Once hired, stay bought; never leave a comrade in the hands of the enemy; never desert the standard. -10 points.

- *Kozaki Code of Honor*. Always avenge a betrayal, no matter what the cost; all kozaki are brothers, and brothers should be protected and avenged. -5 points.

- *Code of Honor of the Red Brotherhood*. Never abandon the ship; follow the captain, or fight him fairly for the job. -5 points.

- *Code of Honor of the White Square*. Never harm any living creature; never use magic to dominate or rule; never tell the secrets of the Order to any outside the Order. -15 points.

Epilepsy

-30 points

The seers of the Hyborian lands are not epileptic. Epilepsy is believed to be a form of demonic possession by the peoples of the Hyborian Age, so an epileptic vision is unlikely to be believed.

Phobias

varies

Given the technological level and magical involvement of the Hyborian Age, the following phobias have specific costs:

Machinery (technophobia): -5/-10.

Magic (magophobia): -10/-20.

Sharp Things (aichmophobia): -15/-30.

Number 13 (triskadekaphobia): Lucky and unlucky numbers vary with nationality. Hyborians consider 13 unlucky, and believe the numbers 6 and 30 to be very lucky. Stygians dislike the numbers 3 and 7, but rejoice in 5 and 25. Turanians and Hyrkanians like things to come in fours (4, 8, 44, etc.), and consider 3 and 11 unlucky. The Khitans consider 9 and 27 to be very lucky, but think 7 is unlucky. Characters taking triskadekaphobia should in fact fear the unlucky numbers from their culture. Whatever the number, this phobia still has a point value of -5/-10.



Split Personality

-10/-15 points

Subjects with this disadvantage may find others believing them possessed, and may be the target of some rather unpleasant exorcisms!

Skills

Archaeology

see p. B59

Characters may specialize in one or more of the historical civilizations (see *The Hyborian Age*, pp. 5-9).

Armoury/TL

see p. B53

Characters may specialize in one or more of the following fields:

Armor, Bows and Arrows, Hand Weapons (knives, swords, maces, etc.), Siege Engines.

This skill defaults to Blacksmith/TL-3 for Hand Weapons and Armor, Woodworking-3 for Bows and Arrows and Carpentry-3 for Siege Engines.

Engineer

see p. B60

Characters may specialize in one or more of the following fields:

Primitive machines: catapults, etc. (prerequisite: Mechanic).

Mining (prerequisite: Geology).

Vehicles (prerequisite: Mechanic/Wagons).

Traps (prerequisite: Traps).

Clockwork (prerequisite: Mechanic).

Fortifications (no prerequisite).

Bridges and Buildings (no prerequisite).

Ships (prerequisite: Shipbuilding).

History

see p. B61

The character may specialize in one of the following:

Pre-Human Cultures, Atlantis, Pre-Cataclysmic Thuria, The Cataclysm, The Eastern Khari Empire, The Western Khari Empires, Early Hyborian History, Modern Hyborian History.

Other specialties can be developed by focusing on one country (either ancient or modern), such as the history of Acheron, Aquilonia, Turan, Vendhya or Khitai.

Hypnotism

see p. B56

Hypnotism is commonly practiced in the Hyborian Age, especially by the sorcerers of the East. It is viewed as a magical

skill (even though it uses no magic, per se). Successful use of the Mind-Sending spell (p. M26) is +2 to Hypnotism.

Hypnotism is best performed by strong-willed people. Thus, Strong Will and Weak Will are applied as modifiers to the Hypnotism roll. Two levels of Strong Will add +2 to the caster's skill with Hypnotism; two levels of Weak Will are -2.

In addition to those abilities described in the *GURPS Basic Set*, a hypnotist can cause a hypnotized subject to forget things. This is treated as a specialized form of post-hypnotic suggestion; the hypnotist must have the subject hypnotized, and then succeed with a second Hypnotism roll. The subject gets a roll vs. IQ every day to restore the memory, minus the number of days since the hypnotism. Thus, after IQ days, there is no chance of remembering. If the hypnotist's roll was a critical success, the subject must also make a critical success to remember!

Magic

See *Hyborian Magic*, pp. 95-100.

Mathematics

see p. B61

See *Mathematical Ability*, p. 16.

Mechanic

see p. B54

Mechanics can specialize in one or more of the following:

Wagons

Clockwork and small gadgets

Siege equipment

Craft machines (looms, potter's wheels, etc.)

Mills (wind and water)

Traps

Research

see p. B62

Hyborian libraries are repositories of books and scrolls, usually without any significant organization. Even the most scrupulous librarian will have classified his scrolls (probably) by language first, and by subject second — he can't take the time to read all of them to find out what they're about. There are neither indexes nor tables of contents and nothing is filed in alphabetical order. Thus, for the Hyborian Age, Research is a Mental/Hard skill.

New Skills

Hyperborean Baton (Physical/Hard)

No default

The Hyperboreans teach a combat skill using a special baton. These batons have two solid platinum spheres, one at each end of a central bar of wood. (For those without Hyperborean Baton skill, these batons can be considered identical to those described on p. B206.) The Hyperboreans can strike with these batons against the nerve centers in the human body to paralyze limbs without causing any permanent damage.

To simulate the care required to use these batons, they must always be used to strike at a specific hit location (p. B203). The batons do swing damage for armor penetration purposes only. If the blow hits the target and the force penetrates the armor, it does no permanent damage, but the location is "crippled" (p. B127) for 1d hours. Thereafter, the location returns to normal (although other injuries are not cured).

The effectiveness of Batons depends on understanding the position and effects of various nerve centers. Therefore, characters must learn this skill separately for each kind of creature, or default to any other Hyperborean Baton-6. Thus, for example, a

character with Hyperborean Baton skill for use on humans is -6 to attack a satyr, unless he has a separate Baton skill for satyrs.

Hyperborean Baton skill is extremely rare even in Hyperborea. Knowledge of the skill is usually limited to Witchmen in service to Louhi. It requires a 10-point Unusual Background for other Hyperboreans and a 20-point Unusual Background for non-Hyperboreans.

Speed Reading (Mental/Average)

No default

This skill is the skill of improving your reading speed by study and practice. *GURPS Conan* characters read very slowly (when compared to modern people); add your Speed Reading skill level to your IQ, doubling the total to determine the number of words you read per minute. You must be Literate to get Speed Reading skill.

Inappropriate Skills

The following skills are inappropriate to the Hyborian Age: Astrology, Battlesuit, Beam Weapons, Bicycling,

Biochemistry, Black Powder Weapons, Computer Operation, Computer Programming, Demolition, Driving, Ecology, Electronics, Electronics Operation, Force Shield, Force Sword, Forensics, Free Fall, Genetics, Guns, Motorcycle, Nuclear Physics, Parachuting, Photography, Piloting, Powerboat, Scuba, Skiing, Speed-Load, Telegraphy and Vacc Suit.

Languages

Many languages are spoken in the Hyborian Age. Each nation has at least one major language and there are many local dialects.

The modern languages can be divided into several families.

The Hyborian family: Aquilonian, Argosian, the argot of the Border Kingdom, Corinthian, Nemedian and Ophiric.

The Hyrkanian family: Hyrkanian and Turanian.

The Khari family: Hyperborean, Khitan and Stygian.

The Black Kingdoms family: Amazonian, Darfari, Keshani, Kushite, Puntian and Zimbabwan.

The Atlantean family: Antillian, Cimmerian, Nordheimir and Pictish.

The Shemitish family: Kothic and Shemitish.

The Vendhyan family: Kosalan, Meruvian and Vendhyan.

The Vilayet family: Ghulistani and Iranistani.

The remainder (Brythunian, Zamoran and Zingaran) are unrelated to any other tongues.

For details on the difficulty and defaults appropriate to each modern language see the entry in Chapter 5, *Lands of the Hyborian Age* for the country in which it is spoken.

There are also certain ancient tongues which, while in general no longer spoken, have many manuscripts remaining untranslated, and one modern language which is totally non-human.

Acheronean

Mental/Average

This Khari-family tongue was spoken by the inhabitants of the Kingdom of Acheron, which extended over modern Nemed, Brythunia, Corinthia and Ophir. It used the Khari writing systems.

Ancient Khari

Mental/Average

The founding language of the Khari family was spoken by the Khari refugees when they fled what is now Khitan and invaded the West. It is guttural, with many fricative (v, d) sounds. It is written with two scripts. One is ideographic, used to inscribe monuments and formal documents; the other is alphabetic, used for less formal writings.

Ancient Stygian

Mental/Hard

This Khari-family tongue is a mixture of ancient Khari with the tribal tongues of the ancient Stygians. Its monumental form is identical to Ancient Khari, but another, less formal written form uses a modification of the Valusian alphabet (see below).

Atlantean

Mental/Average

Atlantean was the tongue of the inhabitants of the now-fallen isle of Atlantis. It was used by the Atlantean colonists in the days before the Cataclysm, although some cultures (such as the Cimmerians) now speak a greatly modified form. Its script is wholly ideographic.

Lemurian

Mental/Hard

Lemurian was the tongue of the islanders of eastern Lemuria. It is a sing-song tonal language, with an alphabetic script modified by tonal diacritics.

Tongue of the Degenerate Men

Mental/Easy

The degenerate men communicate in a monosyllabic system of grunts and howls which can only barely be considered a language. If a human wished to learn it, it would be Mental/Easy, but it is only suitable to convey such fundamentals as the existence of food and water.

Tongue of the Satyrs

Mental/Very Hard

This is the tongue of the satyrs of the Giant's Notch area of the Brocellian Forest in Aquilonia. It sounds "like the cawing of crows," and has no written form.

Tongue of the Serpent Men

Mental/Very Hard

This is the tongue of the non-human serpent men of ancient Stygia. When spoken, it has a flat, nasal sound with many sibilants. It is difficult for a human to speak the language, since serpent-man mouth structure is decidedly inhuman. The written form of the tongue is made up of patterns of squiggly lines. The number of lines and the steepness of the squiggles convey both literal meaning and emotional overtones. Humans, who do not have the same pattern sense as serpent men, find it difficult to read (-5 on Language roll).

Valusian

Mental/Hard

This western tongue was the primary language of the pre-Cataclysmic empires of the Thurian continent. Valusian uses the same consonants as the Tongue of the Serpent Men, but mixes with them a rich set of vowels and vowel diphthongs (oi, ui, ai, etc.). It is written with an alphabetic script.

Jobs, Status, and Cost of Living



In civilized areas, PCs may find jobs to provide income while they are not in play. Of course, not every job is available in every part of the world — there is little call for a ship captain

in Brythunia! Jobs can help cover the PC's cost of living, as required by his Status. The *Jobs Table* lists a number of jobs; the GM may add others. Some have skill or experience prerequisites (default values don't count here); the character must have at least a half-point invested in the skill).

Cost of Living

Status doesn't always correspond to a specific standard of living, but it does give the best general indicator. Therefore, monthly cost of living is determined by the PC's status. Use the table on p. B191.

Note that living below your status level may reduce your status! Roll vs. IQ each month; a failure means status drops by 1. The point value of your character drops if your status drops.

Jobs Table

<i>Job (Prerequisites), Income</i>	<i>Success Roll</i>	<i>Critical Failures</i>
Poor Jobs		
Farm laborer (ST 9+), \$150	12	LJ/LJ
Servant (no attribute below 7), \$200	IQ	LJ/LJ, whipped, 2d
Street beggar* (none), \$150	10	-1i/3d
Street vendor* (none), \$200	IQ-1	-2i/1d
Thief* (4 Thief skills at 13+, or 2 at 16+), \$300	Best PR	3d, A/6d, jailed
Struggling Jobs		
Apprentice (Craft skill 10+), \$100 (no living expenses)	PR	2d/4d or LJ
Bandit (Survival 11+, one Weapon skill 11+), \$300	Best PR	3d/3d, jailed
Cook (Cooking 12+), \$25 × skill	PR-2	LJ/2d
Gambler* (Streetwise, Gambling, Fast-Talk), \$40 × IQ	Best PR	3d, X/lose hand
Jongleur* (traveling entertainer), (Bard or Musical skill at 14+), \$400	PR-2	LJ/2d, rotten eggs
Laborer (ST 10+), \$250	PR	LJ/2d, LJ
Noble's servant (Savoir-Faire 13+, Status -1 or higher), \$300	PR	LJ/1d, LJ
Porter* (ST 12+), \$300	PR+1	1d, LJ/2d, LJ
Sailor (Seamanship 10+), \$250+room and board	PR	2d/3d
Shepherd/drover (Animal Handling 12+), \$250	PR-1	1d, LJ/3d, LJ
Store clerk (Merchant 10+), \$350	PR	-1i, LJ/-3i, LJ
Tenant farmer* (Agronomy 12+, ST 10+), \$300	PR	-1i/-2i, LJ
Traveling artisan* (Craft skill 11+), \$350	PR	-1i/-2i
Average Jobs		
Artisan (Craft skill 14+), \$35 × skill	PR	LJ/-1i, LJ
Castle guardsman (Weapon skill levels totaling 40+, Savoir-Faire 12+), \$600	Best Wpn	2d/ 4d, LJ
City guard (Weapon skills levels totaling 40+), \$500	Best PR	2d/4d, LJ
Free farmer* (Agronomy 12+, ST 10+, some land), \$500	PR	-1i/-3i
Large-animal trainer (Animal Handling 14+, Vet 12+), \$40 × lower skill	PR	2d, -1i/4d, C
Mercenary soldier (Weapon skill levels totaling 40+, Survival 12+, appropriate equipment), \$750	Best Wpn	3d, -2i/5d, -4i, LJ
Scribe or minor bureaucrat (Literacy; DX 12+ or Administration 12+), \$300	PR	-1i/LJ
Shopkeeper* (Merchant 12+), \$30 × skill	PR	-2i/-6i
Slaver* (Merchant 10+, Diplomacy 10+), \$700	PR	-2i/3d, -4i, X
Smuggler* (Merchant 10+, Streetwise 12+, Shiphandling 11+), \$600	PR-2	3d/5d, X
Soldier (Weapon skill levels totaling 40+, Survival 12+), \$550	Best Wpn	3d/5d, LJ
Traveling merchant (Merchant 12+, Diplomacy 12+), \$35 × skill	PR-2	2d, -2i/-6i, 3d, X
Comfortable Jobs		
Alchemist* (Alchemy 14+), \$40 × skill	PR-2	2d, -2i/3d, -3i
Healer* (Physician 14+), \$40 × skill	PR	-2i/-2i, 2d
Master artisan (Craft skill 20+), \$30 × skill	PR-4	LJ/-2i, LJ
Master merchant (Merchant 16+), \$30 × skill	PR	-3i/-8i
Mercenary leader* (as military officer (see below), plus Savoir-Faire at 14+ but no rank), \$20 × total of above skill levels	Best PR	-2i, 3d/-3i, 5d, LJ
Military officer (Weapon skill levels totaling 60+; appropriate equipment; Strategy at 14+, Rank 3 to 5), \$15 × total of above skill levels	Best PR	3d/5d, LJ
Priest (Theology 12+, Clerical Investment), \$800	PR	-1i/LJ
Wealthy Jobs		
Administrator or bureaucrat (Administration 14+), \$200 × skill	PR	-2i/-6i, LJ
High church official (IQ 12+, Theology 14+, Diplomacy 14+), \$3,000	Best PR	-1i/-2i, LJ
Member of noble family (None; Diplomacy and Poisons are handy), \$1,000	IQ+2	-2i/D
Ruling noble (Diplomacy, status 3+), \$3,000	PR-3	-2i/-4i, D

* indicates freelance occupations. Income is earned when roll is made exactly. For more information, see pp. B192-194.

- A — The character is arrested for a crime, but is freed after 1d-2 weeks.
 X — The character is run out of town.
 D — The character loses his noble title.
 LJ — The character loses his job.
 C — Make a HT roll. If you fail, one limb (pick randomly) is crippled.



Equipment and Prices

Much of the medieval equipment described in the *GURPS Basic Set* (pp. B206-207, 210, and 212) is appropriate for the Hyborian Age.

Glass Weapons and Armor

Weapons of specially-hardened glass can be found on the islands of Antillia, where metal is scarce. These weapons are fragile; it takes 2 hits of damage to break a dagger, 3 to break a knife or shortsword, 4 to break a broadsword, and 5 to break a larger sword. For parrying, glass weapons are treated as *cheap*.

Glass weapons are very sharp. Glass *cutting* or *impaling* weapons do +1 damage (before any multipliers) if they penetrate armor.

Only scale and plate armors are available in glass. Due to its slick surface, glass armor deflects blows better; add 1 to the PD of the armor. However, any blow exceeding the DR of the armor by 2 or more shatters the armor, making it useless.

Hyperborean Batons

Hyperborean Batons are described on p. 17. They are extremely precise in manufacture, balance and weight, and require a large quantity of platinum. They cost \$800, and weigh 3½ lbs.

The Dragon's Feet

The thieves of Zamora use *Dragon's Feet*. These are large, metal claws which can be tightened or loosened by manipulating a lever. Two *Dragon's Feet* are worn on the climber's feet; two more are used as mobile handholds.

Dragon's Feet require Climbing skill. Eight hours of familiarity give +1 to skill; 24 hours gives +2; 100 hours gives +3. A beginning character who purchases *Dragon's Feet* and has any points in Climbing is assumed to be fully familiar with them.

A climber can use the *Feet* to create handholds and footholds on a vertical stone wall. However, manipulating the levers on the *Dragon's Feet* is time-consuming. A climber can expect to gain only about 1 foot every ten seconds, on average.

Possession of *Dragon's Feet* is a *prima facie* case for burglary in every society of the Hyborian Age. Penalties range from death to a share of the loot depending on the honesty of the local authorities. They weigh 5 lbs. and cost \$200.

Powers of the Lotus

The lotus plant is the most important single source of drugs and poisons in the Hyborian world. The Hyborian lotus is a jungle vine, with large blossoms (up to one foot across). It is found in most of the tropical jungle and swamp areas of the Thurian continent. The Purple Lotus Swamp of Stygia and the jungles of southern Khitai are sources for the deadliest blooms.

Many different drugs and poisons are produced from the lotus. One "dose" of lotus drug is enough to affect one person, except where vapors or powders are concerned. Then, one dose is enough to affect a 7-hex area (usually 1 hex and the 6 surrounding ones). Breathing *any* of the vapor will cause the specified effect; to hold your breath successfully, make a HT roll, or a HT-3 roll if the vapor was unexpected. Most will linger for 10 seconds indoors, or a second or so outdoors in a breeze.

The several different-colored species of lotus have different effects. It should also be noted that different parts of the lotus can be used in many different ways, and different preparations of the same lotus will have different effects. Some of the commoner possibilities include:

The flowers can be eaten, or their aroma inhaled.

The dried flowers can be burned, ground and inhaled, or cooked. Steeped in alcohol they make a "tincture."

The roots can be eaten raw, or dried and prepared in any way the dried flowers can be used.

The sap collected from the stems can be dried and powdered, or mixed with alcohol, or applied to the skin, or drunk.

The pollen of the flowers can be collected, though this is dangerous! Any type of pollen that has interesting effects will affect anyone collecting it unless precautions are taken. An extra roll on Botany or Poisons must be made; failure means the collector got the equivalent of a dose of pollen himself.

Buying Lotus

Most lotus is difficult to acquire even where it grows. The narcotic fumes make lotus gathering a job for specialists. In the more civilized Hyborian lands, lotus is rare and expensive. The prices given below assume that one is dealing with a fairly ethical dealer in a large city. Locating such a dealer requires a *Streetwise* or *Area Knowledge* roll. The GM should require penalties (up to -10) for less cosmopolitan places.

To locate lotus in the wild, one must be in a lotus-growing area (GM's decision). A roll against Botany, Naturalist or Poisons (with a penalty based on rarity in the area) is necessary. If the lotus is not to be used fresh, a roll on Botany, Chemistry, or (for deadly varieties) Poisons is necessary for processing. A failed roll ruins the raw materials; a critical failure means the person doing the processing, and everyone else in the room, suffers the effect of the desired product.

In Vendhya, the narcotic red and pink lotus are common and easy to find; in fact, in rural areas, even the poorest people may have lotus twining over the house. Lotus addiction is fairly common in those areas, and very common among outlanders who spend much time there!

Types of Lotus

Black lotus. Black lotus is found in Khitai, Stygia and the Black Kingdoms. The stalks are green with prominent leaves; the blossoms are a foot across and ebony black, with a faint but distinctive perfume.

The perfume is narcotic; it acts as an incapacitating gas (see p. B132). Anyone within ten yards of a cluster of lotus blooms must make a HT+Will roll once per minute, or fall unconscious (-1 to the roll for each yard closer). An unconscious victim makes a HT roll every 15 minutes to regain consciousness. Blossoms lose their narcotic perfume one hour after plucking.

The juice of the black lotus is a quick and deadly poison. It works whether ingested or injected into the bloodstream. The



victim must make a HT-3 roll or he will go into a violent tetanic seizure and die in 2d seconds. A successful roll still results in a violent seizure that incapacitates the victim for 2d hours (1d on a critical success). Black lotus juice is dark yellow in color and has a sweet taste. Cost is \$100 per dose.

A powder can be precipitated from this juice. It is a respiratory poison with the same effects as the juice. The powder is yellow-green and very fine. Cost is \$500 per dose. Or, for one week a year, the pollen of the black lotus may be gathered; it has exactly the same effect as the juice.

An antidote for black lotus poison is available but rare; when available it costs \$300 per dose. Taken as a prophylactic not more than three hours before the poisoning it prevents any damage. Administered after the poisoning, it prevents death and reduces the incapacitating seizure to 1d minutes.

Gray lotus. Gray lotus is found in the Swamps of the Dead in the extreme east of Khitai. The dust precipitated from its sap induces a berserk state (see p. B31) in anyone who breathes it, unless a Will-5 roll is made to resist. The victim has ST+2 while the fit continues, but, unlike a normal berserk rage, he can make absolutely no distinction between friend and foe. If he is alone he will attack inanimate objects and attempt to destroy them. The fit lasts until he is dead, unconscious or 2d minutes after he stops breathing the powder. The powder is light gray and is odorless and tasteless.

Cost of this poison is \$1,000 per dose. The antidote for it works as does that for black lotus; it costs \$500 per dose.

The fresh root of the gray lotus can be chewed to induce a more "normal" berserk state (see p. B31), in which the berserker has a chance to recover his senses after his foes are defeated. The berserker also has a +2 to ST while the berserk state continues! This root does not travel well, usually lasting only a week after it is cut (though sometimes a plant can be kept alive longer in a pot). Cost is \$600 per dose when available at all.

Pink lotus. Pink lotus is found in tropical Vendhya. The odor of the fresh blossom is an aphrodisiac. It gives a temporary Lecherousness disadvantage (see p. B34) to anyone who inhales. Anyone who already has Lecherousness adds -3 to his Will penalty. There is no antidote. The blossoms retain their effect for one hour after they have been separated from the living plant. The effect lasts for 1d hours after exposure.

A paste made from pink lotus is an effective pain-killer on open wounds, but it has an intoxicating side effect. The user temporarily is healed of all non-crippling wounds, but he is impulsive, overconfident and unreasonably happy until the effect wears off in 10d minutes. Cost of this paste is \$200 per dose. A similar pain-killing effect, without the side effect, is gained by making a tincture of the leaves; this costs \$300 per dose.

Purple lotus. The true purple lotus is found only in the Purple Lotus Swamp of Stygia. True purple lotus sells at ten times the price of other lotus. The fresh blossom, or the juice squeezed from the blossom, is the most powerful and fastest-acting narcotic known. It completely paralyzes the body instantly, unless a HT-5 roll is made; the paralysis lasts for 3d hours. The mind remains completely conscious even though the body is helpless. If the HT-5 roll is successful, DX is at -5 for 3d hours. The juice can be ingested or injected; there is no known antidote.

The juice is a clear fluid and remains transparent when dried; it is odorless and tasteless. Wizards and mystics use the drug to free the mind from the body's demands; criminals have several other ingenious uses. A single dose (the juice from one entire flower) costs \$1,000.

Red lotus. Red lotus is one of the commoner varieties. It is found in all the tropical parts of the continent. It is widely used as an intoxicant by smoking and chewing. It induces a sense of

euphoria and seems to slow the passage of time. Red lotus is highly addictive (see *Addiction*, p. B30) but legal almost everywhere. It is difficult to find anywhere north of the Himelias (\$50/dose), but common (\$10/dose) south of the mountains. Purplish varieties of red lotus are frequently sold as purple lotus (see above) and some unwary users don't know the difference.

Yellow lotus. This is another very valuable type. The pollen of the yellow lotus induces a trance of great value to mages. It lasts 1d hours and gives +2 to IQ and Will while the trance continues. The mage remains conscious of his physical surroundings and can react to them. However, if he moves or speaks aloud, he will break the trance! He will then be at -2 to both IQ and Will for whatever time would have remained to his trance. One dose of the pollen costs \$1,200.

A tea brewed from the dried blossom is an aid to concentration: +1 to IQ for 10d minutes. It costs \$150 per dose.

New Lotus Potions

Following the examples above, the GM may create a complete "herbary" of lotus drugs and potions in order to surprise the players with new effects. Howard and his successors invented new types of lotus (or lotus effect) at need. The effect of the root of the black lotus, or the sap of the orange lotus, is yet to be discovered!

Masters of the Lotus

The GM may permit PCs to experiment with whatever raw lotus they can find, to discover new effects; of course, this can be risky! They can even compound their own lotus formulas by using the Alchemy rules (p. M87). Substitute the appropriate skill (Physician, Chemistry or Poisons) for Alchemy skill. For items that require manufacture, assume that the raw materials cost half the value of the finished product. The time required to make the potion accounts for the other half of the value, at \$25 per day. *Example:* The raw juice of the black lotus is a natural poison (\$100/dose). It can be used to make a potent powder (\$500/dose). Half of the cost of a dose of powder is for the raw materials (in this case, \$250 worth of juice). The other \$250 pays for the maker's time at \$25 per day — so it takes 10 days to make the powder out of the juice.

Players may also experiment with lotus to create new drugs, using the rules for creating magic spells (p. M15). Even the most trivial new formula would require at least four weeks to research, and a successful roll against the appropriate skill at -5, plus a raw material cost set by the GM. More potent formulas would take much longer!

Other Poisons

Apples of Derketo

These poisonous fruits grow in the jungles of the Black Kingdoms. They have thin skins and a reddish juice. Ingesting the juice causes 1d damage immediately and 1d more in each turn that a successful HT roll is not made. Three successful HT rolls, or one critical success, will stop any further damage. Even getting the juice on the hands is dangerous; it does 1d damage per minute to exposed skin until it is rinsed off.

Upas Wine

This translucent, reddish liquid is made from the fruit of the upas tree, also known as the Apples of Derketo (see above). The juice is extracted from the fruit and allowed to settle out impurities. The result looks, smells and tastes like an unusually clear red wine, but does 1d damage per dose (swallow) unless a roll vs. HT-3 is made. Each dose requires a separate roll. \$200/dose.

3

HYBORIAN BESTIARY

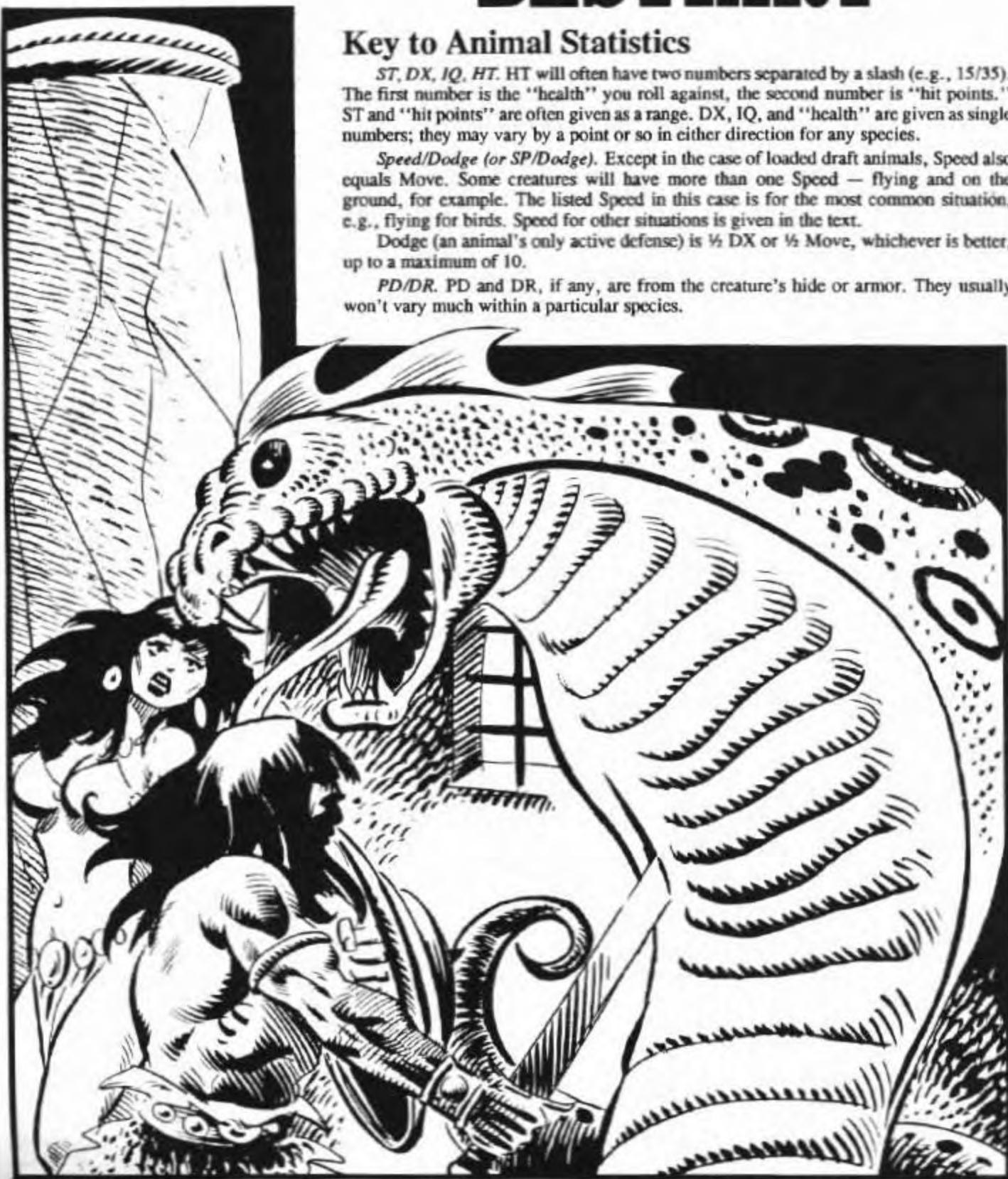
Key to Animal Statistics

ST, DX, IQ, HT. HT will often have two numbers separated by a slash (e.g., 15/35). The first number is the "health" you roll against, the second number is "hit points." ST and "hit points" are often given as a range. DX, IQ, and "health" are given as single numbers; they may vary by a point or so in either direction for any species.

Speed/Dodge (or SP/Dodge). Except in the case of loaded draft animals, Speed also equals Move. Some creatures will have more than one Speed — flying and on the ground, for example. The listed Speed in this case is for the most common situation, e.g., flying for birds. Speed for other situations is given in the text.

Dodge (an animal's only active defense) is $\frac{1}{2}$ DX or $\frac{1}{2}$ Move, whichever is better, up to a maximum of 10.

PD/DR. PD and DR, if any, are from the creature's hide or armor. They usually won't vary much within a particular species.



Damage. Listed damage is that for the creature's most common form of attack; damage for other forms of attack is given in the text description. Listed damage is for an average member of the species; stronger animals may do more. Abbreviations: imp = impaling, cut = cutting, cr = crushing.

Reach. Most creatures attack by "close combat" — a grapple or slam, followed by an attempt to crush the foe or rip it to pieces. C = close combat; 1, 2, etc. = reach in hexes; R = ranged attack, see description for details.

Size. The animal's size in hexes. Small creatures take up less than a hex; several can fit in the same hex. Large animals occupy 2 or more hexes; see p. B137.

Weight. The creature's weight, usually a range, in pounds or tons.

Habitat. Where the creature is commonly found; the primary habitat is listed first. Habitats are abbreviated as follows:

A = Arctic J = Jungle P = Plains
D = Desert M = Mountain S = Swamp
F = Forest Sub = Subterranean
FW = Fresh-Water Aquatic SW = Salt-Water Aquatic

Note: D = any dry area, including scrub woodlands
F = any temperate forest
J = any tropical forest
P = any grasslands, including prairie (largely flat land), steppes (rolling hills) and savannas (dotted with trees)

An asterisk (*) means that the ability or attack is special in some way — see the text for details.

A "—" means that the heading does not apply.

A "#" sign means that there are exceptions to the number given — see the text for details.

Previously Published Creatures

All of the normal animals described in the *GURPS Basic Set* (pp. B140-144) exist in the Hyborian Age. In particular, apes, lions, pythons and wolves all appear in Conan stories.

Animals from the *GURPS Bestiary* can also be found in the wildernesses of the Thurian continent. Any real or Ice Age animal can easily be inserted into the Hyborian Age, and many mythical creatures also appear. Dinosaurs still survive in remote areas. Game stats and descriptions for some *Bestiary* creatures which appear in the saga are reproduced below.

Dinosaurs

Allosaurus

ST: 75-100 SP/Dodge: 7/7 Size: 12+
DX: 14 PD/DR: 2/2 Weight: 1-2 tons
IQ: 3 Damage: 4d imp# Habitats: J, P
HT: 14/40-50 Reach: C, 1

Allosaurus is possibly the ultimate carnivore. It looks like a smaller (15 feet tall) and faster Tyrannosaurus with larger forelimbs. Allosaurs can bite in close combat or at 1-hex reach for 4d impaling damage, or claw in close combat for 1d cutting damage (their arms are relatively weak). They are called "dragons" in the Black Kingdoms.

Giant Crocodile

ST: 48-58 SP/Dodge: 8/6# Size: 14-17
DX: 13 PD/DR: 3/4# Weight: 1-2 tons
IQ: 3 Damage: 3d-2 cut Habitats: FW, S
HT: 13/24-30 Reach: C#

Giant crocodiles resemble their modern cousins, except for their large size (up to 50' long). They are found on the Antillian Islands, where the priests of Xotli keep them as "dragons."

Giant crocodiles can bite for 3d-2 cutting damage. They can also whip from side to side with their tails. This attack has a Reach of 3 and does 2d crushing damage.

Plesiosaurus

ST: 14-30 SP/Dodge: 7/7 Size: 3-30
DX: 14 PD/DR: 1/1 Weight: 250-2,000 lbs.
IQ: 3 Damage: 1d+1 imp Habitats: SW
HT: 14/10-25 Reach: C, 1-7

Plesiosaurs are air-breathing swimming carnivores which feed primarily on fish. However, they have no qualms about a quick snack of sailor, and are thus a hazard to ships sailing far from the coasts. Plesiosaurs attack by biting for 1d+1 impaling damage, and their long necks allow them to reach up to 7 yards out of the water — ideal for plucking people out of small boats.

Stegosaurus

ST: 75-100 SP/Dodge: 4/4 Size: 12+
DX: 8 PD/DR: 2/3 Weight: 2-3 tons
IQ: 3 Damage: 4d cut# Habitats: J, P
HT: 15/50-65 Reach: 1,2

Stegosaurus are heavy, four-legged dinosaurs with tiny heads and huge plates on their spines. The Hyborian version of this creature is carnivorous, and bites for 4d cutting damage. It can also swing its tail into any back hex, or any hex adjacent to the back hexes, for 3d impaling damage.

Hyborian Creatures

Carnivorous Ape

ST: 20-24 SP/Dodge: 7/7 Size: 1-2
DX: 13 PD/DR: 1/1 Weight: 200-600 lbs.
IQ: 6 Damage: 4d cut Habitats: M, J
HT: 12-14 Reach: C

These huge creatures bear only scant resemblance to the more tranquil primates of the modern age. They are huge carnivores covered with shaggy brown or white fur and equipped with sharp teeth and claws.

Swamp Cat

ST: 35-40 SP/Dodge: 10/7 Size: 2
DX: 15 PD/DR: 1/1 Weight: 500-700 lbs.
IQ: 4 Damage: 2d-1 cut Habitats: S
HT: 15/20-25 Range: C

These cat-like creatures roam the marshes along the shore of the Vilayet Sea. Their forequarters are like those of a cat, but their hind legs are greatly elongated, like those of a rabbit or kangaroo. They can jump several feet into the air, and travel with a bounding gait. Swamp cats attack in close combat by biting and clawing for 2d-1 cutting damage.

Winged Ape

ST: 20 SP/Dodge: 10/8 Size: 1
DX: 13 PD/DR: 2/3 Weight: 250 lbs.
IQ: 12 Damage: 2d+2 cut# Habitats: S
HT: 14 Reach: C

These degenerate creatures were the remnants of an ancient race poisoned by pollution in their drinking water. They were cunning, strong and dangerous. The last of these creatures was supposedly slain in the City of the Winged One (see *Kush and the Black Kingdoms*, pp. 68-71), but it is possible others exist farther up the Zarkheba River.

The winged ape attacks with claws for 2d+2 cutting damage, or with bite for 1d cutting damage (close combat only).



Man-Ape

ST: 20 SP/Dodge: 7/7 Size: 1
DX: 14 PD/DR: 0/1 Weight: 200 lbs.
IQ: 7 Damage: 2d+1 cut# Habitats: M
HT: 14 Reach: C, 1

Man-apes are found in the inaccessible fastnesses of the Kezankian Mountains. They have a language of clicks and grunts but use neither tools nor fire. Some philosophers think that they are beasts on their way to being human; they are known to mimic the actions of men. They prefer to attack by biting but will also punch, strangle or grapple and crush for 1d damage per turn that the grapple is maintained. They may try to mimic the use of weapons they have seen frequently (GM's decision); skill will be 9 at most.

Brythunian Dragon

ST: 25-40 SP/Dodge: 12/6 Size: 4
DX: 12 PD/DR: 2/3 Weight: 400-800 lbs.
IQ: 12 Damage: 2d-1 cut# Habitats: M
HT: 15/25-40 Reach: C, 1-3

An adolescent dragon (the only kind seen in Conan's lifetime) bites and claws in close combat for 2d-1 cutting damage, or breathes flame at range 1 to 3 for 1d+2 damage — only completely sealed armor protects.

A dragon can also attack with its tail, either by "sweeping" or "striking." For a sweep, the dragon picks either the

rightmost or leftmost foe in range (1 to 3 hexes) and rolls a Quick Contest of ST. If the dragon wins, the foe falls over, and the dragon rolls against the next foe — and so on. If the dragon ties or loses, the foe remains standing and the sweep is over.

A strike is an attack rolled against one foe at the dragon's normal DX by literally dropping his tail on the victim. An adolescent dragon does 2d-1 crushing damage with a strike, and can hit targets 1 to 3 hexes away.

Giant Slug

ST: 80-140 SP/Dodge: 6/6 Size: 5+
DX: 8 PD/DR: 0/10 Weight: 10-12 tons
IQ: 2 Damage: 5d crush# Habitats: M
HT: 16/80-120 Range: C#

The giant slug is 50' long and stands 8' high at the antennae, but otherwise resembles its much smaller cousins.

A giant slug can attack by biting (2d) or by trampling (5d), but its usual attack is made by spitting digestive acid. Anyone hit by the acid takes 2d damage per turn for 6 turns, or until the acid is washed off. Armor absorbs damage up to its DR, but thereafter is useless.

The slug hits on a roll of 12 or less, and can strike at a range of up to 40 yards. The slug can only spit once every 5 turns.

Giant Snake

ST: 35-70 SP/Dodge: 12#/5 Size: 5-25
DX: 15 PD/DR: 2/3 Weight: 300-1,200 lbs.
IQ: 4 Damage: 2d crush# Habitats: all
HT: 15/25-60 Reach: C

Giant snakes attack by grappling. Once the snake gets a successful "grapple," it squeezes its victim for 2d damage. Only plate armor protects against this attack, but it protects with its full DR. Getting free of the snake requires a successful Contest of ST. Others not grappled by the snake can assist, using their own strength to try to pull the coils apart.

Giant snakes can also bite for 3d crushing damage. Some varieties are venomous. They have the same attributes as above, but they bite for 3d impaling damage, with an additional 3d poison damage in 3 minutes if a HT roll is failed.

Giant Hunting Spider

ST: 25-30 SP/Dodge: 8/7 Size: 4
DX: 15 PD/DR: 2/2 Weight: 400 lbs.
IQ: 2 Damage: 1d+2 cut Habitats: P
HT: 14/35 Reach: C

Giant hunting spiders are mostly found near the city of Yezud in Turan. They can jump up to 6 yards to attack — treat this as a flying tackle (see p. B113). Once they reach their prey, they bite for 1d+2 cutting damage.

Giant Web Spider (Scytode)

ST: 12 SP/Dodge: 4/7 Size: 1
DX: 15 PD/DR: 1/1 Weight: 75 lbs.
IQ: 2 Damage: 1d-2 cut + poison
HT: 14/12 Reach: C# Habitats: F, J

Scytodes are pig-sized spiders. They attack by casting a web mass at their prey which roots the victim to the spot! Treat the web-line as a bolas (see p. B49).

Once the prey is trapped, the spider runs in and bites for 1d-2 cutting damage. If it actually does damage to the target, it injects a poison which does 3d damage to the victim unless a

HT-6 roll is made. A critical failure brings instant death. Anyone taking damage is nauseated and dizzy — -3 to all attribute checks and skill rolls for one to six hours. If the HT-6 roll is made, the nausea and dizziness only last 3d minutes.

Kulamtu Trees

ST: 13	SP/Dodge: 0/0	Size: 4
DX: 6	PD/DR: 2/4	Weight: 1-3 tons
IQ: 2	Damage: *	Habitats: J
HT: 14/40	Reach: C, 1	

These carnivorous trees have broad, round fibrous trunks, with a large orifice at the top and several broad leaves. The kulamtu tree uses these fronds to soften its prey and lift it to the mouth-orifice at the top of its trunk. A conscious man is quite able to avoid the leaves but the Amazons typically sacrifice bound captives to the trees.

The kulamtu's fronds secrete a digestive acid which does 1 point of damage per 5 turns to those touched by the leaf. Armor protects up to a total of its DR, but thereafter is destroyed and useless. A typical kulamtu tree has 2d fronds; a frond can be cut off by any cutting weapon doing 4 or more points of damage to the frond.

Its mouth-orifice leads to a digestive chamber inside the trunk. Anyone inserted into the digestive chamber takes 2 HT damage per turn from acid; a successful Climbing roll (at -5) is needed to climb out of the digestive bowl once tossed in.

Kulamtu trees have few vital organs; impaling weapons only do normal damage to them.

Naga

ST: 12-15	SP/Dodge: 4/6	Size: 2
DX: 13	PD/DR: 1/2	Weight: 150-300 lbs.
IQ: 7	Damage: 1d-3 cr	Habitats: J
HT: 12/11-14	Reach: C#	



Hyborian nagas are an ancient servitor race (or possibly ruling race) of the serpent people. They look like a serpent with a beautiful human head.

Hyborian nagas can charm their victims, as per Hypnotism (p. B56) at skill level 15. The spell takes no time or Fatigue to cast, is at -1 for every hex of distance to the target, and is resisted by Will. Its effects last for one minute or until the victim is grappled. The naga communicates orders telepathically.

Hyborian nagas do not bite. They wrap their snake-like bodies around the victims' necks and strangle them.

The naga's constriction does 1d-3 crushing damage per turn; only plate armor protects. A Contest of ST is needed to break free of the grapple.

Remora

ST: 50-60	SP/Dodge: 4/0	Size: 7-10
DX: 14	PD/DR: 1/2	Weight: 300-800 lbs.
IQ: 2	Damage: 3d-1 imp#	Habitats: M
HT: 15/30-40	Reach: C, 1-3	

This ice worm is a legendary creature of the glaciers of the Eiglophian Mountains in northern Brythunia. Known as a "yakhnar" to the Hyperboreans, it looks like a 40' giant worm or land-eel with two luminous green eyes and a lamprey-like mouth of sharp inward-pointing teeth. They live alone, as each remora requires a large hunting range to survive, and reproduce parthenogenetically.

The remora emits an eerie piping sound which acts as a Sleep spell (at no Fatigue cost) on all who hear it. The spell can be resisted by IQ rolls (one per minute), and it takes at least one minute for the piping to take effect.

Once the creature has approached its victim, it has two attacks. The first is a bite, doing 3d-1 impaling damage. This can be defended against as normal (Dodge, Parry, etc.), so long as the victim is not asleep.

The second attack is radiated cold which does 1d-4 damage per turn to all within 3 hexes of the worm. This damage cannot be defended against, although armor will protect to a total of its DR.

The remora takes normal damage from weapons, but it takes double damage from heat and fire. Cold attacks such as Ice Spheres (p. B160) do no damage to remora.

Wyvern

ST: 40-50	SP/Dodge: 20/10	Size: 4
DX: 14	PD/DR: 2/3	Weight: 300-500 lbs.
IQ: 4	Damage: 2d+2 cut	Habitats: J
HT: 13/40	Reach: C, 1	

The wyvern of Zembabwei is more like a giant pterodactyl than like the wyvern of European myth. It is bred and used as a riding beast by the Zembabwans.

In combat the wyvern bites for 2d+2 cutting damage or tears with its claws for 2d damage. It can also carry away prey (up to Medium encumbrance) in its talons.

The wyvern is stupid and difficult to handle. When flying, it will often forget its duty and attempt to land or attack prey. Wyvern riders keep a club on the saddle for correcting these faults.

Wyvern riding defaults to Riding -5 for a land animal and Riding -2 for other flying animals. It is normal for the rider to tie himself to the saddle lest he be unseated by some unexpected maneuver.

The Walking Dead

The sorcerers of the Hyborian Age know many ways to keep the bodies of their servants animate beyond death. The walking dead are a recurring enemy in the Conan saga, and appear in many stories.

The attributes of the walking dead depend upon their attributes in life. Thus, rather than giving exact attributes for these creatures, modifications from their living forms are provided, and typical human specimens are described. The GM should feel free to create "special" walking dead made from unusually capable "raw material." Zombies need not be human; any formerly-living being can be made into a zombie.

Zombies

ST: 11	SP/Dodge: 5/5	Size: 1
DX: 10	PD/DR: 0/0	Weight: 150 lbs.
IQ: 8	Damage: As per weapon and ST	
HT: 15	Reach: As per weapon	

Zombies are magically animated corpses: HT +5, ST +1, IQ -2, DX and weapon skills are as in life. A zombie follows the verbal orders of its creator, or those its master says to obey. If a conflict arises, a zombie will always obey its master.

Zombies feel no pain. They are never stunned, and never suffer any skill penalty because of wounds. Should a zombie be crippled, or even lose a limb, it will continue to fight. A zombie with a missing foot is at -1 to Speed (maximum Move of 4); with a missing leg, it hops along at Move 2; legless, but with at least one arm, it drags itself along at 1. When its HT reaches 0, the spell is broken and the zombie "dies."

After a couple of years of service, a zombie's flesh falls entirely off. Their HT drops by 5 (to normal human level) and ST drops by 2, but their DX goes up by 2, and they become skeletons.

Mystical Creatures

Atali, Daughter of Ymir

ST: 9	SP/Dodge: 10/10	Size: 1
DX: 15	PD/DR: 0/0	Weight: 150 lbs.
IQ: 13	Damage: None	
HT: 16/9		

Atali is a unique creature. She can, however, be encountered by those adventuring in the far northlands.

Atali is the daughter of Ymir, god of the Nordheimr. When men are near death in the icy wilds of Nordheimr, Atali appears to them as a beautiful woman in diaphanous veils, enticing them to pursue her into the wilderness. There, they either exhaust themselves or fall prey to the axes of her giant brothers.

Atali is Very Beautiful. She has no weapon skills, but can Charm (see p. M59) any man who sees her at no Fatigue cost. Charmed men will pursue her through the wilderness, running themselves to exhaustion. She has 20 points of Fatigue for determining how long she can run (see p. B134).

Sons of Ymir

ST: 20	SP/Dodge: 7/5	Size: 1
DX: 12	PD/DR: 3/4	Weight: 400 lbs.
IQ: 9	Damage: 4d+1 cut	
HT: 16/30	Reach: C, 1-2	

The two giant (8-foot tall), red-bearded brothers of Atali. They fight with huge axes, doing 4d+1 cutting damage. Each of them has Two-handed Axe/Mace at 15.

Skeletons

ST: 9	SP/Dodge: 6/6	Size: 1
DX: 12	PD/DR: 0/0	Weight: 100 lbs.
IQ: 8	Damage: As per weapon and ST	
HT: 10	Reach: As per weapon	

Actual human skeletons, animated by sorcery. IQ -2, ST -1, DX +2, normal HT. A skeleton has +1 to Basic Speed; with no flesh on its bones, it is much more lightly encumbered!

An impaling attack does -2 damage, and no bonus damage, to a skeleton. But a crushing blow that gets through armor does double damage to those dry bones. Otherwise, skeletons are just like zombies.

Mummies

ST: 11	SP/Dodge: 5/6	Size: 1
DX: 10	PD/DR: 0/0	Weight: 150 lbs.
IQ: 10	Damage: As per weapon and ST	
HT: 15	Reach: As per weapon	

Mummies are just like zombies, but with normal human IQ (the preservation process keeps the brain in better working order). Mummies tend to go up in flames if ignited — more than 4 hits of fire damage does it automatically. They do not become skeletons. They are rare in most parts of the world, because the mage must start with an actual, prepared mummy. In Stygia, however, these creatures are common.

There are even rumors of free-willed mummies inhabiting some of the ancient Stygian tombs, who still officiate in the gruesome rites of the temple of Set. Even worse, some hint that some of these free-willed mummies are themselves sorcerers, wielding the secret mystical knowledge of the Khari!

Black Shadows

ST: 15	SP/Dodge: 12/—	Size: 2
DX: 12	PD/DR: —/—	Weight: —
IQ: 5	Damage: 2d cut#	Habitats: all
HT: —	Reach: As per weapon	

These incorporeal creatures resemble wispy, translucent black bats with glowing green eyes. They can be summoned from their hellish dimension by the mystical talisman known as the Hand of Nergal.

The Black Shadows are insubstantial: weapons swung at them simply pass through, doing no damage. They attack by radiating a fierce cold, doing 1d-3 damage to all characters within 2 hexes, and by clawing for 2d damage.

Brylukas

ST: 13	SP/Dodge: 5/5	Size: 1
DX: 11	PD/DR: 0/0	Weight: 120 lbs.
IQ: 9	Damage: 2d cut#	Habitats: all
HT: 11	Reach: C	

These ghoulish creatures are vaguely humanoid, but are lean and stringy with white, hairless skin. They have large, staring eyes, bat-like faces, and needle-pointed fangs.

Brylukas survive by drinking blood — preferably the blood of humans. They attack in close combat, grappling and biting for 1d impaling damage. If they do damage to the victim, they hang

on, drinking his blood. The victim loses 1 ST per turn; when he reaches ST 0, he loses HT instead!

For defense, brylukas also have claws which do 2d cutting damage. They prefer not to use them, however, as the claws cause the victim to lose precious blood.

Ghosts

Ghosts are the souls of sacrificed or cursed beings doomed to haunt a specific site for eternity. They feed upon the strength of living beings to survive, and to provide themselves with the strength to take vengeance for their eternal imprisonment.

In its natural state, a ghost is incorporeal. It has no ST, DX, or HT, and a maddened IQ of 4 or 5 (although some ghosts, particularly those recently formed, retain the intelligence they had in life). A ghost may have accumulated Fatigue, which it can use to form a temporary body. Such bodies are hideous, bestial, ghoulish forms representing the twisted soul of the ghost.

Creating a body is considered a spell, with 1 Fatigue point expended for each 10 character points the body has (disadvantages are not allowed); the body must have at least 10 character points. The body has a "duration" of one minute, and the ghost must pay half cost to "maintain" the body, just as if it were a spell. A typical ghost body has ST 10, DX 12 and HT 12, for a total cost of 4 Fatigue points to create, and 2 per minute after the first to maintain. The ghost can dissolve its body at any time for no energy cost.

Corporeal ghosts can attack living beings with manifested body weapons (claws, horns, teeth, fists, choking hands, etc.) for normal physical damage (as per the weapon type and body ST). At the same time that they attack, they also drain 1d Fatigue from their victim, which is added to their own Fatigue total. A victim cannot be drained below 1 ST.

A ghost can only accumulate Fatigue up to twice its IQ. Extra Fatigue is lost, unless it is immediately used to increase the power of the manifested body, or to maintain the body's temporary existence. Thus, typically, as a ghost is fought, its physical body grows stronger.

Damaging the ghost body to 0 HT requires the ghost to reform it, paying full Fatigue costs once again. Damaging the body to a HT of minus the ghost's IQ in a *single turn* stuns the ghost; it must make an IQ roll to recover.

Ghosts cannot be permanently killed without powerful magic (more powerful than is represented in the game). However, ghosts cannot travel more than 100 yards from their sacrificial altar, and it is possible to flee from them; also, a ghost dropped to 0 Fatigue is effectively unable to reform its body, and is therefore no longer a threat.

However, even ghosts with 0 Fatigue points still have a small reserve of energy. In extremis, each group of 10 ghosts can contribute at least 1 Fatigue point to the formation of a new body. Typically, this will be done only when the chance for regaining the energy (and then some) is great; i.e., when there are lots of victims. Such "composite" ghost bodies are monstrosities, with arms, legs, faces, eyes, etc. forming, disappearing, and reforming again all over the body.

Ghouls

ST: 13	SP/Dodge: 5/5	Size: 1
DX: 11	PD/DR: 0/0	Weight: 120 lbs.
IQ: 9	Damage: 2d-1 cut	Habitats: F, M
HT: 11	Reach: C, 1	

Ghouls are physically manlike, with huge clawed hands, sharp teeth, and sloping foreheads. They are found in the Drujistani mountains of Iranistan and the ghoulish forests of Zingara.

Ghouls are meat-eaters, and they are not at all fussy about where the meat comes from or how fresh it is.

Ghouls claw for 2d-1 cutting damage, and bite for 1d damage. They also can use clubs, doing 2d crushing damage.

Walking Idols

ST: 30	SP/Dodge: 6/6	Size: 2
DX: 11	PD/DR: 2/4	Weight: 400 lbs.
IQ: 10	Damage: 3d cut	Habitats: all
HT: 14/40	Reach: C, 1	

Various spirits and gods of the Hyborian Age have the ability to inhabit their stone idols to physically defend their temples or their favorite worshippers. Typically, such walking idols represent lesser gods, as the greater powers do not need to physically incorporate to affect the world.

There are a wide variety of possible shapes and strengths for walking idols. The stats above represent a typical humanoid idol, 8'-9' high, but idols vary wildly in size and capability.

A huge idol might have stats of:

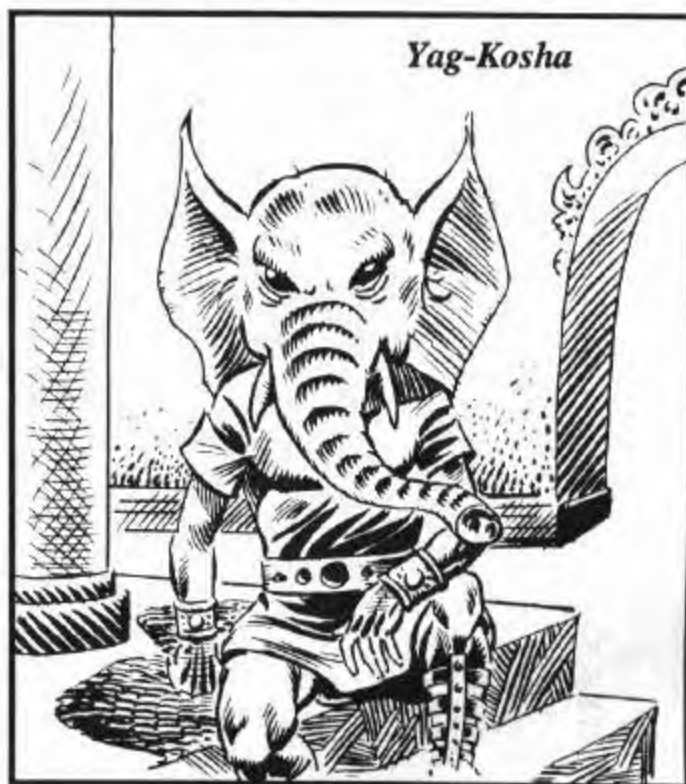
ST: 100	SP/Dodge: 12/5	Size: 6
DX: 11	PD/DR: 2/10	Weight: 3-4 tons
IQ: 8	Damage: 4d crush	
HT: 14/80	Reach: C	

This idol attacks by stamping on its victims for 4d crushing damage.

Yag-Kosha

ST: 13	SP/Dodge: 5/6	Size: 1
DX: 14	PD/DR: 1/2	Weight: 200 lbs.
IQ: 20	Damage: per spell	Habitats: any
HT: 14		

Yag-Kosha was an ancient being which inhabited the Tower of the Elephant in Shadizar, an unwilling servant of the evil wizard Yara. According to his tale, Yag-Kosha was an outcast from the mystic planet of Yag who had come to this world before the time of the serpent people.



Yag-Kosha appeared as a green-skinned man with the head of an elephant. He had once been winged and able to cross the great void of Space between the worlds, but his wings had withered.

The above stats describe Yag-Kosha when he was in good health. He had Magery 3 and command of enormously powerful

sorceries. He raised the Tower of the Elephant in a single night, and had learned many other powerful spells over the millennia.

The other beings which came with Yag-Kosha had all died out (as far as Yag-Kosha knew), and Yag-Kosha himself died in 1265 A.A. in "The Tower of the Elephant."

Demons

Demons of the Outer Dark

ST: 20 SP/Dodge: 10/6 Size: 2
DX: 14 PD/DR: 3/4 Weight: 250 lbs.
IQ: 8 Damage: 4d cut Habitats: all
HT: 14/25 Reach: C

The demons of the Outer Dark are spirits from the great evil places beyond the stars. These beings find their way to Earth, and to interact with the inhabitants take corporeal form.

A typical embodied demon of the Outer Dark is described above. It is winged (and can fly), and attacks with claws and bite for 4d damage. These demons usually occupy themselves terrorizing the local natives, feeding upon their souls or the terror induced when they are murdered.

Red Shadows

The Red Shadows are servants of Xotli, a creature of the Elder Night. They are not demons but creatures of another plane. They destroy humans so Xotli can feast on the tortured spirit. The victim is surrounded for ten seconds by red-tinged shadows and then disappears completely.

The shadows are directed by a priest of Xotli who has learned the ritual from Xotli. The ritual takes four seconds; if it is interrupted it must be restarted. Prerequisites for the ritual are: Clerical Investment, priesthood of Xotli; Fanaticism, Xotli worship; IQ + Magery 15 (at least Magery 1); Will 15. The success roll is against the lower of Will or IQ + Magery. A failure summons no shadows; on a critical failure the shadows devour the caster unless he can dismiss them, which requires a Will -5 roll and one second. The caster must have both hands free and uninjured for the entirety of the ritual, including dismissal. He can send only one flock of shadows at a time; when they have taken one victim they disappear. The priest can direct them to a specific target that is within his sight, or he can send them to take any human being at a given location at up to 300

miles. The shadows have no effect on inanimate objects or animals other than humans. They are not affected by material weapons. They can be dismissed by the Banish spell (p. M65). A flock of shadows has an effective ST + IQ of 40.

Summoned Demons

These demons are summoned by wizards. They come from parallel planes of existence. They are sometimes of more than human intelligence, but, in any case, will act with careful planning and circumspection.

The demons come from many different planes, and vary wildly in appearance and special abilities. Some are little better than human warriors, although they are far more obedient.

When a demon appears, it will take about five seconds to fully materialize. It starts with a foul smell, which becomes visible as a vapor and then coalesces into a solid body. The demon will then attack the caster of the spell (or anyone else it can reach) unless confined by magic. Demons can speak all languages, and know many things. However, this does little good, because they lie whenever it suits them.

Demons often also know magic. However, they are loath to use their magic for the benefit of their summoners, and must be forced (via a Contest of Will). Demon spells are known at a skill of 21 (or sometimes better); their magic is sufficiently different from that of human mages, however, that they cannot teach it (even if forced).

The GM should feel free to design any type of demon desired; just pick the stats and abilities to fit the situation. As for their appearance . . . anything goes! Most are vaguely manlike 1-hex creatures with Speed of 5 to 7. Some are different. When creating demons, GMs should not be bound by believability or common sense.

Should a random demon be desired, use the table below, rolling once for each column.

Summoned Demon Table

Die roll	ST	DX	IQ	HT	Special feature
3	5	9	7	10	Beautiful, unearthly human shape.
4	5	10	7	12	Regenerates 1 HT per turn!
5	6	10	8	14	Can cast Body of Air spell at will.
6	8	10	8	15/16	Knows ALL fire spells.
7	10	11	8	15/18	Attacks with sword at skill 16.
8	12	11	9	15/20	Invisible — attacks against him are -6.
9	14	12	10	15/22	Damage Resistance of 6.
10	16	12	10	15/24	Damage Resistance of 3; roll again.
11	18	13	10	15/26	Magic Resistance of 2; DR of 4.
12	20	13	11	15/28	Roll twice more.
13	22	13	12	15/30	Roll twice more.
14	24	13	12	15/35	360-degree vision; roll again.
15	26	14	13	15/40	Uses Sleep spell; no energy cost.
16	30	14	13	15/45	Flies as Flight spell; no energy cost.
17	35	15	14	15/50	Magic Resistance of 5.
18	40	15	15	15/50	Invulnerable to normal weapons.

HYBORIAN RELIGION

4

This chapter describes the various religions of the Hyborian Age, and provides some information on how the powers of the various gods (and their clerics) should be portrayed in a *GURPS Conan* campaign.

How Religion Works

The true nature of religion in the Hyborian Age is up to the GM's conscience, whim and/or sense of drama. However, the Conan saga makes several references to acts of Divine Intervention, usually in the form of advice provided to priests or faithful worshippers, or to protection of particular worshippers from evil magical influences. Nowhere in the saga do the gods create an overt miracle. The polytheistic quality of the Age, combined with the nature of most godly intervention, implies either an unrevealed pact or secret "behind the scenes" divine disputes which limit the gods' effectiveness on the mortal plane.



With this in mind, there are several possible ways to handle religion:

Nonintervention. Divine powers do not enter human affairs. Good works and prayer may help you in the afterlife, but no one will ever know; they'll have to take it on faith. Most non-religious pragmatists take this view of divine activities; priests and other faithful blame their attitudes for their inability to see the effectiveness of the gods. Should this be the case, Clerical Investment is a purely social advantage worth 5 points.

Occasional intervention. Once in a while, sincere prayer will be good for a die-roll modifier, or a modest little miracle. The players should never be sure whether a divine intervention has actually occurred. There should always be a "natural explanation." This is the opinion held by many Hyborians. Should occasional intervention be the rule, Clerical Investment does give an opportunity for a little help now and then, so treat it as a 10-point advantage.

Secret influence. The gods take an active interest in human happenings, especially when the gods' divine foes or pre-human artifacts are involved. Most divine aid consists of revelatory visions and/or minor incidents of "luck." Although these are usually performed at the god's whim (i.e., under GM control), priests of the gods can beseech the deities for an explanation or assistance when the god's interests are threatened. Should the god truly be concerned with the priest's actions (GM's discretion), he may provide the priest with a cryptic vision or explanation, often couched in allegory, and often clear only at the critical moment — or sometimes only after the event is over! Under this option, Clerical Investment is a 10-point advantage.

Magical aid. The gods aid their priests to cast certain favored spells. This manifests itself as an automatic bonus to learn spells related to the priest's religion, or automatic "mage" ability in one or more colleges. This belief is held by the Pictish shamans, and the worshippers of Set, Jhebbal Sag, and the pre-human gods of Khitai.

To support those GMs who wish their campaign to include magical aid, each of the religions in this section is provided with a specific magical bonus. Use of these bonuses is at the discretion of the GM. Should this option be used, any cleric character must spend the Clerical Investment point costs listed with each religion to gain any magical bonuses.

Clerical Magic

In the Hyborian Age, some believe that holy men and women — clerics — have magical abilities granted by the powers that they serve. GMs wishing religion to be magically effective may use the magical bonuses described in this chapter for each of the Hyborian religions.

In order to gain any of these magical bonuses, characters must purchase the Clerical Investment advantage associated with the specific religion. In addition, they must also accept any disadvantages specified.

The "Blessed" Advantage

A Blessed individual is especially favored by the power he or she serves. This advantage costs 10 points, or 20 points for *Very Blessed*. The character must behave in a manner appropriate to the power he serves, or lose the benefits of this advantage. A Blessed individual automatically has one type of standard Divination ability (see below) at IQ level (+5 for *Very Blessed*), which can be used according to the description below. He or she occasionally receives the aid of the Power in other ways. One may be Blessed without taking Clerical Investment. Blessed characters may only be created with the GM's permission.

Anyone known to be Blessed gets an automatic +1 Reputation among followers of his own (or allied) powers. Religious Fanaticism is an appropriate disadvantage for a Blessed character.

Divination

Gives the caster a vision relevant to his question, or the answer to one yes-or-no question. There are many sorts of divination; each is a separate spell, and requires the appropriate materials (see below). Each has its own strengths and weaknesses. Those methods which are linked to a particular element or elements will give more detailed answers if the answer has something to do with that element — e.g., molybdomancy would work better than haruspication for a question about the sea.

Skill modifiers: Standard long-distance modifiers (see p. B151). If repeated questions are asked on the same subject within a day, the "vibes" are muddled; -4 skill for the second question, -8 for the third, and so on. Questions about past or future are also harder; use the standard long-distance modifiers again, substituting "days" for "miles"!

Cost: 10.

Time to cast: 1 hour unless specified otherwise.

Prerequisite: History, and element spells as specified for the particular method of divination.

Astrology is divination through examination of the heavens, including weather. Observation of the sky is necessary; the caster must be outside, and is at a -5 unless it is a clear night, away from city lights. Without a reference library (cost \$2,000; weight 200 lbs.), all rolls are at a -5. If the divination involves an individual, his birthplace and birthdate must be known, or all rolls are at a -5. These penalties *do* add! **Prerequisite:** 10 Air spells.

Cartomancy is divination through the Tarot, giving yes-and-no answers, and sometimes hints about the motivations and physical appearance of those important to the subject's future. The only equipment required is a Tarot deck (hand-painted and worth \$1,000 at TL3 and below, but mass-produced inexpensively at higher tech levels). Cartomancy is highly personal. If it is used any way except to divine for a single willing person (or couple) *in their presence*, it is at a -5. **Prerequisite:** 3 spells from each of the four elements.

Crystal-gazing is use of a crystal ball (see p. M42). If it works, the GM will describe a scene; it is up to the player to interpret it! Caster can also use clear water, tea leaves, etc., but at a -10 (!) to skill. **Prerequisite:** 5 each Earth and Water spells.

Dactylomancy is divination by movement of a pointer around a board, indicating letters, numbers, symbols and words such as Yes and No. Except on a critical success, answers to complex questions will be cryptic, seemingly gibberish. **Prerequisite:** 3 spells of each of the four elements.

Haruspication is divination by examining the entrails of a slaughtered animal (must be at least 20 lbs. — no pigeons!). It is illegal in many areas. Only one question can be asked per animal. **Prerequisite:** 10 Earth spells.

Molybdomancy is divination by examining the shape taken by molten metal when poured into cold water. Requires a hot fire (e.g., from a forge) to melt the metal. **Prerequisite:** 5 each Fire and Water spells.

Oneiromancy is the interpretation of the caster's own dreams. It requires no equipment, but only one question can be asked per night, and there is only a 50% chance that the caster will dream at all! The GM tells the caster what he dreamed; the player must interpret it. Energy cost is paid on awakening. **Prerequisite:** 5 each Air and Water spells.

Pyromancy is divination by staring into fire. It may produce

Information

a vision, or the caster may *hear a voice* in the flames. Small amounts of certain rare herbs (value \$100 per attempt) must be burned. Questions are at a -4 unless something pertaining to the question (e.g., hair of the subject of the divination) is also burned. *Prerequisite:* 10 Fire spells.

Rune-casting is divination by means of runestones (see p. M83). The caster must have a bag of runestones; a complete set is 25 stones, and he is at -1 for each stone missing. Mock runestones work perfectly well, but a full set of true stones gives +2 to skill. Takes 30 minutes for a detailed divination. Or the caster may simply reach into the rune-bag and pull out one or more stones. Energy cost is only 1. The GM will tell the caster which rune or runes he drew; it is up to the caster to interpret this, and the runes drawn on a failed roll will be misleading. *Prerequisite:* Magery and Rune-Lore skill at 15+.

Gods and Pantheons

The following sections describe the gods of the Hyborian Age, including their views on morality, and their magical strengths and weaknesses.

Mitra

Mitra, Lord of Light, God of the Hyborians, is worshipped in Aquilonia, Argos, Corinthia, Nemedia, Ophir and Zingara. Mitra is a benevolent god, believed to be all-pervasive and without form, although he is often pictured as a tall man with wide-set, piercing eyes, curly hair and a patriarchal beard (SHD). Mitra takes no living sacrifices, although the temple takes extensive tithes in money and services.

According to Mitraic belief, each person is called to a virtuous life. It is the obligation of each individual to follow the tenets of the faith of Mitra, which include truthfulness, honor and trustworthiness. In Mitra's tenets, telling a lie or betraying a friend are mortal sins.

Mitra holds his priests to even more strict behavior. Priests of Mitra must remain celibate and must abstain from all alcohol and mind-altering drugs. In addition, they must never perform sorcery, rather trusting totally in Mitra.

One of Mitra's most potent aspects is as the Defender, protecting Hyborians from evil sorcery, most specifically from

his ancient enemy, the serpent-god Set. In his battles with Set, Mitra prefers working through mortals, so that those who are called to be his champions can both defeat Set and act as living proof of the validity of his cult's tenets.

In a magical aid campaign, priests of Mitra cannot cast any sorcery without losing all benefits of the Clerical Investment (treat this as a Vow; major penance is required to restore Mitra's blessing). However, priests of Mitra also receive a +4 on all Magic Resistance rolls, representing the protection of Mitra. Clerical Investment in the temple of Mitra costs 15 character points.



Set and the Stygian Pantheon

Religion in Stygia is dominated by the worship of Father Set and his pantheon. No other religion is tolerated. Temples to other sects are forbidden, and worship of other gods is considered treason.

The tenets of Set worship are difficult and sheathed in many layers of dogma. Principally, the temples profess that Father Set is the most potent of gods, a powerful friend and a terrible enemy, and that it is the fate of mankind to serve. Apostates who have learned some of the inner knowledge have reported that Set also offers eternal life in the tomb to those who serve him faithfully. This promise, perhaps more than fear, has brought the people of Stygia to Set's service.

Set's greatest opponent is Mitra, Lord of Light. According to the priests, Mitra is perhaps as powerful as Set, but lacks the strength of heart to use his power to rule. Thus, Mitra is ever doomed to failure; no matter how many times he succeeds, Set need only prevail once.

Priests of Set can learn Necromantic spells as if they were mages, with a bonus of +2 on Necromantic spell rolls. Clerical Investment in the temple of Set costs 15 character points. It requires a Vow of asceticism. Priests of Set must deny themselves all ordinary material pleasures (including wine, women and song) in return for power.

Damballah

Damballah is what Set is usually called in the Black Kingdoms. He is worshipped throughout the Kingdoms; even Juma the Kushite, Conan's friend, swore by Damballah (CTM).



Derketo

Derketo, Goddess of Lust, is a servant of Set. She represents the seductive nature of the flesh, and the desire for life which Set offers to maintain eternally. Derketo is commonly worshipped among the peasantry of Stygia, who find Set's ascetic demands too restrictive.

Priestesses of Derketo can learn Body Control spells as if they were mages. Clerical Investment in the temple of Derketo costs 10 character points.

The Hawk-God of Harakht

The Hawk-God of Harakht is another lesser member of the Stygian pantheon. According to Set's doctrine, the Hawk-God of Harakht hovers over Stygia, watching all that occurs, and when the sun passes the western horizon, he wings his way to Set and tells him all that transpired during the accursed day.

Priests and priestesses of the Hawk-God of Harakht can learn Air spells as if they were mages. Clerical Investment for this temple costs 10 character points.



The Hawk-God of Harakht

Erlík and Living Tarim

Erlík the Flame-Lord is a god of Pathenia, in northern Hyrkana. As such, Erlík would be a minor god (and listed among the others below) were it not for the prophet known as Living Tarim. Tarim brought Erlík worship from Pathenia to a group of Hyrkana tribes who, with the strength of their religious fervor, swept down and founded the Turanian empire.

Erlík is a harsh god, who believes in the tempering of the soul through trials and deprivation. His tenets, as revealed by Tarim, forbid fornication, the consumption of alcohol and usury. However, even most of his priests ignore these precepts.

Clerics of Erlík (and Living Tarim) can learn Fire spells as if they were mages, but only if they follow the strict codes of the Revelations of Tarim. As most do not, this ability is not widespread in the Turanian empire. Characters wishing this benefit must pay 5 character points for the privilege, but if the precepts are violated in any way, the ability is lost permanently.

The Shemitish Pantheon

Unlike Mitra worship, which uses the altar only as a focus,

Shemites believe that their gods actually inhabit their omnipresent brass idols. These idols are caricatures: the swollen breasts and belly of Ishtar and the equally enlarged sexual characteristics of Adonis appear repulsive to the more refined worshippers of Mitra. Every home has a tiny shrine to the Lovers, and usually small statues of the other gods, including Bel, whose protection is invoked against his servants. Only Set is excluded from the tableau.

In the temples, the idols of the Shemites are enlarged to incredible size. The huge brass images are hollow, and their enlarged bellies serve as sacrificial furnaces where sandalwood blazes. Sheep, goats, valuables and occasionally people are cast into the flame to feed the Shemitish gods.

Adonis/Pteor and Ishtar

Shemitish religion is based on the myth of the male sky god, known as Adonis or Pteor, and his courtship of the Earth Mother, Ishtar. This myth is central to Shemitish belief, and variations on the basic tale are heard around the campfires of the nomads and in the taverns and temples of the city-states.

Priests of Adonis can learn Air spells as if they were mages. Similarly, priestesses of Ishtar can learn Earth spells as if they were mages. Clerics of either of these religions must pay 10 character points for Clerical Investment.

Set

One common theme in the original myth is the intercession of the god of jackals, who attempted to prevent the two Lovers from consummating their marriage and creating the world. Although this deity at one time had many names, modern Shemitish theologians universally identify this jackal-god with Set, the serpent-god of the Stygians.

Ashtoreth

Ashtoreth, handmaiden to Ishtar, represents purity and chastity, and the revitalization of spring. She appears in the tale as a go-between for the Lovers, and at one point rescues Pteor from the clutches of Set by merely touching his bonds.

Priestesses of Ashtoreth can learn Healing spells as if they were mages at a cost of 8 character points for Clerical Investment. However, in order to maintain their abilities, such priestesses must remain virgin.

Bel

Bel, god of thieves, appears in some versions of the Shemitish myth-cycle, and his rather peripheral episodes are thought to be later additions to the myth. Bel is worshipped, however; the Zuagir nomads and the thieves of Asgalun point to his exploits to prove that their nefarious acts are blessed by the gods.

Priests of Bel can learn Movement spells as if they were mages, for a cost of 5 character points. To maintain these benefits, these priests may never buy or trade for anything. Should they slip, Bel can only be appeased by a sacrifice of stolen goods ten times the value of the item purchased.

Derketo

Derketo is probably of Stygian origin. In Shemitish myth, she is the Temptress; she represents wanton lust, and Set tricks her into enticing Adonis from his bride. Derketo is not evil according to the Shemites; rather, her elemental passions are unconcerned with the niceties of the struggle between Ishtar and Set. When she discovers Set's deception, she joins the Lovers in their battle.

The Golden Peacock of Sabatea

One aberrant cult of Shem is the Cult of the Golden Peacock of Sabatea. This group worships a demonic being covered in elaborate feathers who requires continual human sacrifice. The Sabatean cult resembles the Katari of Vendhya and the Yoggites of Darfar in that the cult captures victims for its sacrifices; over the centuries the cult has developed stealth techniques unknown elsewhere, which it uses to train its "procurers."

The Vendhyan Pantheon

Asura

Most Vendhyans worship Asura, who teaches that life is illusory and the only final truth comes after death, in the light of the soul. The cult devotes itself to "penetrating the veil of illusion of life."

Asura's doctrines reveal that all beings reincarnate, and that the purpose of life is the paying of the karmic debt against the soul. Each evil act extends the cycle of reincarnation; each good act shortens it. Those who suffer earned their trials in previous lives; they are not to be pitied.

The cult of Asura has spread throughout the Hyborian empires. However, its secretive nature combined with its odd (to Hyborian minds) doctrines, has kept it distrusted and persecuted. In modern Aquilonia King Conan allows its practice without interference. Many Aquilonians believe Asuran rituals include human sacrifice, cannibalism and worship of snake-gods, but no temple of Asura has ever been found engaging in any of these practices. Indeed, Asuran temples are rarely found at all, given the priests' skill at concealing them.

Priests of Asura can learn spells of Illusion and Creation as if they were mages, with a +2 on their skill rolls. To gain this ability, they must purchase Clerical Investment at a cost of 20 character points.

Katar

One other sect in Vendhya captures the attention of Hyborians: Katar, Goddess of Death. Katar is the judge of souls, and determines the form each soul should take in its next life to most quickly purge its karmic debt.

The temples of Katar hold secret power in the form of the Katari assassins. These incorruptible warriors will assassinate anyone for whom they are paid, although they do it in their own way, and at their own time. They are potent warriors, and are known for their suicide missions, committing assassinations in places offering no hope for their own escape. They are encouraged in this by the promise of eternal life in Katar's paradises if they die while performing their "holy" task. Even the devi is not immune to their efforts, although her corps of bodyguards constantly watches for the Katari's stealthy approach, and the head of more than one would-be assassin rots outside the palace.

The Animal Gods

The Picts and the tribes of the Black Kingdoms worship many different gods which are anthropomorphic representations of the power of animals. Each Pictish tribe selects one of these totem spirits to serve, from whence they take their names.

For more about the Pictish tribes and their totem animals, see the *GURPS* solo adventure *Conan Beyond Thunder River*.

Shamans of the Animal Gods receive a +2 on Animal spells involving their totem animal, and learn all such spells as if they were mages, but their Clerical Investment advantage costs 10 character points. Shamans of Jhebbal Sag receive a +3 on all

Animal spells, for any animal, for 20 points. Both types of shaman must swear never to harm one of their totem animals (all animals for a priest of Jhebbal Sag); harming such an animal revokes the shaman's powers permanently.

Gullah

Gullah the gorilla-god (or Jullah, as he is known in the Black Kingdoms) is worshipped by the Picts and the commoners in Kush. Little is known of Gullah worship, as few scholars have been permitted in the temples, but the god requires occasional human sacrifice, and the temple is decorated with the skulls of victims.



Hanuman

One "civilized" animal cult is that of Hanuman the ape-god, worshipped in Zamboula. Hanuman's priests are feared rather than loved, but worship of the ape-god is still supreme in Zamboula. One unusual ritual of the cult is the Dance of the Cobras, in which a young girl is made to dance between four live cobras, dodging their venomous fangs until, inevitably, she tires and falls to her death.

Jhebbal Sag

The most commonly worshipped Pictish deity is Jhebbal Sag, Master of Beasts. According to Pictish legend, all animals, including man, once worshipped Jhebbal Sag. Now, most have forgotten, and only the largest, smartest and strongest animals remember the earliest days. Those who remember are bound together, however, and can be controlled by one who serves Jhebbal Sag. Jhebbal Sag is the leader of the Animal Gods and all of the other animal totems serve him.

Jhil

Jhil the Merciless, King of the Ravens, is worshipped primarily by the Picts, the Ghanatas and their allied tribes. Jhil promises freedom to the strong and slavery to the weak. This theology provides the Ghanatas with the justification for their slaving.

Nature Worshippers

Nature worshippers are scattered throughout the Hyborian lands. These groups have many aspects in common, but are separately organized and sometimes mutually hostile.

All nature worshippers can learn Animal, Plant, and Air spells as if they were mages (at a cost of 15 character points).

The Ligureans

Early in the days of the Hyborian drift a group of Acheroneans fled deep into the Pictish Wilderness. They called themselves Ligureans. Exactly who and what they were is a mystery, but some of them were accomplished sorcerers.

Most of the Ligureans have forgotten their origins and become savage tribesmen, distinguishable from the Picts only by their lighter skin. The druids, priests of the Ligureans, are another matter. They worship nature personified as a goddess, and otherwise seem impartial among the feuding cults. The symbols of the druids are the oak and the golden sickle. What vows they take are a mystery; they certainly are not ascetics and some are notably fond of wine or of the druids' own potent honey-mead. They oppose any magic that disturbs the natural order of things, and this usually means that they oppose Set and the servants of Set. Many of the druids are powerful mages; their support can be valuable.

The druids have no temples. Their places of worship are oak groves deep in the wilderness of Pictland. Even the most savage Pictish chief or the most arrogant Aquilonian governor walks warily around the white-robed druids and their places of power.

Cost of Clerical Investment for a druid is variable (GM's decision). Most druids are simple local priests, with perhaps a Healing or Plant spell; their investment is worth only 5 points. The greatest druids are not only mages, but recipients of divine aid. Cost of their investment will never be less than 20 points, and may be more, depending on the nature of clerical magic in the particular campaign.

Wiccana

The nature goddess Wiccana is worshipped by rural Brythonians. Like Ligureans, Wiccana worshippers revere the oak and the mistletoe (although both are rarer in Brythunia than in Pictland). Their symbol is the golden sickle, and they are devoted to healing.

However, the two religions are not identical. First, Wiccana only accepts priestesses; men may not directly serve the goddess. The priestesses are celibate (though not necessarily virgin), and vow never to cut their hair. Secondly, priestesses reside in the villages, rather than secluding themselves in private sanctuaries.

Gods of the North

Atali

Atali, daughter of Ymir, is a spirit in the shape of a beautiful woman. It is said that she entices wounded men to follow her into the wild, where they die in the snow from exhaustion or under the axes of her giant brothers. See p. 26.

Crom

Crom, the Cimmerian god, lives on Ben Morgh. The Cimmerians seldom pray to him; they believe it is usually best not to attract his attention. The Cimmerians believe, however, that Crom breathes the strength to strive and slay into a man at birth. "What else shall men ask of the gods?"

After death, the Cimmerians believe their souls go to "a grey misty realm of clouds and icy winds, to wander cheerlessly for all eternity" (QBC). Hyborians maintain that such grim beliefs explain much about Cimmerian temperament.

Hyborian Religion

Ymir

The Nordheimr worship Ymir, the Frost Giant, Lord of Storm and War, who lives (according to legend) in Valhalla, his castle in far northern Vanaheim. According to Nordheimr shamans, the souls of warriors who fall in battle go to Valhalla to feast and fight forever. This belief makes Nordheimr warriors terrible in battle, as they fight with no regard for their own safety, preferring to take an honor guard with them to Valhalla.

Ymir provides his shamans with the ability to cast Water spells as if they were mages, for a cost of 10 character points.

Ancestor Worship

Primitive peoples across the Thurian continent practice ancestor worship. There are ancestor worship cults in the Black Kingdoms, Hyrkania, Khitai, Nordheim and Turan.

Most ancestor worship consists of telling sagas of ancestors on ceremonial days, and possibly using a litany of ancestors as an introduction. However, in some cultures (notably the Hyrkianian Erlikites and the Nordheimr), ancestor spirits are seen as intermediaries between living men and the gods.

Demon Worship

Various tribes worship demons, either summoned by the shamans or remaining in the land from prehistoric times. Among these are the demon of the "Vale of Lost Women" and the slithering shadow of Xuthal.

Xotli

The Antillians worship Xotli, Lord of Terror, a great demon from the Elder Night. Hundreds of people are sacrificed each month atop the Great Pyramid in Pthuacon. The demon hovers over the Pyramid in the aspect of a large, tentacled black mass (like a giant black kraken) with a single central eye. The sacrifices are marched up the pyramid and bound to the Altars of Ultimate Night. Their hearts are cut out, their body goes to feed the dragons inside the Pyramid, and their soul goes to feed Xotli. With such a powerful manifestation, there is little need for abstract theology in Antillia.

The priesthood is led by the Hierarch of the Sacred Mysteries of Xotli, a direct descendant of the first Hierarch. Xotli's priests shave their heads and wear full-length feathered robes. Beneath their robes, the priests wear platform shoes, increasing their height, and golden finger-rings, neck-chains, and bracelets on wrists, arms and ankles.

Xotli originally provided his priests with the ability to learn many types of spells. However, as his power over them has grown, he has withdrawn these benefits.

Other Gods

The remaining gods do not fit into any particular pantheon. Belief in one of these gods implies nothing about a character's opinions of the remainder.

The Gods of Iranistan

The Iranistani gods comprise a myriad of tribal deities and heroes mixed with ancient sects of Hyborian or Vendhyan gods. There is no "state religion" in Iranistan; the temple district of Anshan is a confusing maze of tiny hut-shrines beside huge stone temples. The strength of a given cult is directly tied to the associated tribe's favor with the king.

None of the Iranistani deities provide any magical bonus. Therefore, Clerical Investment for all these deities costs 5 character points.

Kulamtu Tree

The Amazons revere the carnivorous *kulamtu* tree (see p. 25), which they raise in closed courtyards and feed with slaves and captives. It is not known whether the Amazons believe the trees to be their gods, or whether they are merely the tools the Amazonian gods use to accept sacrifices.

Nebethet

Nebethet, the Ivory Goddess of Punt, is worshipped primarily there, although some Shemitish scholars equate her with Derketo. Her traditional image is of a voluptuous woman with the head of a skull, although recent visitors to the shrine report that the original statue has been replaced by one appearing more human.

Yajur

The most famous (or infamous) deity in the bewildering Kosalan pantheon is Yajur, the god of Yota-Pong. The head of this religion is the Prefect of Yota-Pong, ruler of the city-state, a masked figure who is reputed to be eternal. Most visitors to the state believe that the Prefect of Yota-Pong is just a man and that upon his death the post is filled from the highest ranks of the priesthood.

Yajur's priests sacrifice humans by strangulation. The sacrifice is offered by specially trained servants of the temple, who strangle the victim with their bare hands. These servants are trained from young childhood, strangling a victim each day until they become extremely strong and adept at crushing the life from anyone.

Priests of Yajur receive the ability to learn Mind Control spells as if they were mages, for a cost of 10 character points.

Yama

The Meruvians worship Yama, king of the devils of Vendhya. Yama is portrayed as a six-limbed demonic being with a beast's head, and is credited with the creation of the Cup of the Gods.

According to the priests of Yama, should the people ever revolt against the theocracy, Yama will destroy the Cup of the Gods, and thrust the Seven Sacred Cities back into the snow and ice of the Roof of the World.

Priests of Yama gain the ability to cast Earth spells as if they were mages, for a cost of 10 character points.

The Yezmites

One other cult within the borders of Drujistan is the Yezmites, or the Sons of Yezm. This cult has its roots in the pre-Cataclysmic Society of the Hidden Ones, a sect of assassins who used their dreaded Flame Knives to sway the destiny of empires.

According to scholars, the Sons of Yezm have influence in cults across the continent. It is said that their followers include

members of all the nations of the world, and that sub-sects of such disparate religions as Mitra, Set, Derketo, Ishtar, Gullah and Eriik secretly serve the Magus of the Sons of Yezm.

Yezmite assassins are blamed for the deaths of King Yildiz of Turan, King Satish of Vendhya (father of Bhunda Chand and the Devi Yasmina) and Kobad Shah of Iranistan. Their acts are marked by the stealth of their assassins and the poisoned daggers they use. The daggers have blades shaped like a many-tongued flame.

The Sons of Yezm maintain their headquarters in the hidden city of Yanaidar in Drujistan (see p. 61). They defend their city through a combination of secrecy, discipline and superstitious awe. The latter is enforced not only by the evil reputation of the city, but by the use of huge, mournful horns to frighten would-be explorers and bands of warriors to kill those more determined to approach. These bizarre practices of the Sons of Yezm have contributed significantly to superstitions about Drujistan.

Yog

Yog worship dates back to the Khari invasion. Hyborian scholars speculate that Yog may be a demon of the Elder Night, like those worshiped by ancient Atlantis.

Yog's doctrine is simple. Worshippers may only eat meat, never plants of any kind. They must consume human flesh at least once per month, and those who fail are considered ritually unclean until they have done so.

In Darfar itself, bodies for the cannibalistic rituals come from raiding other tribes. Outside of Darfar, however, the Yoggites band together and take what they can get. Where there are many Darfar slaves, wandering bands hunt and kill anyone who leaves shelter at night.

Although most city residents fear the Yoggite ceremonies, they permit the Yoggites to practice their religion, as without this concession they are rebellious and violent.

For proper sacrificial power, the victims are clubbed unconscious and thrown into fire-pits. Dead sacrifices are considered inferior, as are those who have been cut, so the Yoggites do not use knives or swords. One adult can feed as many as thirty or forty Yoggites, as only a token consumption is required to meet Yog's requirements.

For obeying these strictures, Yog promises strength in battle and victory over the worshipper's foes. Such promises might hold more weight were Darfar slaves uncommon in the southern lands. Even so, Yoggites are devout enough to practice their religion wherever they go.

Zath

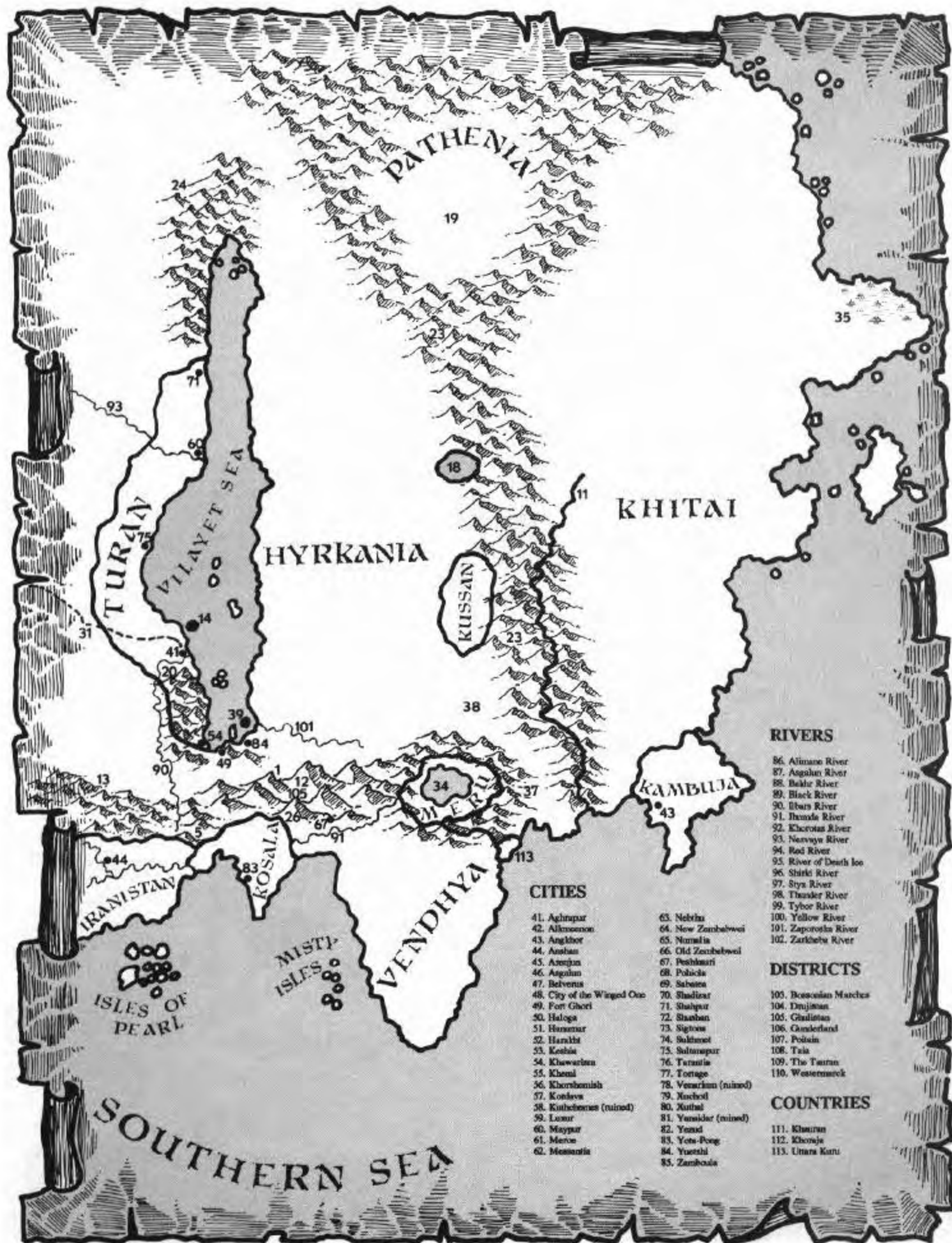
The most famous of the Zamoran divinities is Zath, the spider-god of Yezud. Zath's worshippers believe that the great spider-god walks the earth, and must be served by humankind. Indeed, the giant spiders which have occasionally been seen in the hills near Yezud are testaments to Zath's power.

Priests of Zath do not drink alcohol or fornicate, and those laymen in the service of the temple must also abide by these strictures. Even more guarded are the temple virgins, who dance for the spider-god on holy days. There are rumors of extensive caverns beneath the temple, where hundreds of giant spiders reside, fed cattle (and occasionally humans) by the priests of Zath. The cattle come from enforced tithes demanded from the steadings which surround Yezud; it is said that the priests would loose these spiders on the countryside if the king did not permit them their grisly worship.

Priests of Zath can learn Animal spells pertaining to spiders as if they were mages, with a +2 on their spell rolls, at a cost of 10 character points.







5

LANDS OF THE
HYBORIAN AGE

This section covers the lands described in the Conan stories by Howard, et al. Unless otherwise specified, descriptions refer to conditions in the year 1288 A.A., when Conan became King of Aquilonia.

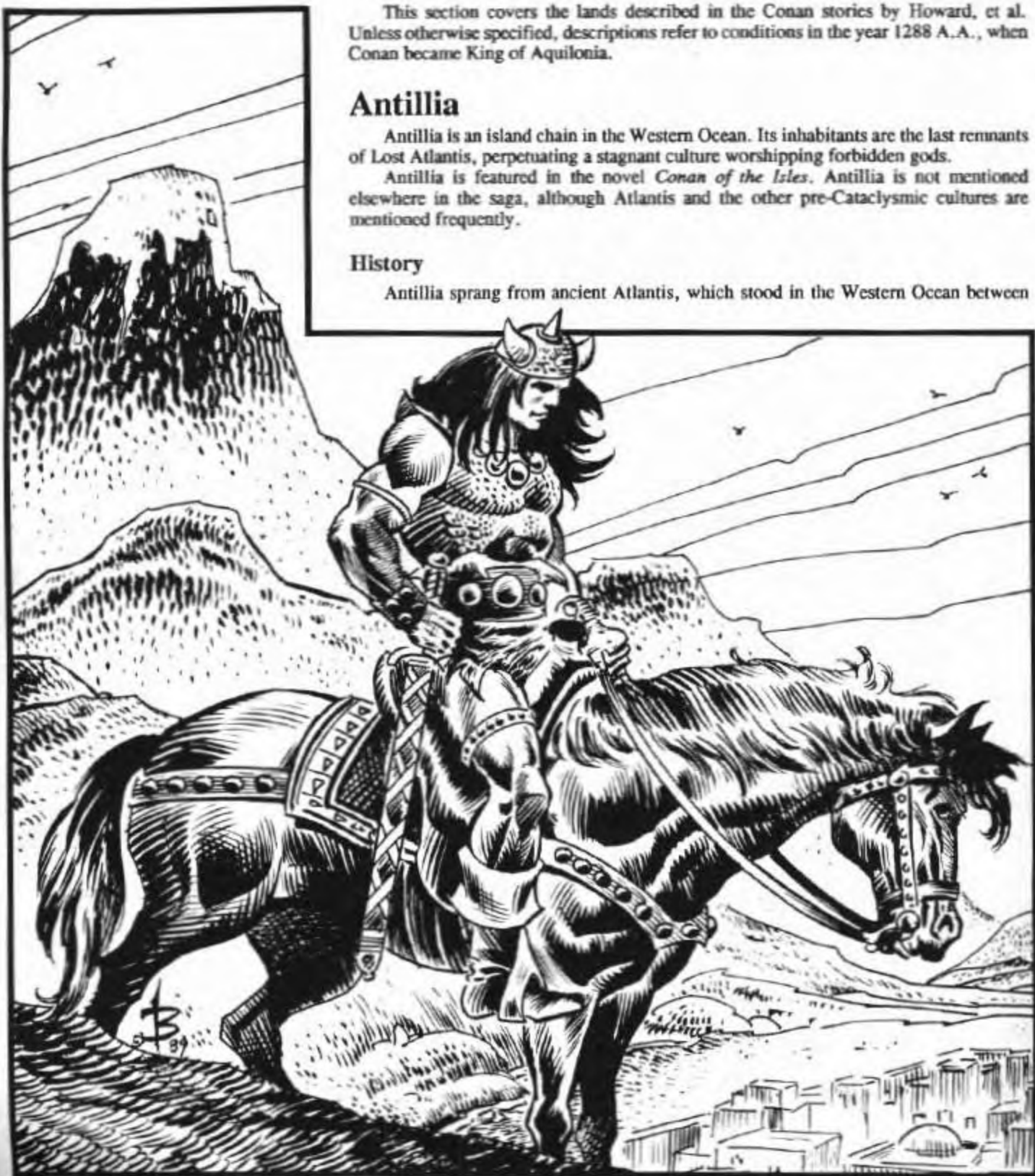
Antillia

Antillia is an island chain in the Western Ocean. Its inhabitants are the last remnants of Lost Atlantis, perpetuating a stagnant culture worshipping forbidden gods.

Antillia is featured in the novel *Conan of the Isles*. Antillia is not mentioned elsewhere in the saga, although Atlantis and the other pre-Cataclysmic cultures are mentioned frequently.

History

Antillia sprang from ancient Atlantis, which stood in the Western Ocean between





the Thurian continent and the Antillian Islands. Atlantis was the most powerful nation in the world, with magic far beyond that available in the Hyborian Age.

Atlantis was ruled by religious factions who worshipped demonic beings from the Elder Night. One such faction was the cult of Xotli, Lord of Terror, whose priests sacrificed thousands of primitives and slaves to their dark deity.

Four thousand years before Conan, seismic upheavals sank Atlantis beneath the Western Ocean, never to rise again. Many Atlanteans fled; most headed east to the Thurian continent. Here they warred with the Picts and descended into barbarism.

Xotli's priests fled southwest to Antillia in huge sky-ships. Beyond Antillia, the mysterious continent of Mayapan marked the edge of Atlantean exploration.

The native Antillians were small, brown, slant-eyed savages. The newly arrived Atlanteans enslaved these primitives, founded the city of Pthauacan, and resumed worshipping Xotli.

As the power of the priests grew, many ex-Atlanteans pressed to return to civilization. The priests sailed their sky-ships east to seek other survivors, but they soon returned to Antillia. The Atlantean continent had sunk completely beneath the waves, and the Thurian continent was too distant to be reached; therefore, the Antillians were Atlantis' last survivors. Their last hope gone, the Antillians succumbed to the iron rule of the priests of Xotli.

Although the priests tried to maintain Atlantis' civilization, this proved hopeless, as few of Atlantis' powerful sorcerers had come to Antillia. Over generations, most Atlantean technology was lost; the sky-ships lost power and decayed to worthless hulks.

Despite this, the priests had considerable resources. When Antillia's population began to dwindle from the drain of sacrifice, the priests summoned spirits to row huge, wing-sailed galleys to Mayapan. Once there, the Red Shadows, spirit-servants of Xotli, attacked the coast and consumed the natives to appease Xotli's hunger.

Eventually, the people of Mayapan realized that the Red

Shadows were coming from their eastern sea. The Mayapan natives had no craft to compare to the Antillian ghost-ships; since they could not attack their tormentors, they fled into Mayapan's trackless wilderness.

Current Affairs

The dwindling availability of sacrifices from Mayapan has driven the priests of Xotli to desperate measures. Temporarily, they have appeased their god's appetites by the sacrifice of their own people, but their population is again dwindling. Some priests have proposed a bold stroke; they want to send a ghost-ship east, along with a priest, to strike against the barbarians on the ancient Thurian continent and capture sacrifices for Xotli. This measure is opposed by the current High Priest, but he is old, and it is likely his successor will implement this plan.

Friends and Foes

Antillia is isolated from contact with the rest of the lands of the Hyborian Age. It has neither allies nor enemies, until its first contact with Hyboria (COI). At this time it picks up two active enemies, Aquilonia and Argos.

Geography

The Antillian chain is seven large islands in a rough crescent southeast of Mayapan. The islands lie approximately 3,000 miles west of the Argoscean coast.

The Antillian Islands are sand-covered coral reefs rising over a volcanic base. There are no iron deposits on the islands. The Antillians make their weapons, armor and other hard goods from specially-hardened glass. The weapons, although somewhat fragile, are extremely sharp.

Gazetteer

Mayapan — the far western continent of Mayapan is only briefly mentioned in the saga; Mayapan apparently corresponds to America, where a pre-Mayan civilization holds sway and other Atlantean remnants still survive (COI).

Pthauacan — the only city in Antillia, Pthauacan is built in tiers on a tall, curved slope. The lower tiers house the commoners; the higher tiers are devoted to the temples and priests' housing.

Above all towers a large, black and crimson ziggurat, the Great Pyramid. Atop the Pyramid stand the Altars of Ultimate Night where priests sacrifice thousands each year to Xotli. Inside the pyramid lies a large chamber where dragons feed on the corpses. If the populace rebels, the priests open the pyramid, freeing the dragons to prey on the citizens.

Pthauacan can hold hundreds of thousands of people. In Conan's time, however, the diminishing Antillian population has half-abandoned the city (COI).

Climate

Antillia has a warm, humid climate, as the sea keeps the summers cool and the winters warm. Occasional tropical storms ravage the islands. Snow and ice are unknown on Antillia.

Flora and Fauna

Antillia is covered with a jungle of flowering trees and vines. The animals are ornately feathered birds and large dinosaur-like reptiles. There are no native mammals.

The seas around Antillia teem with many species of fish, lobsters, crabs and oysters. Oyster divers with their glass breathing helmets are a common sight on Antillia's coast, as are small fishing vessels.

Antillia's seas are not all peaceful. Giant sharks and giant octopi lurk below the waves and often attack swimmers. Mostly, however, the sea provides a bounty for the Antillians.

Economy and Loot

There is no established trade between Antillia and the Thurian continent. However, should such trade begin, the Antillians have several products which are rare or unavailable in the Hyborian kingdoms, including glass, the plumage of tropical birds and pearls.

Mana Level

Most of Antillia is low mana. Only near the Great Pyramid in Ptahuacan is normal mana available, and atop the Pyramid, the Altars of Ultimate Night have very high mana!

Society

The Antillians are a mixture of the tall Atlanteans with the original Antillian savages. They are slender, of medium height, with brown skin, black hair, slitted eyes, knobby cheekbones and hawk noses. Over 4,000 years, all distinctions between the original two races have faded, merging the Antillian population into one race.

Culturally, Antillia strives to repeat the Atlantean culture; this is difficult without iron or other metals. Some orichalcum remains, brought from Atlantis before the Cataclysm, but all iron and bronze has corroded away. Some fascinating items are still produced, such as the ghost-ships, the underwater breathing helmets, and the fire-breathing dragon-ships, but most Atlantean sorceries have been lost.

Antillia is ruled by the High Priest of Xotli (Status 5); other levels are Sorcerer-Priest (4); Priest (3); military officer (2); common soldier or acolyte (1); common-born citizen (0); servant (-1); beggar (-2); bandit, brigand or thief (-3); slave (-4).

Due to the small size of the Antillian military (composed mostly of the Sea Guard and local militia), military ranks above 6 are not held, except (on rare occasions) by Sorcerer-Priests.

Customs

Xotli's constant threat makes people ignore the world around them. Robberies occur on Ptahuacan's streets, ignored by passers-by, and even the death of a loved one is only a momentary distraction. This apathy has steadily worsened since the supply of Mayapanic sacrifices has diminished. The priests suspect that Xotli is feeding upon the remaining Antillians, draining their vitality slowly.

Law

Law in Antillia is simple; those who disobey the will of the priests are sacrificed to Xotli. In any dispute between priests the Hierarch's word is law, but the priests are reluctant to bring disputes to the Hierarch's attention as he may well order both disputants sacrificed.

Despite priestly assurances that Antillia is the only land remaining, enough Antillians attempt to flee to require a Sea Guard of wing-sailed dragon-ships around the islands. This Sea Guard patrols the sea-lanes, and tries to prevent any ship from leaving. The Sea Guard is only partially successful, but it is not known how many refugees survive to reach the coast of Mayapan, and how many die seeking lost Atlantis.

Religion

The Antillians worship Xotli, Lord of Terror, a great demon from the Elder Night. Xotli is discussed on p. 34.

Armed Forces

Most Antillian troops are Medium Infantry (MI) or Light Infantry (LI), and are Green to Average in quality. The military is used as a police force, and they have had little experience in true battlefield situations. A small ceremonial guard possesses Heavy Infantry (HI) materiel, but as they do not fight except in staged spectacles, they are considered Green.

Language

Antillian is "guttural and sibilant" (COT), derived from ancient Atlantean mixed with the original primitive Antillian tongue. It is only distantly related to any Hyborian tongue, although it shares a few root-words with modern Cimmerian.

Antillian is written with a hieroglyphic system unknown to the Hyborians. It is possibly derived from Mayapan, as Atlantean used a different ideographic system.

Both written and spoken Antillian are Mental/Average skills.

Names

Antillian names are "Mayan" or "Egypto-Mayan": Calaxoc, Hatup, Itzra, Metemphoc, etc. These names presumably come from the mixture of the Atlantean culture (which had Egyptaic trappings) with the native Antillians (who inherited Mayapan's culture).

Antillian Adventure

Assault from the West. The adventurers are in the small Zingaran village of Castilia when the Antillian priests arrive, seeking sacrifices with their demonic Red Shadows. Can the party save the town?

Aquilonia

"... but the proudest kingdom in the world was Aquilonia, reigning supreme in the dreaming west."

— *The Nemedian Chronicle*

Aquilonia is the foremost Hyborian kingdom. It is the leading military and economic power west of the Vilayet Sea.

Aquilonia is the setting for many of Conan's exploits, including the classic "Beyond the Black River." Conan becomes Aquilonia's king shortly after this story, and remains king for most of the rest of his life.

History

The Hyborians swept down from the north 2,000 years before Conan. These powerful barbarians spread south and west, absorbing the native tribes or driving them from their strongholds. Within 800 years, the Hyborians had founded their great kingdoms: Nemed, Argos, and, in O.A.A., Aquilonia. In the western lands of Bossonia, Gunderland and the Poitain, independent Hyborian tribes established homelands of their own, separate from the larger forces of their eastern cousins.

Aquilonia's founding is shrouded in mystery. According to legend, Epimetheus the Sage founded the small kingdom which would eventually become Aquilonia at the behest of Mitra himself. Epimetheus foretold a time when the forces of darkness, embodied by the serpent-god Set, would rise up to conquer the Hyborian peoples. Epimetheus himself fought Set for over 200 years, but eventually he fell to the infernal power of the serpent god. According to legend, his remains were entombed in Mount Golamira, and his spirit watches over Aquilonia and her kings.

For 1,200 years, Aquilonia grew westward, devouring

smaller independent peoples on the Hyborian frontier. Many, such as the Gundermen and the warriors of the Poitain, entered vassalage rather than be crushed by the advancing Hyborian tide. Others, such as the half-aborigines who inhabited Bossonia, had to be conquered.

Of course, Aquilonia had problems. Rebellions broke out, wars were fought, dynasties rose and fell, and plagues, droughts and other natural disasters preyed upon the Aquilonian people, but Aquilonia survived. Sometimes a weak king sat on the throne in Tarantia, and barons and counts fought bloody territorial wars; at other times, powerful kings ruled the nobility with an iron hand.

Aquilonia grew despite the turmoil. In the Aquilonian interior, the people softened, as war became the province of soldiers and armies, and the peasantry lived quiet, peaceful lives. Families thrived on Aquilonia's bounty, and the population increased. Soon the best land was either already being farmed or was part of game preserves, and the nobility refused to reduce their preserves so a few peasants could farm.

Over time, population pressures increased beyond even the weakest king's ability to ignore. In 1278, King Vilerus declared the Pictish lands between the Thunder and Black Rivers to be a new Aquilonian province, the Westermarck. He divided it into four major territories — Conajohara, Oriskonie, Conawaga and Schohira — and assigned them to his most favored vassals. These nobles immediately offered farmland to any who could hold it. When King Vilerus died shortly thereafter, the policy was maintained by his nephew, Numedides.

The Westermarck was more difficult to settle than the Bossonian Marches had been. Bossonia had the powerful Thunder River as its natural boundary. The Black River was much narrower and slower, and was easily crossed by Pictish canoes.

Also, the Bossonians fought a Pictish force in relative awe of the Hyborian invaders. The Picts had spent a thousand years sparring with the Bossonians, and by the time the Westermarck was opened, Aquilonian swords no longer held superstitious terror for them.

Still, the Picts were divided into a myriad of tribes, unable

to work together. Slowly, the Aquilonians cleared the Westermarck, transforming the wilderness into home.

The Pictish Uprising

This changed in 1285 when the Pictish wizard Zogar Sag, after being captured and humiliated by Aquilonian troops, allied several Pictish tribes near Conajohara (p. 42) against the Aquilonians. Zogar Sag poisoned the wells at Fort Tuscelan (see p. 43) sent wild beasts to attack the fort's outriders, and led the tribes in a massive assault on the fort. In one night, Fort Tuscelan and Conajohara were lost. Of the 750 warriors who garrisoned Fort Tuscelan, only one survived the battle.

Conan, serving as a scout at Fort Tuscelan, discovered the attack and warned the settlers (BBR), then led Aquilonian defenders to stop the Pictish invasion at Velitrium (MOB), but Conajohara was never recovered.

After Conajohara fell, many of its settlers went to Oriskonie or Schohira, but others established new settlements near Fort Thandara on Warhorse River, south of Schohira. These settlements grew into the province of Thandara, led by an elected military governor and only nominally under Aquilonian rule (WBB).

King Numedides took little notice of the new province. He sent it no troops and approved its elected governor, Brant Drogo's son, as a matter of form. The Thandarans founded their own military, called the Rangers, to defend themselves against the Picts, built their own blockhouse-like forts, and survived without Aquilonian help or interference.

The Civil War

Bound by feudal obligation, Aquilonia's peasantry toiled to advance the wealthy, powerful families. Revolutions moved the crown from one noble family to another, but the class distinction stood. King and peasant, baron and farmer, all had a place in Aquilonia — and they were expected to keep to it. Although Aquilonia never became as class-bound as Nemedia (see pp. 72-74), rule was always vested in the scions of the ancient Hyborian families.

King Numedides was the last of a long line. He had little interest in government. He surrounded himself with fawning sycophants, but left the Imperial power in the hands of the sorcerer, Thulandra Thuu. Numedides' more depraved practices led some to speculate that he was mad. Aquilonia's nobility jockeyed for political power, always careful to avoid the prying eyes of Thulandra Thuu's spies (CTL).

In 1286, Conan was brought to Tarantia as the hero of Conajohara. The sycophants of Numedides' court saw him as too powerful and falsely accused him of treason. Numedides imprisoned Conan in the Iron Tower but he escaped and fled Aquilonia.

Despite Numedides' weakness, no noble had enough support to take the throne, but many nobles respected the hero of Conajohara. Count Trocero of Poitain found Conan and persuaded him to try for Aquilonia's crown. Conan returned with a mysterious treasure, and began forming an army in Zingara, just south of the Poitain.

Half of Aquilonia declared for Conan; the other half supported Numedides, mostly to keep a barbarian from the Aquilonian throne. Some nobles privately supported Conan but remained publicly neutral, deceiving loyalist forces about Conan's true strength. The loyalist forces had many desertions, including the Black Dragons, Numedides' personal guard.

Thulandra Thuu's sorcery opposed Conan. For a time, it seemed nature herself fought against the Liberator, as unnatural storms wrought havoc with Conan's army. Young farmers in the



first flush of martial ardor soon deserted, choosing home and family over nameless death by sorcery.

Nevertheless, in 1288, Conan secretly crept into Tarantia with a small force. In a daring raid, Conan entered the palace, strangled Numedides on the steps of Aquilonia's throne, and took the crown for himself (CTL).

Current Affairs

Conan's rule is still shaky. His control of the Poitain and the Westernmarck is unchallenged. However, many of the older parts of the kingdom see Conan as a barbaric usurper, with no right to the throne. Only time will show whether Conan's abilities as a warrior and a commander will make him a good king.

Aquilonia's enemies are also watching carefully. Nemedia finds Conan's ascension to the throne intolerable, but it remains to be seen whether they will commit troops in support of a claimant of royal blood. Koth and the Shemitish city-states are offering public conciliation and recognition to the new ruler and his dynasty. Stygia, as ever, remains silent.

Friends and Foes

Aquilonia's staunchest allies are Argos and Ophir, but given the bickering nature of Hyborian politics, even they are at odds with the Aquilonian Lion at times. In such circumstances, they usually keep their opposition on a diplomatic level. Zingara, while not an ally, maintains a reasonably friendly posture with Aquilonia. She is not strong enough to challenge Aquilonia on her own terrain, and Aquilonia has shown no interest in extending southeast.

Aquilonia's enemies are legion. Nemedia and Koth see themselves as rivals for the leadership of the West, there are many disgruntled Aquilonian nobles in the Border Kingdom, and the kings of Shem distrust the Hyborian giant.

The most serious enemy of all, however, is Stygia. Although there are many countries lying between Stygia and Aquilonia, the Set worshippers see Aquilonia as the stronghold of Mitra. Thoth-Amon of the Black Ring has often run afoul of Conan over the years, and it may yet be that old enemy who brings King Conan down.

Geography

The Thunder River is Aquilonia's traditional western border; Westernmarck settlers have made tentative feints into the Pictish Wilderness as far as the Black River (see Conajohara), but such settlements suffer from continuous Pictish assaults.

To the north, the kingdom runs to Cimmeria's wooded hills. To the east, Aquilonia abuts against the mountains of Nemedia, while to the south it extends to the Alimane and Tybor Rivers which mark the border with Zingara and Ophir.

Aquilonia has a pleasant and temperate climate. Its lands are rich and fertile, although much of the arable land is held in preserves for the nobility, forcing many to leave the Aquilonian heartland and found new farms in the Westernmarck (see below). Aquilonia is patched with forests, which become more dense in the Bossonian Marches, Gunderland and the Westernmarck, eventually becoming trackless forest at the Pictish border.

Gazetteer

Amillus — a barony. Valerius the Usurper deposed Tiberius, its baron under Conan, in 1293. Tiberius continued to try to regain his barony all through the failed rebellion, and was slain by Valerius in 1294, during the battle for Conan's return (CCO).

Alimane River — a river marking the border between Aquilonia and Zingara.

Attalus — a barony in the southeast. Attalus has the highest level of commerce and culture in Aquilonia. Baron Dion the Fat, a cousin of King Numedides, ruled Attalus; he publicly accepted Conan's rule but was secretly one of the Rebel Four. After his death, his companions attempted to assassinate Conan. Subsequently, Conan gave Attalus to General Pallantides (PSW).

Bossonia, Bossonian Marches — a frontier province between the Aquilonian heartland and the Pictish Wilderness. The Marches extend along the Pictish frontier, from Cimmeria in the north to Zingara in the south. Recent expansion westward has placed the Westernmarck (see p. 43) between the Marches and the Picts, but the Bossonians are still Aquilonia's primary defense against Pictish assault. ("The Hyborian Age" by Robert E. Howard; PSW.)

Conajohara — a northern Westernmarck province. Conajohara was a "narrow wedge thrust into the untamed wilderness" (BBR). Taken from the Picts in 1280, Conajohara lay between the North and South Creeks, nineteen miles apart where they entered the Black River (Conajohara's western border). The land north and south of Conajohara was impassable marsh; Fort Tuscelan (see below) guarded its western border. To the east, Conajohara ended at Velitrium on the Thunder River. Conajohara was lost in the Pictish uprising of 1286 (BBR; TTT; WBB).

Conawaga — the largest, richest, and most thickly settled province of the Westernmarck. Baron Brocas of Torb (see below) ruled Conawaga during the rebellion, and forced the province to support Numedides (WBB).

Couthen — a county. Its count is Monargo (TRC; COI).

Gunderland — a northern province between the Aquilonian heartland and Cimmeria. Gunderland was once a separate kingdom. The Gundermen became Aquilonian vassals in 787, preferring alliance through feudal obligation to capture as a subject people. Nevertheless, the Gundermen still view themselves as semi-independent, and Gundermen mercenaries serve many Hyborian kingdoms ("The Hyborian Age" by Robert E. Howard; TRC; TWM).

Imirus — a county. Its count is Guilaime (TSC; RME).

Karaban — a county. The rebellion impoverished Karaban, and its count, Volmana the Dwarf, was one of the Rebel Four; he died in an assassination attempt against Conan in 1288 (PSW).

Khorotas River — a river running from northeast Aquilonia, south past Tarantia, southwest to the Poitain, and into Argos.

Kormon — a barony. King Numedides assigned Schohira (see below) to Baron Thasperus of Kormon; Thasperus appointed a governor to run the fief and remained in his interior barony. Baron Thasperus fought beside Conan against Numedides in the rebellion of 1287 (WBB).

Kwanyara, Fort — the southernmost fort of Thandara (see p. 43) (WBB).

Lor — a barony (TRC).

Manara — a county (TRC).

Oriskonie — the northernmost Westernmarck province.

Pellia — the only Aquilonian principality (TSC).

Poitain — the southernmost county of Aquilonia, nestled against the border with Zingara and Ophir. Bounded on the north by mountains, on the west and south by the Alimane River, and on the east by the Khorotas River, Poitain is a land of rolling plains, rose gardens, and palms. Count Trocero of Poitain is one of Conan's staunchest supporters and general of Aquilonia's armies.

Despite Poitain's loyalty, most Aquilonians still distrust the

southern province. In many of Aquilonia's civil wars, Poitainian troops ravaged Aquilonia's southern heartland. Trocero himself besieged Tarantia in 1257. The Aquilonians have not forgotten. ("The Hyborian Age," by REH; WBB; TSC; CCO.)

Ruman — a border county in Gunderland (CCO).

Schohira — the smallest province of the Westernmarck (WBB).

Schondara — the capital of Schohira (WBB).

Tarantia — the capital of Aquilonia, the "most princely city of the world's West." This great walled city stands on the banks of the Khorotas River in southeastern Aquilonia.

Tarantia houses not only the king's palace, but also the infamous Iron Tower, where Aquilonia's political prisoners have been executed for over 1,000 years (TTT; CCO).

The Tauran — a province in northwest Aquilonia, north of the River Shirki, east of Bossonia, and south of Gunderland. The Tauran is a land of "open groves and sun-dappled meadows" (BBR) dotted with forests. The people of the Tauran are woodsmen and believe themselves as essential to Aquilonia's defense as the Gundermen and the Bossonians, despite the fact that they are not a border province. The Bossonians view the Tauranians as "ox-eyed yokels," well-meaning, but lacking in woodcraft.

The Tauran has its share of wild animals, and is best known for the deer and the panthers in its forests (BBR; MOB; TSC).

Thandara — the frontier province of the Westernmarck. Thandara was founded by settlers displaced from fallen Conajohara who wanted freedom from feudal masters (WBB).

Thune — a county. Count Ascalante of Thune led the Rebel Four in an unsuccessful assassination attempt against King Conan in 1288. (PSW).

Torh — a barony. Baron Brocas of Torh was assigned the Westernmarck region known as Conawaga as a fief; the Baron assigned a governor to run the fief and remained in his interior barony. Baron Brocas fought beside Numedides against Conan (WBB).

Tybor River — a river marking the border between Aquilonia and Ophir.

Tuscelan, Fort — a Conajoharan border fort on the east bank of the Black River, roughly centered between the North and South Creeks. Fort Tuscelan marked the farthest extent of Aquilonian influence in Conajohara (BBR).

Velitrium — the capital city of the Westernmarck province of Conajohara. Velitrium is a frontier town on the western bank of the Thunder River, and is the only remaining settlement of Conajohara after the Pictish invasion of 1286 A.A. (BBR; MOB; CCO).

Westernmarck — a region west of the Thunder River between the Pictish Wilderness and the Bossonian Marches (BBR; WBB).

Flora and Fauna

Aquilonia is an agricultural land which has been civilized for over 1,200 years. Farms spread across the countryside, growing wheat, barley, and a variety of fresh vegetables. Aquilonian farms are tilled by hand or oxen, as the Aquilonians do not possess the horse collar.

The forests are generally preserves for the nobility, especially in the east. The wardens keep the preserves free of dangerous animals, but leave them filled with deer and other, smaller game. Some wild animals are still found in the western forests, including panthers, apes, bears and wolves. Even here, though, the horrors of the Pictish Wilderness (see pp. 76-78) are unknown.



Economy and Loot

Aquilonia's primary products are raw materials: wood, grains and cattle. There are some iron, tin and copper mines, but few sources of precious metals. However, the cities of Aquilonia attract goods from all over the West, and virtually anything can be purchased in the markets of Tarantia.

Mana Level

Aquilonia has normal mana throughout its heartland. Some of the Westernmark has high mana, and the northern fringes of Gunderland have low mana.

Society

The Aquilonians are tall, averaging 5' 11" in height, long-limbed and rangy, although the city-dwellers tend toward portliness. They vary in complexion: the Gundermen are "tawny-haired and gray-eyed," of "pure Hyborian stock," while the Poitainians are swarthy. The Bossonians have medium builds, and are broad-shouldered and strong. Their differing build comes from an aboriginal Bossonian tribe which Hyborian settlers absorbed before Aquilonia's founding.

Aquilonians derive their culture from their Hyborian ancestors. The culture is relatively advanced, with considerable scientific development under the auspices of the temple of Mitra. Despite this enlightened intellectual climate, the common people live in feudal bondage to the nobility, with personal freedom varying according to each lord's temperament. The cities resemble medieval free-towns, with shopkeepers who own their own businesses, but in most of Aquilonia, mercantile activities are under the control and for the profit of the local nobility.

Aquilonia is ruled by the King (Status 7); other levels are Prince (6); Count (5); Baron (4); Mayor (of a city) or Knight (3); Patrician, wealthy merchant or military officer of Rank 6-7 (2); craftsman, merchant, military officer of Rank 3-5 or physician (1); commoner or common soldier (0); servant (-1); beggar (-2); bandit, brigand or thief (-3); slave (-4).

Customs

The Aquilonians are a direct people, with few pretensions. Although nobles have some privileges, Aquilonians are too pragmatic to develop elaborate protocols, and (supposedly) the lowest peasant may request justice at the king's court.

Noble titles in Aquilonia are inherited through the male line; a noble's eldest son is heir to his title. If a noble has only daughters, then the husband of his eldest daughter is heir to his fief. If a noble dies without children, or if his daughters remain unmarried, brothers, nephews and so on are examined until a suitable candidate can be presented to the king for ratification.

Although noble blood is preferred to inherit fiefs, inheritance is not a right. A noble who defies the king (or who simply falls from the king's favor) can be stripped of his fief, although the king's army must often enforce such removals. A deposed noble may be replaced by a relative, a successful general or war hero, a powerful politician or one of the king's sycophants. Aquilonian kings have offered fiefs as rewards for exceptional service, and sometimes even delivered on the promise.

Government

In theory, the king rules Aquilonia, and territorial counts and barons administer at a local level. Each noble maintains his own troops; he is expected to provide these troops to the king and his generals in time of war. When disputes arise between nobles, the king's justice is invoked to resolve the question.

In practice, things are more complex. Aquilonia's size makes it impossible for the king to directly supervise the nobility, and nobles often ignore edicts from Tarantia (at least until the king's troops arrive). Feuds develop quickly, and hostilities sometimes last for generations. Aquilonia's more distant provinces possess considerable local pride and view themselves as outside the boundaries of Aquilonian society. Poitain Gunderland and the Bossonian Marches have all seceded from the rule of a weak Aquilonian king, only to be dragged back under the thumb of a stronger successor.

Law

In Aquilonia, nobles dispense justice, determining right and wrong in their own view rather than using any well-developed precedents. Nearly anything is admissible as evidence, including hearsay and testimony extracted under torture, and some corrupt lords have accepted equal bribes from both sides and then decided a case strictly on its merits.

If a plaintiff or accused criminal is dissatisfied with its judgment, he may appeal up the feudal ladder by petitioning in writing. These appeals are rarely heard, and since literacy (and legal advice) are the province of the rich, justice is often without appeal.

Although guilt or innocence is established by the judge, sentences are fixed through long tradition. Treason, rebellion and murder of a noble all bring death by beheading. Theft from a commoner requires repayment of thrice the stolen amount; a habitual thief, a poacher or one who steals from a noble may lose his right hand or be hanged. Civil cases generally restore only actual losses; punitive damages and "pain and suffering" are not concepts of the Aquilonian civil courts.

Religion

The Aquilonians worship Mitra, Lord of Light, God of the Hyborians. Mitra is worshipped more fervently by the Aquilonians than by any other nation; few deviate from the tenets of this faith.

A few foreign deities have established footholds, including Asura of the Vendhyan pantheon and the Shemitish gods, but they have little following among native Aquilonians.

Some religions are reviled in Aquilonia. The priests of Mitra have banished the worship of Set, snake-god of the Stygians. The ancient beliefs of the Picts are considered demonic worship. No Aquilonian king has ever stood against the temple of Mitra on the side of either of these faiths.

Armed Forces

Aquilonia has some of the best troops in the world. All types of regular troops, including cavalry, are included in Aquilonia's troop complement, and most units are considered Seasoned or better. Bossonian archers are considered Light Infantry (LI), and the Heavy Infantry (HI) is mostly composed of Gundermen.

Language

Aquilonian is descended from the tribal tongue of the ancient Hybori, with admixtures of Zingaran and Ligurian (particularly in the west). It is related to modern Nemedian and Ophirean, but is a distinct language. Aquilonian is considered a Mental/Average skill, and can default to Nemedian or Ophirean at -5.

An eastern Aquilonian can communicate in the latter countries if he works at it; a western Aquilonian is reduced to gestures. Many easterners also speak Nemedian or Ophirean.

many westerners (particularly in Poitain) also speak Zingaran or Argossean.

Names

Most Aquilonian names are Latin in style: Attalus, Balthus, Baraccus, Dexitheus, Dion, Emilius, Epeus, Flavius, Hadrathus, Junia, Lucian, Publius, Tuscelan, Servius, Vilerus. Poitainian names carry some external influences, both from the Zingarans and from the long period of isolation before conquest by Aquilonia, and are Italian in style: Gonzalvio, Prospero, Trocero, etc. Surnames are rare, but occasionally people will append a sobriquet (Dion the Fat) or the father's name, if his father is important (Emilius, son of Flavius).

The Bossonians and Gundermen have Germanic names, and these have carried over into their settlements in the southern Westermarch. Here, a man's name is incomplete without the name of his father: Jon Galter's son (i.e. Jon, son of Galter), Gault Hagar's son, Otho Gorm's son.

Aquilonian Adventure

Bounty Hunt. Ascalante, Count of Thune, was one of the last remaining nobles loyal to Numedides. He fled from Conan's army during the march on Tarantia, and has not been seen since. Count Trocero of Poitain has offered a \$5,000 reward for his capture. There are rumors he is hidden in a secret cave-fortress in northern Thune, guarded by his loyal household troops and by a few trinkets he received from the sorcerer Thulandra Thuu. Dare the heroes try to capture Ascalante in his den?

Argos

Argos is the southernmost sphere of Hyborian influence, and the Hyborian drift's only contact with the Western Ocean. Surrounded on three sides by more powerful countries, political machinations are Argos' forte.

Argos is not featured in the saga, although there is an excellent short piece about Argossean justice meeting barbarian logic in "Queen of the Black Coast," and the King of Argos helps Conan in *Conan the Liberator* and *Conan of the Isles*.

History

Argos was founded during the early years of the Hyborian drift (ca. 117 A.A.) by frontier Hyborians, who took the land from Shem in a series of swift invasions from the Poitain.

Argos also thrust into Zingara, but was stopped both by the organized army of that older nation and the ghoul-haunted forests which now mark Argos' western border.

The original intent of the Argossean campaign had been to secure the Khorotas River for shipping by the Poitainians. However, once the land had been taken, the Argosseans began using Argos' oaks to build ships of their own, plying the ancient trades of merchant and freebooter.

Argossean shipbuilding plus the Hyborian drive to expand earned Argosseans a reputation as the finest sailors on the Western Ocean — much to the irritation of the Zingarans. The two countries have repeatedly gone to war over the last thousand years each trying to destroy the other's fleet and become the undisputed naval power of the Western Ocean. The fragmented nature of both nations' navies combined with the inhospitable terrain between them has kept these wars ineffective for both.

Argos has also battled Ophir, Shem and even Stygia. These conflicts have been quickly resolved, often at high cost to Argos and leaving Argosseans with a reputation for being easily angered.

Nevertheless, Argos maintains good relations with Aquilonia, particularly with the Poitain. When politics in Aquilonia become too heated, the Argosseans quietly remove themselves from Aquilonian activities until the dust settles. "Tugging the Zingarans' beards is one thing," King Milo has been heard to say, "but only a fool angers the Aquilonian Lion."



Current Affairs

King Milo is currently concerned with the increased hostility and unrest brought on by the ascension of Conan. (Argos supports his claim, more in deference to Count Trocero than to real belief in Conan's right to rule.) In addition to the Zingarans, the Kothians have made exploratory probes, and the Pelishti of western Shem are stirring to reclaim their "ancestral" lands.

Friends and Foes

Argos' primary ally is Aquilonia, particularly the Poitain. Ophir and the city-states of western Shem also support Argos, whose river barges provide those landlocked kingdoms with valuable access to the sea.

Her single most determined enemy is Zingara. Years of rivalry have made the Zingarans implacable enemies, whose hand is restrained more by internal struggle than any magnanimous sentiment.

The most serious single contention between the two nations, besides their mutual antagonism, is the thin strip of seacoast southeast of the ghoul forests. This "Argossean panhandle," as it is called, provides many useful seaports for Argossean traders and privateers. Zingara has raided the panhandle ports several times, but Zingaran naval forces have been unable to dislodge fortified troops.

Geography

Argos' borders are defined by the Western Ocean, the ghoul forests of eastern Zingara, the Alimane River to the Poitain, and the Kothian hills. On its western side, a thin finger of land extends westward along the Zingaran coast to encompass the

mouth of the Thunder River. This "panhandle" is the source of many of the countries' disputes.

The most fertile region in Argos is the Khorotas river valley. The valley is filled with fruit orchards, farms, and oak forests where Argos' shipbuilding industry gets its wood.

The coast of Argos is dotted with harbors. Many of these are not commercially viable, but the king maintains them to make it difficult for Zingara to interdict freebooters or Argosian merchants.

Outside the valley and off the coast, Argos fades into the bare, rolling hills of Shem. Eastern Argos is lightly populated, although some new lands are being settled with the assistance of artesian wells.

Gazetteer

Khorotas River — Argos' major river. In Argos, the Khorotas runs from the Aquilonian border southwest to the Western Ocean. The Khorotas is not navigable by ocean-going vessels, but there is a lively barge trade bringing goods to and from the Poitain, Ophir and northeastern Argos (CCO).

Messantia — the capital city of Argos. Lying at the mouth of the Khorotas River, Messantia is a major seaport and shipyard for ships from Zingara to Stygia. Although Messantia has many of the same problems as any seaport town, by 1310, when King Ariosto sat upon the Argosian throne, Messantia had become "so safe a juicy wench can walk the length of the waterfront unmolested" (COI).

Climate

The Khorotas river valley gets abundant rainfall and pleasant weather, but is a little warm in the summer. The Khorotas' annual swells bring fertile soil from upstream.

Outside the valley, things are less pleasant. The coastal cities suffer from occasional floods in summer, while eastern Argos is arid and hot.

Economy and Loot

Argos' primary product is ships. The huge oak forests provide the keels and hulls of most modern sea-going vessels. The remainder of Argos' resources barely suffice to support the populace, so Argos' profit is made as a carrier of trade for other nations.

Mana Level

Argos has normal mana, with extended low-mana areas scattered throughout the kingdom. The only high-mana region is near the ghoulish forests along the Zingaran border.

Society

The Argosians are Hyborian, with some Zingaran and Shemitish influence. They are dark-skinned, with thick, curly dark hair and short, stocky bodies.

Culturally, the Argosians are Hyborian, although some Shemitish customs have infiltrated, particularly in eastern Argos.

Argos is ruled by the King (Status 5); other levels are Count or Baron (4); Mayor (of a city) or Knight (3); Patrician, wealthy merchant, ship's captain or military officer of Rank 5-6 (2); craftsman, merchant, military officer of Rank 3-4, or physician (1); commoner or common soldier (0); servant (-1); beggar (-2); bandit, brigand, or thief (-3); slave (-4).

Law

Argos' judges are appointed by the Argosian nobility. The

courts are well known for siding with the wealthiest party in civil cases. They have no compunction about imprisonment or torture for witnesses who refuse to testify.

Religion

The Argosians are primarily Mitra worshippers, although Bel, the Shemitish God of Thieves, is worshipped by many Argosian freebooters. Other religions are tolerated, although worship of Set, the Stygian serpent-god, is viewed with considerable suspicion.

Armed Forces

Argos' land military has a wide variety of troop types, mostly Light and Medium, with some Pikemen and small Heavy Infantry contingents. Despite Argos' warlike reputation, her troops are not well trained, and are usually of Green to Seasoned quality.

Argos' ship-crews are considered Irregular Infantry (II), with some Light Infantry (LI) and Pikemen (PI) aboard the royally-owned privateers. However, they see constant action on the Western Ocean, and are considered Seasoned to Elite. It is this force that has given Argos the strength to challenge Zingara.

Language

Argosian is a Mental/Average language closely related to western Aquilonian, with some Zingaran and Shemitish loan-words. Argosian is a sailor's lingua franca on the Western Ocean, but many Argosians speak Zingaran, Shemitish or both. Argosian defaults to Aquilonian at -4 and Nemedian at -6.

Names

Argosians have Italianate names, similar to those in the Poitain: Ariosto, Fabio, Milo, Publio, Strabo. Other names used in the Poitain would also be appropriate for an Argosian.

Argosian Adventure

Stop Zaronno! The Zingaran privateer Zaronno has been raiding Argosian villages along the "panhandle" section of the Argosian coast. King Milo's spies captured one of Zaronno's rogues, who revealed (under "questioning") that the next planned strike is in the Argosian coastal town of Birrantia. Can the party arrange an ambush for Zaronno, and help the peaceful coastal townspeople to rid themselves of this pirate once and for all?

Asgard

See *Nordheim*, pp. 74-75.

Barachan Isles

"... half the freebooters of the Western sea swaggered through the cobbled alleys of Red Tortage with pouches bursting with gold, bellies bulging with beer and ale, and hearts inflamed by lust and truculence."

— *Conan of the Isles*

The Barachan Isles house the pirates of the Western Ocean. These pirates are despised by Zingaran and Argosian sailors alike. Their loyalty is not to any nation, but to their captain, their islands and to themselves.

Conan joins the Barachan pirates when he is in his early thirties, and spends a few years there. "The Gem in the Tower"

and "The Pool of the Black One" describe some of Conan's pirate adventures, but no story deals with the Barachas directly.



History

The Barachan Isles were discovered (according to legend) by the Argoscean freebooter Rigello in 1137 A.A. Captain Rigello was fleeing Argoscean justice. Having found the Zingarans too tough to take on, he had begun preying upon Argoscean coastal towns. With both sea powers offering a reward for his head, he fled west into the trackless sea.

West of the Zingaran coast, Rigello discovered an uninhabited archipelago, which he named the Barachas. These islands had fruit trees, small game, plenty of water and several safe harbors. Rigello built a small settlement, which he called Tortage, on the largest island.

Rigello remained in the Barachas for nearly a year, then returned to the mainland. Soon, though, he had resumed his old habits, and had to return to the Barachas.

Some of the men he left behind told their shipmates about where they'd hidden from the Zingarans, and soon other captains began shipping out to the Barachas. Tortage became a haven for pirates of all nationalities.

Since those days, the Barachan pirates have raided indiscriminately, their only nationality the islands where they hide. Argos and Zingara have tried to drive the pirates out several times, but the pirate ships melt away into the islands. There are too many pirate's havens to ever clean the islands out. The Barachan pirates will continue to be a thorn in the side of all honest captains on the Western Ocean for many years to come.

Current Affairs

The Barachan pirates are often hard-pressed to avoid Zingaran or Argoscean military vessels. Recently, King Ferdugo of Zingara swore that he would see the Barachas purged of pirates, and has commissioned his shipyards to produce four swift new war-galleys to root out the pirates and send them to the

bottom of the Western Ocean. Only time will tell whether the galleys will succeed in their task, or whether they will end up sunk or captured by the pirates themselves.

Friends and Foes

The Barachan pirates are despised by all mainlanders who sail the Western Ocean. A pirate ship caught at sea would be destroyed with equal relish by a Zingaran, an Argoscean, a Shemite or a Stygian.

Geography

The Barachas are a substantial archipelago of 13 volcanic islands varying from one to 60 miles across. The islands are sprinkled with small coves, just right for one or two ships, and Tortage stands beside an enormous harbor able to berth 40 Zingaran galleys.

Above the coves and harbors loom the Barachan peaks, which extend through the ever-present clouds. In Tortage's inns, ancient seamen whisper tales of ancient ruins glimpsed briefly as the wind brushed back the clouds or of eerie cries wafted down from the heights on nights of the full moon. No Barachan admits to fearing what lies beyond the clouds — but the peaks remain unexplored.

Gazetteer

Isle of the Black One — an isolated island in the Western Ocean, set with ancient pre-Cataclysmic ruins (PBO).

Tortage — main settlement of the Barachan Isles. Tortage is a neutral port, where reavers who would sink one another if they met on the open sea can drink in the same tavern without a brawl. The Zingarans hope that rivalries among the pirates will destroy Tortage, but it seems unlikely. As an old buccaneer once explained: "Even a kraken must rest a time in peace" (PBO).

Climate

The lower altitudes of the Barachas are arid, although water can be found bubbling up in springs or trapped in glassy lava formations. The higher altitudes are presumably moister, as they are continuously enshrouded in white clouds, and rain can often be seen falling on the upper slopes, but the runoff from this is trapped in the many lava vents which run out beneath the sea.

Flora and Fauna

Although the Barachas were uninhabited until the pirates came, there is some animal life. Birds of all types, rodents and a kind of mountain goat all thrive on the larger Barachas, and fishing generates a major portion of the Barachan diet.

In addition to the native animals, the pirates brought their own, including a large breed of dog. Some of the dogs have escaped captivity and now run in packs on the islands, bringing down animals and (rarely) wandering men.

Mana Level

The Barachan Isles have normal mana, at least along the coastline. Some of the stories about the misty peaks tell of ruined altars which may have high or even very high mana.

Society

The Barachan pirates are primarily Argosceans. What culture has been transferred to this remote outpost comes primarily from that Hyborian nation. Others have come from Zingara, Shem, Stygia, Kush, Aquilonia, Nemedia and even Cimmeria and Nordheim.

There are few women on the Barachas. Most of them are doxies for one captain or another or harlots working the streets of Tortage. Those whose allure has faded run brothels or other businesses in Tortage, gather enough coin for passage back to the mainland or starve to death.

The power on the Barachan Isles is held by the Captains (Status 2); other levels are navigator, physician, or cargo-master (1); common sailor (0); whore (-1); servant (-2); beggar (-3); slave (-4).

Law

The only law of the Barachas is the sword. Anything goes as long as you're willing to fight for it — and you win.

Armed Forces

The Barachan pirates are considered Irregular Infantry, although they range from Average to Crack quality.

Language

The Barachan argot is primarily Argossean, with bits added in every port from the Black Coast to Zingara, and is a Mental/Easy skill with a default of Argossean-4.

Private codes are common. Sometimes they are ciphers carefully designed by ingenious captains, but more often they are verbal "shorthand" developed informally from experiences shared by a ship's crew. All such are Mental/Average skills.

Names

Hardly anyone is born on the Barachan Isles. The few that are usually have Argossean names (see p. 46).

Barachan Isles Adventure

Rite of Passage. The adventurers book passage from Mes-santia with a disreputable-looking ship captain, who offers them passage for much less than the other captains requested. When they get to sea, their ship turns out to be a Barachan pirate, and the captain has no compunction about robbing a few too-innocent travelers and dumping their bodies overboard, or locking them in with the other car-slaves. Their only hope is to challenge the captain in single combat, winner take all!

Black Kingdoms

See *Kush and the Black Kingdoms*, pp. 68-71.

Border Kingdom

The Border Kingdom is a stretch of inhospitable terrain which lies between the northern border of Nemedra and Aquilonia and the Eiglophian Mountains which mark the southern border of Cimmeria. It is divided into many minor independent holdings, each with its own overlord.

The Border Kingdom is only visited once in the saga (in "The Witch of the Mists"), and then it is only peripheral to the story. Nevertheless, the Border Kingdom shows up on Howard's earliest maps.

History

When the Hyborians spread across the West, the first areas to be settled were Nemedra and Koth. They were already occupied, and it is always easier to steal lands from other men than to take them from the wild. Then the Hyborians began to drive

the less civilized peoples (in particular, the Picts and Ligureans of the Pictish Wilderness, see p. 76) out of the northern reaches.

As the Hyborians came from the north, they often crossed the land now known as the Border Kingdom, but they did not stay. The soil of the Border Kingdom is poor, the vegetation is sparse and the salt marsh renders much of the land unfit for farming. Thus, this narrow band of land was left unsettled for centuries.

Eventually, the Hyborian kingdoms produced nobles dissatisfied with the rule of the existing monarchies. Some rebelled, and founded their own dynasties. Others rebelled and lost.

Some of those who lost fled the Hyborian lands, settling in small homesteads in the Border Kingdom with their followers. There, they could rebuild their strength, or just crawl away and lick their wounds.

Over time, the Border Kingdom became dotted with petty overlords, each one holding a tiny spot of cleared land, with a few peasants to eke a living from the barren soil.

In addition to these human enclaves, the marshes of the Border Kingdom are inhabited by a race of shaggy, club-wielding primitives, dressed in loincloths, who subsist on frogs, crayfish and dog-meat. These "degenerate men" are believed to be the spawn of refugees who have used the Border Kingdom region for millennia (see p. 13).



Current Affairs

The Border Kingdom has recently gained a large influx of inhabitants, primarily supporters of Numedides in the recent Aquilonian civil war. Some of these exiles brought large contingents of retainers and the more powerful Aquilonian forces have been absorbing the older overlords. It is uncertain whether Aquilonia or Nemedra will permit this buildup of force to continue.

Friends and Foes

The overlords of the Border Kingdom are individually enemies of their homelands. Otherwise, their presence is tolerated by the other kingdoms. Thus, an Aquilonian overlord might have a problem with Aquilonian troops, but would be of no note to Brythunians.

One exception to this is Nemedra, which resents the loss of tariffs brought on by the Border Kingdom's smuggling efforts.

Nemedian raids are indiscriminate, with any overlord considered fair game whether or not he participates in the smuggling. This policy reduces the effectiveness of the raids. The overlords of the Border Kingdom figure they might as well smuggle — they're going to be punished anyway.

Geography

The Border Kingdom is a "dreary waste of desolate, empty moors," sprinkled with "gnarled, stunted trees." Here and there are tiny wattle-and-daub villages, with one small stone hovel as the castle of the overlord.

Mana Level

The Border Kingdom has low mana. Even the degenerate men seem devoid of magical and shamanistic practices.

Society

The people of the Border Kingdom are Aquilonian and Nemedian, with a few Ophireans, Argosseans and Kothians mixed in. They hunt the limited game, raise goats or sheep and raid Aquilonia, Nemedian and Brythunia.

Caravans cross the Border Kingdom between Brythunia and Aquilonia to evade the tolls on Nemedian roads. The overlords charge the caravans for "safe passage," although such charges are less than the Nemedian tariffs; occasionally, however, a depraved or desperate overlord will simply loot the caravan.

The Border Kingdom is ruled by the overlords (Status 2); other levels are sergeant (1); common brigand (0); doxy (-1); degenerate man (-2); beggar (-3); slave (-4).

Armed Forces

Some of the Border Kingdom overlords maintain small Irregular Infantry (II) forces; a few even have Light Infantry (LI) or Pikemen (PI). Cavalry is limited to the overlords and their personal attendants. Horses don't prosper in the marshes.

Language

Most refugees in the Border Kingdom speak Aquilonian or Nemedian; the refugees in the Border Kingdom do not have a sufficiently independent existence to develop their own language.

Border Kingdom Adventure

Bring 'em Back Alive. Amilius has been building a force in the Border Kingdom, and Conan's spies report that he intends to invade Aquilonia. Publius, Conan's prime minister, has offered \$1,000 for his death or capture. Amilius, insulted at the amount, has vowed to flay bounty hunters.

Brythunia

Brythunia is really two countries. One is the plains and forests of the central territories and the other is the barren highlands of the northeast. Brythunia is inhabited by the descendants of pre-Hyborian primitives and Hyperborean refugees.

The Kezankian Mountains east of Brythunia are inhabited by Kezankian hillmen. These tribes are of the same stock as those which live in Zamora, and their description can be found under *Zamora*, p. 87.

"The Thing in the Crypt" is set in northern Brythunia, but no Brythunians appear in this short story. The best look at Brythunian highland culture is in *Conan the Magnificent*, which is set in the Kezankian Mountains near the Zamoran border.

History

When the Hyborians came south, Brythunia was an unsettled wilderness nestled in the northeastern corner of Hyperborea the Elder. Refugees from Hyperborea the Elder and Acheron fled into the Brythunian wilderness to escape the Hyborians. The invaders, bent on conquering wealthy Acheron, ignored Brythunia's rough highlands.

The refugees allied with the nomadic tribes which had inhabited Brythunia since Cataclysmic times. These natives were tall and light-skinned, with blond hair, and possessed a well-developed hunter-gatherer culture. Hyperborean farming techniques did not work in the stony Brythunian highlands, so the Hyperboreans learned the Brythunian way of life. Over time, however, Hyperborean technology allowed the refugees to clear the lowland forests and begin agriculture.

Since that time, Hyborian influence has drifted into Brythunia, partially through osmosis and partially through a series of occupations by Hyborian forces. The Brythunians make poor vassals, however; no Hyborian conquest has been lasting.

Current Affairs

King Eldran of Brythunia rose to the throne from low beginnings as a hillman of northeastern Brythunia. His rule is shaky, as many of the nobles see him as a threat to the hereditary nobility, but he has demonstrated himself to be a good and just king. If he is successful in his bid to re-unite the divided regions of Brythunia, he may finally achieve the long-promised strength inherent in the Brythunian throne.

Friends and Foes

Brythunia has no major enemies, in part because the "kingdom" is not taken seriously enough to be considered a threat. The king is usually pressing Nemedian and Corinthia for relief from the slave-raiding, but has not gone to war in many years.



Geography

Brythunia is bounded by the Graskaal Mountains to the north, the Kezankians to the east, the Yellow River to the west, and the foothills of the Karpash Mountains to the south. Brythunia's southern and western borders are weakly defended, however, and much of "Brythunia" is claimed (but not occupied) by Nemed, Corinthia and Zamora.

Northeastern Brythunia is dry and stony. High crags and narrow crooked valleys fill the eastern half of the country, while on its western edge, the brackish Yellow River flows from the Great Salt Marsh of the Border Kingdom. The salt from this river makes much of western Brythunia uninhabitable. In the far north, pine forests dot the foothills of the Graskaals, and the high peaks are covered with glaciers and permafrost.

Most Brythunians, however, live in the central prairies and forests. These lands are well watered by rivers which flow from the northeastern highlands, and have numerous small feudal holdings. Much of this land is virgin forest, but in the north and east, the plains have been divided into many independent holdings, each owing often-ignored fealty to Brythunia's king.

There are few fortified cities in Brythunia. The capital, Kelbaza, lies on the Lema Plains south of the Great Salt Marsh. Other walled cities include Pirogia, Charnina and Potrebila.

Climate

Brythunia is cold and arid. Northern Brythunia receives a fair amount of snow every year (mostly on the northern slopes of the Graskaals). The central plains receive heavy rainfall each year, mostly in the late summer and fall, but the cold weather still shortens the Brythunian growing season.

Economy and Loot

The Brythunians live on sheep and cattle (which can eat the brambly plants which grow in the highlands) and have little of what civilized lands call wealth. Their most active export is slaves, much to their chagrin.

Mana Level

Most of Brythunia has low to normal mana. However, the Kezankian Mountains in eastern Brythunia have had more than their share of mystical activity. Treat them as having high mana.

Society

Modern Brythunians descend from ancient Hyperborean and Brythunian stock. Hyperbores were stocky (like modern Shemites), with dark hair; ancient Brythunians were tall, fair-skinned and blond. Modern Brythunians are stocky, but with fair skin and blond hair.

Most Brythunians live in small villages of wattle-and-daub huts. In the central regions, these villages are set into copses of trees, while in the northeastern highlands, they are perched upon the tops of high crags. Where necessary, steps and footholds are carved into the rock to ensure easy climbing, and most Brythunian villages have at least one horse-path.

In the fertile central plains, farming feeds most Brythunians, but in the highlands men hunt to survive. Women remain at home, weaving, embroidering and raising children. A Brythunian widow moves in with her husband's brother or her own family.

The Hyborians make Brythunians the butt of many jokes. Brythunian men are viewed as bumpkins, while the women are perennially willing (according to Hyborian storytellers).

Brythunians live in many Hyborian cities, especially in Corinthia, where they work as skilled weavers and dyers.

Brythunia is ruled by the King (Status 5); other levels are Count or Baron (4); Knight (3); Mayor (of a city) (2); village headman (1); commoner or common soldier (0); servant (-1); beggar (-2); bandit, brigand, or thief (-3); slave (-4).

Government

Central Brythunia is ruled by hereditary nobles who legally owe allegiance to the Brythunian king, but are in fact independent. This divided leadership causes many of Brythunia's problems, and puts the king into a difficult position when bargaining with the other Hyborian nations.

The Brythunian nobles bicker with one another as frequently as they ignore the throne. The difficulty of Brythunian life prevents large standing armies, but each noble maintains a few "household guards" who raid neighboring steadings for cattle and sheep (or on the whim of a piqued noble). This constant internal strife has prevented Brythunia from consolidating into a true nation.

The Brythunian monarch is constantly trying to make other kingdoms acknowledge his sovereignty over Brythunian territory. However, as he has no army to draw upon, Nemed and Corinthia generally ignore the Brythunian "King of Oafs."

In the northeast, there is no hereditary nobility. Village headmen are selected by the priestesses of Wiccana. The headman is primarily an arbitrator, and has no police force to draw upon or written law to uphold. The headman is respected, however, and his suggestions often become the village decision.

Slavery

The Hyborians raid Brythunia for slaves, particularly in the outlying areas such as the far south and northeast. Brythunian women are prized as slaves. Their blonde hair is considered especially attractive, and they are believed easily tamed. Brythunian men, on the other hand, make poor slaves, and are only used for outdoor labor. Nemedian slavers value a Brythunian male at \$7,500; a woman from the same village might bring \$20,000.

Religion

Brythunians in the populated central plains are usually Mitra worshipers, although there is some worship of the gods of Turan and Zamora. Rural Brythunians worship the nature goddess Wiccana.

Armed Forces

The King of Brythunia maintains a small force of Light and Medium Infantry (LI and MI), but these are so poorly trained they are considered Green.

However, the villages are used to defending themselves. Treat Brythunian villagers as Irregular Infantry (II) of Average to Crack quality. Also, remember that when a Brythunian village is attacked, every villager is a member of the fighting force. Thus, a Brythunian village can amass a startling amount of force in a short period of time.

Language

Brythunian is a Mental/Average derivative of ancient Hyperborean and the tongue of the original Brythunian primitives. Many Brythunians, however, also speak Zamoran, Corinthian or Nemedian.

Names

Brythunian names are Celtic: Aelric, Boudanecia, Eldran,

Ellandune, Fyrdan, Godtan, Haral, etc. Brythunian slaves in Hyborian lands are given Hyborian names, as the Hyborians consider Brythunian names barbaric.

Brythunian Adventure

Stop the Slavers. A party of strangers is visiting a Brythunian village just east of the Nemedian border when a runner comes. Nemedian slavers have just attacked a nearby village. Can the heroes rescue the villagers before they cross the Yellow River and come under the protection of Nemedian troops?

This incident can form a single adventure, or can be used as a springboard for an entire campaign.

Cimmeria

"I recall
Only the stillness of that sombre land;
The clouds that piled forever on the hills,
The dimness of the everlasting woods.
Cimmeria, land of Darkness and the Night."

—Cimmeria

Cimmeria is north of Aquilonia. It was the birthplace of Conan. The Cimmerian highlands have been inhabited for over 4,000 years, but the Cimmerians are still barbarians (see *History*, below).

Cimmeria is the setting of *Conan the Valorous*, by John Maddox Roberts. None of Howard's stories take place in Cimmeria, but Conan is Cimmerian, so hints and descriptions are scattered throughout the saga.

History

The Cimmerians are the descendants of the Atlantean colonists, with no recollection of their origins. They have been hardened into one of the strongest peoples of the Hyborian Age. They are barbarians, although they have rediscovered the art of smelting ore and have culturally passed the stagnated Picts. Their physical strength, their stubbornness and their absolute trustworthiness are legendary among the Hyborians. "The Cimmerians never do what you want," a Gunderman once said, "but they always do what they say."

Since the Cimmerians have no written language, a complete history of their peoples would be impossible. However, one recent Cimmerian historical event stands out . . . the sack of Venarium.

The Gundermen pushed the Aquilonian frontier into the southern highlands of Cimmeria, displacing the southernmost tribes northward one time too many. The Cimmerian clans decided to drive the Gundermen out of Cimmeria once and for all. The Bloody Spear was passed, and a horde formed at the Standing Stone on the Field of the Chiefs. Thousands of screaming Cimmerians swarmed south, overwhelmed the defenders of Venarium, and levelled the fort. Only a few Gundermen survived to return home with the message, "Stay out of Cimmeria."

Current Affairs

Conan has sent ambassadors to his kinsmen, informing them of his rise to power in Aquilonia. It is too early to determine whether the Cimmerians will view a Cimmerian on Aquilonia's throne any differently than they have the Hyborian kings.

Friends and Foes

Cimmeria's primary allies are the Æsir. These northern

warriors share the Cimmerian love of battle and respect its limits. Cimmerian tribesmen still raid Æsir settlements (and vice versa), but this is viewed as manly sport, not war.

Cimmeria's enemies are the Vanir and the Hyperboreans. Cimmerian raids against these cruel peoples are extermination rather than sport. Both groups take Cimmerian slaves, an act the Cimmerians do not forgive.

The Cimmerians war with Aquilonia whenever the Hyborians attempt to colonize Cimmeria. The Cimmerians protect their land, but when the Hyborians stay properly south of the mountains, the Cimmerians trade without animosity.

The Cimmerians also hate the Picts and have feuded with them since Cataclysmic times. What contact they have is violent, but both sides prefer to avoid one another's territory.

Geography

Cimmeria is a mountainous land with precipitous cliffs and bluffs. Surrounded by high mountains, Cimmeria is a somber land, with overcast skies most of the year, and bitterly cold winters.

Wolves enter Cimmeria from Nordheim during the winter, raiding the Cimmerian herds, and white and brown bear can be found in the higher crags. Cimmerians respect the animals' fierceness and cunning, but they kill wolves whenever possible to protect their herds. A species of white mountain goat inhabits the highest peaks, and some Cimmerian tribes hunt these goats for their skins and meat.



Gazetteer

Ben Morgh — also known as Mount Crom, this mountain in northwestern Cimmeria is the home of the god Crom, and the holiest place in Cimmeria. The chiefs of the clans of Cimmeria are buried on the Field of the Dead at the base of Ben Morgh.

Eiglophian Mountains — the mountain range which marks the border between Cimmeria and Nordheim.

Field of the Chiefs — a field in northwestern Cimmeria dotted with ancient stone structures, probably Atlantean in

origin. In the center of the field is the Standing Stone, a stark shaft of black rock sitting upright in the center of the field. Legend states that Crom ripped the Standing Stone from a mountain in Hyperborea and hurled it at Ymir when that Nordheimr deity invaded Cimmeria long ago.

Economy and Loot

Cimmerians are an insular people, and do not export anything of great value. Their barren land also provides little loot, although some hunters have made a profit on bear and wolf pelts.

Mana Level

Cimmeria has low mana, with patches of normal mana along the mountainous edges. Ben Morgh, the home of Crom, has high mana, and possibly very high mana at the unclimbable summit.

Society

The Cimmerians are a tall, powerful people, with dark hair and blue or gray eyes. They live in small, isolated tribes which herd cattle, grow oats and raid one another for cattle or wives.

The isolation of the Cimmerian tribes gives each a distinctive appearance. For example, the Canach have sharp, craggy features, the Murrogh sport a distinctive square jaw, the Tunog have high foreheads and the Raeda have long noses. Some clans augment their differences. For example, the Lacheish shave their temples, and the wild Galla wear their hair in a topknot.

Cimmerians disparage the comforts considered mandatory by those of the south. They are solemn, and avoid bragging about themselves. "Who but a fool or a coward boasts of the men he has slain?" asks one Cimmerian. "Friend or foe, the measure of a fighter is in his arm and heart."

The leaders in Cimmeria are the clan-heads (Status 2); other levels are Warchief or Elder (1); warrior (0); woman (-1); youth (-2); bandit, brigand, thief, or outlaw (-3); oath-breaker (-4).

Customs

In Cimmeria, a youth is considered a man when he has killed in battle. For most Cimmerians, this comes before their sixteenth birthday, either in clan-feuds or in battle against the Vanir, Æsir or Hyperboreans. After this time, he is obligated to uphold custom like any adult.

A proper Cimmerian male takes a wife before his eighteenth birthday, then stays to take care of the clan cattle and lands. Widows are often married by the brother of the deceased, although the Cimmerians do not practice polygamy.

Few Cimmerians live to old age. Gray hair is a mark of respect, as it indicates that the elder has been skilled enough to survive. The Cimmerians are courteous to one another, and to those who visit them, because in Cimmeria, rudeness is an invitation to battle. "Civilized men are more discourteous than savages because they know they can be impolite without having their skulls split, as a general thing" (TOE).

Law

Cimmerian custom is rarely violated. Each man is free to do as he pleases, but violation of custom brings disapproval by the clan. If the clan disapproves of a man, they won't go to blood feud over his death. This makes him a target of every ambitious youth in Cimmeria.

One other custom deserves mention: the Bloody Spear. When danger threatens the clans, the chiefs call Cimmeria to war by sending a blood-covered spear to each clan. If invaders are killing Cimmerians, the blood of the victims marks the Spear.

Lands of the Hyborian Age

Otherwise, the clan that sends the Spear marks it with the blood of its own warriors.

The Bloody Spear suspends all feuds between clans, and all Cimmerians send their warriors to defend those who have called. The resulting horde is nearly unstoppable, as the defenders of Venarium learned.

Religion

The Cimmerian god is Crom (see *Hyborian Religion*, p. 34).

Armed Forces

Cimmerians are Irregular Infantry (II): they have no formal military training. However, their natural strength and vitality increases their TS (see *Mass Combat*, p. 101) value to 4; furthermore, their long familiarity with war gives them a Seasoned to Elite quality.

Language

The Cimmerian language is "a harsh, uncouth tongue, full of singsong vowels and crashing, guttural consonants" (TWM) descended (distantly) from ancient Atlantean. It is unrelated to most other languages, although it shares many words and grammatical structures with Nordheimr. It is considered a Mental/Average skill, and has no written form.

Names

In Howard's own writings, Conan is the only Cimmerian mentioned, but other authors have supplemented the list of names: Anga, Bodhrann, Bronwith, Chamta, Chulainn, Dietra, Milach, Rorik and Twyl. In general, Cimmerian names are Celtic in origin.

When dealing with other tribes, the clan name is often appended to the personal name. Thus, Conan is actually "Conan of Canach." The chief is referred to by the tribal name, thus the chief of Conan's clan is simply "Canach," or "Canach of Canach" on more formal occasions.

Cimmerian Adventure

Return to Venarium. The Aquilonians attempt to re-colonize Venarium. This effort, sponsored by the independent Gundermen, is against King Conan's wishes. The Gundermen hope that by "purchasing" the land from the local Cimmerian tribes, they can gain "legal" control of the land in the same fashion that the Westernmark was "purchased" from the Picts. This promises lively times for adventurers on either side.

Corinthia

Corinthia is a minor Hyborian state lying between Brythunia and Koth. Corinthia was part of ancient Acheron, as was Nemedia, and the modern kingdom falls squarely within the Nemedian hegemony.

Corinthia is mentioned in a few of the Conan stories, but only one, *Conan the Fearless*, actually takes place there.

History

Corinthia began as a subject kingdom of ancient Acheron. When that great kingdom was overrun by the Hyborians, Corinthia was briefly independent, but as with the other northern lands, it too fell to Hyborian conquerors.

Unlike Nemedia and Ophir, Corinthia never truly gained a separate independence. It has constantly owed allegiance to one or another of the greater powers: Aquilonia, Nemedia, Zamora or Koth.

The Road of Kings

Corinthia's most prominent feature (and one of the most important works of the West) is the Road of Kings. This highway runs west from the city of Aghrapur on the shore of the Vilayet Sea, passing through Arenjun and Shadizar, along Corinthia, through Belverus and Tarantia, and south through the Poitain to the Khorotas river valley and Messantia. The road provides a single uninterrupted caravan route from the Western Ocean to the shores of the Vilayet Sea.

The road was begun in 1047 A.A. in a rare show of solidarity by the Corinthian city-states. They sought to improve their economic condition, heighten their independence, and steal some of the eastern caravan trade from Khauran. The critical section (which ran through Corinthia) connected to pre-existing roads in Zamora and Nemedra. Treaties between the Hyborian powers have kept the tolls at a minimum throughout its length.

The road is a marvel of Hyborian engineering. Along its best stretches, the surface is covered with paving-stones set so firmly into the roadbed that they have been compared to the flooring in a noble palace. Over the 200 years since the road was constructed, it has fallen into disrepair in spots, but the Corinthians still keep their section as clear as possible.

In terms of its broader mission, the road was only partially successful. It is true that a large amount of the caravan traffic that once bypassed Corinthia now goes through the city-states, and that these caravans leave a great deal of wealth in Corinthia. However, the Road of Kings is not only important to Corinthia. Nemedra has ever more firmly asserted herself in Corinthian politics, and may invade the smaller nation "to secure the road for lawful commerce."



Current Affairs

King Nemed of Nemedra has been pursuing a diplomatic course, attempting to have Nemedian troops installed on the Corinthian stretch of the Road of Kings. So far the King of Corinthia has been successful in postponing Nemed's proposal, while secretly trying to get King Conan of Aquilonia to make the

same offer. The Corinthian king expects that Nemed's interest in installing troops will evaporate if he must work check-by-jowl with the Cimmerian usurper.

Friends and Foes

These days, Corinthia's fortunes rise and fall with Nemed's. Thus, the two nations seem to have identical likes and dislikes, although Corinthia actively woos Aquilonia, both to protect herself from further Nemedian involvement and to ensure the continued viability of the Road of Kings.

Geography

Corinthia is a mountainous land, whose eastern portions run along the Karpash mountain range, continuing the rough terrain of her northern neighbor, Brythunia. Her southern border blends into the difficult terrain of Koth. Corinthia's heartland, on the other hand, resembles the broad plains of central Brythunia.

Economy and Loot

Corinthia has little to trade. There are some mines in the mountains, although many of these are abandoned and empty, while others barely produce enough to make working them worthwhile. Nevertheless, Corinthia's marketplaces are filled with the wealth of the West and the East because of its central position on the Road of Kings.

Mana Level

Corinthia has normal mana throughout its lands. The Black Square (see below) has attempted Khari rituals to increase the mana level of specific areas, but has so far been unsuccessful.

Society

The Corinthians are dark-skinned as Hyborians go, due to intermixing with the Zamorans. They still retain the Hyborian stout build and tawny hair.

Corinthia is divided into several independent city-states, each with its own government and laws. In practice, they are oligarchies; government positions go to the wealthy and the powerful.

In a Corinthian city-state, leadership resides in the Senators (Status 4). Below them lie the ranks of Patrician (3); wealthy merchant, or military officer of Rank 6-7 (2); craftsman, merchant or military officer of Rank 3-5 (1); commoner or common soldier (0); servant (-1); beggar (-2); bandit, brigand, or thief (-3); slave (-4).

The Squares of Magic

Corinthia has its share of magicians, including three secret magical orders which have existed since Acheronian times. These orders are known as the Squares and share many characteristics with the White Hand of Hyperborea, the Black Ring of Stygia, and the Scarlet Circle of far Khitai.

The White Square uses its magic to aid. The Gray Square is a scholarly organization which pursues magic as a field of study without moral judgement. The Black Square believes that magicians are the rightful rulers of the West (and the world). Secret passages in ancient Acheronian tomes hint of a fourth Square, the Rainbow Square, as the true controlling force behind the secret societies.

The Squares were originally formed to unearth and analyze tomes and artifacts of Acheronian magic. However, over the centuries, the Squares have become increasingly involved in

internal politics. Because the efforts of each Square are devoted to blocking the others, the Squares have little public effect, and are little more than a fairy-tale to most Corinthians.

Law

The city-states of Corinthia have a variety of governmental styles, all based on republican theory. Government leaders are called Senators, and their power varies with the extent of their financial holdings.

The Senate not only creates the laws, but also manages the courts and the prosecution of criminals. The Senators commonly use their legal powers to intimidate their opponents, and each city-state in Corinthia has its own "whips," senior Senators who rule the city.

Religion

The Corinthians are Mitra worshippers, with only a scattering of the pantheons of Shem and Turan. There is little religious innovation, as most theological developments come from Nemedra or Aquilonia, but in some city-states the temples are a major political force.

Armed Forces

Corinthia's troops follow the normal proportions for a Hyborian nation, including troops of all types, with Green to Seasoned Quality. The Corinthian Road Guard is a Medium Cavalry (MC) force responsible for the Road of Kings; the Guard sees plenty of action, and is considered Crack.

Language

Corinthian is a Mental/Average language. It is related to most of the other Hyborian tongues, but defaults to none of them.

Names

Corinthian names are primarily Latin in form: Dalius, Djuluva, Eldia, Hogistum, Kinna, Lemparius, Loganaro, Sovartus, and Vitarius. Names from Aquilonia, Nemedra, Ophir or Koth could be used.

Corinthian Adventure

On the Road to Zamora. The adventurers are hired to protect a small troupe of entertainers in the Corinthian city-state of Mornstandinos. Unbeknownst to them, the stage magician of the troupe is really a sorcerer of the White Square who has been targeted for death by a powerful sorcerer of the Black Square. Can they stop the murder?

Darfar

Darfar is the home of the cannibal cult of Yog, Lord of the Empty Abodes. This cult represents the worst the southern kingdoms have to offer.

The best description of the Darfar cannibals is in "Shadows in Zamboula," where they are such a threat that beggars will not sleep on the street.

History

Yog worship was brought to the west by the Khari (see *Hyrkania*, pp. 58-60 and *Stygia*, pp. 80-83). In Stygia, Yog is viewed as a demon subordinate to Father Set, and is assigned the spiritual task of consuming Set's enemies in the afterlife.

The Darfar cannibals are the last remaining worshippers of

Yog. The ancient Khari temples are still held sacred by the Darfar, although many of the functions of these edifices are beyond the modern worshippers. Almost all of the spiritual implications of Yog worship have faded over the millennia, until all that remains are the forms and the bloodlust.

Friends and Foes

The Yoggites are despised by most northern peoples, and in Shem and Turan they fulfill the role of bogey-men for small children. Only in Zamboula and other southern cities are they tolerated, and then only because of their usefulness as slaves.



Geography

Darfar is a hot, rainy jungle nestled between Kush and Keshan. Its northern border is the Purple Lotus Swamp of Stygia, and to the south it fades into the Black Kingdoms.

Flora and Fauna

Darfar has a great variety of wildlife. Lions prowl the jungle; small antelope are very common. The trees are filled with birds, monkeys and giant sloths.

One kind of monkey, the waguke, is highly prized for its man-like form; the Darfar cannibals consider waguke brains a delicacy.

Mana Level

Darfar is a low-mana land. There is little evidence that the once-potent sacrifices to Yog reach the demon. The wretched condition of the Darfar cannibals argues that they have been abandoned by their deity.

Society

The Darfar cannibals are tall and dark-skinned, with broad shoulders and large hands and feet. They file their teeth to points and cover their kinky hair in mud, which they sculpt into hornlike spindles.

The cannibals live by hunting, as the tenets of Yog prevent them from eating any kind of plant. They have no domestic animals, and live in rough huts coated with dried mud in small villages of 40 to 80. These villages are occasionally raided by Stygian slavers, who sell them either in Stygia or in Shem and Turan.

Darfar's leaders are priests of Yog (Status 1); other levels are hunter (0); woman (-1); slave (-2); bandit, brigand, or thief (-3). Note that cannibals are not considered brigands within their own culture.

Religion

Darfar is the home of the Yoggites (see *Hyborian Religion*, p. 35).

Armed Forces

The Darfar cannibals are considered Irregular Infantry (II), of Untrained to Green quality. Their hunts for sacrifices prey on the weak and helpless, and even then three to four Darfar gang up on a single victim.

Language

The Darfar tongue has a strong Khari strain to it. Nevertheless, it is close enough to Kushite to be considered a Mental/Average dialect; the two default to each other at -3. Darfar is also related to modern Stygian, and defaults to Stygian-6.

Names

No Darfar names appear in the saga. Any Kushite name would be appropriate for a Darfar cannibal.

Ghulistan

Ghulistan lies in the southwestern foothills of the Himelian Mountains, north of Kosala and west of Vendhya. It is inhabited by warlike tribes of mountaineers, who raid the northern reaches of Vendhya for spices and gold.

Ghulistan is the setting of "The People of the Black Circle," in which Conan appears as the warchief of the savage Afghulis, kidnaps the Devi of Vendhya, and fights the Black Seers of Yimsha.

History

The Himelian Mountains have towered over the world since pre-Cataclysmic times. Some speculate that they were thrown up in some earlier catastrophe, when ancient gods fought for the young world.

Whatever their origins, the cold, forbidding peaks of the Himelias have obstructed travel between the eastern realms the Hyborian lands since the time of the Khari. The Himelias may not be crossed; one must pass either to the north or south of the range to go from the Vilayet Sea to the far reaches of Khitai.

Passage to the north requires crossing the lands of the Hyrkanian horse-nomads, and paying tribute to their chieftains. Passing to the south, on the other hand, allows merchants to travel through Vendhya, which is safe from banditry if not from taxation.

A long spur of mountains extends southwest from the main body of the Himelias, creating Ghulistan. This maze of valleys flanked by precipitous cliffs blocks passage west of Vendhya. Ghulistan is home to fierce bandit tribes who raid caravans when they can find them, and Vendhyans, Kosalan and Turanian settlements when they can't.

The terrain makes it difficult to destroy the bandits, and the

Turanian and Vendhyans armies are too ponderous to capture the swift bandit tribes. Additionally, the region provides a buffer between the two powers, permitting each nation to maintain only token forces on what might otherwise be a war-torn border. Thus, neither empire tries too hard to police Ghulistan.

Current Affairs

The King of Turan has recently established a series of border forts inside the northern edge of Ghulistan. These forts are sufficiently well-defended to stop the Ghulistani, and from these the Turanian governor plans to raid outward, conquering and subduing the Ghulistani tribes piecemeal. The Afghulis, who represent the largest single political force in Ghulistan, are far from the Turanian border, and are uninterested in the problems of the northern tribes. However, if the Turanians continue their aggression, the Ghulistani may band together to drive them off, giving Turan its own Venarium.

Friends and Foes

The tribes of Ghulistan bicker among one another, but their true enemies are the Turanians and the Vendhyans, who would like to see them exterminated and the caravan routes they raid opened. Thus far, both "civilized" lands have avoided major troop commitments in Ghulistan, but it is only a matter of time before the economic loss is more than can be borne.

Geography

The Ghulistani mountains are high and steep, and separated by narrow, twisting valleys. Snow makes the valleys impassable for half the year, but the spring and summer reveal the mosses, grasses and trees hidden beneath the snow.

The Vendhyans say only the Ghulistani know all of the twists of the mountains and valleys of Ghulistan. Nevertheless, there are caravan routes through the mountains. One commonly travelled route is Amir Jehun Pass, a wide valley extending almost halfway through the mountains from the Turanian side, and ending in the Valley of Gurashah. Similarly, on the Vendhyans side, the knife-like crevasse of the Zhaibar Pass provides Vendhyans access to Ghulistan.

Mount Yimsha

The most infamous place in Ghulistan is Mount Yimsha, the purported residence of the Black Seers of Yimsha. According to legend, the Seers are a cabal of evil mages who use forbidden, pre-human knowledge to prolong their lives and destroy their enemies. Turanian scholars maintain that the Black Seers are a Vendhyans superstition, but the Ghulistani go days out of their way to avoid Mount Yimsha. For more information on the Black Seers, see *Hyborian Magic*, p. 98.

Mana Level

Most of Ghulistan has normal mana; however, the Mount Yimsha region has high mana. It is rumored that the Black Seers have an inner shrine which has very high mana.

Society

The Ghulistani tribesmen are tall and powerful, with broad shoulders, brown skin, curly hair and long beards. The harsh mountain winds dry and wrinkle their skins, giving them a wizened appearance.

There are hundreds of tribes scattered through Ghulistan. Those mentioned in the saga include the Afghulis, who rule the southwestern region known as Afghulistan, the Wazulis, who

control southern Ghulistan near the Vendhyan border, and the lesser tribes of the Dagozai, the Galzai and the Khurakzai.

Typically, the tribes obey a strong, charismatic warrior-leader (Status 3), and follow him until he makes a mistake. One failure, and the leader is deposed or even killed. Other levels are elder (2); warrior (1); tribal member (0); youth (-1); bandit, brigand, or thief (-3); slave (-4).



Law

Within each tribe, disputes are settled by the tribal leader. These settlements bear little similarity to those at civilized courts. In one property dispute, the leader's solution was to take the item for himself.

Between tribes, settlements are made by war. An offended tribe will raid the offender, unless the offending tribe is too powerful. The most powerful tribes do as they please, as none of their weaker neighbors dare challenge them.

Religion

The Ghulistani worship the gods of Vendhya. The most commonly worshipped deity is Asura, but some of the tribes of Ghulistan devote themselves to the worship of the death-goddess Katar. Indeed, there are rumors of a hidden fortress in southeastern Ghulistan where the Katari assassins weave plots against the Vendhyan king.

Armed Forces

The Ghulistani are considered Irregular Infantry (II), of Average to Crack quality. Horses are ridden in Ghulistan, but there is no cavalry per se, as horses are too valuable to be risked in war.

Language

The Ghulistani tribes speak various Mental/Average dialects, most of which are based on Vendhyan (default to one another-3 or Vendhyan-5). Most southern Ghulistani also speak Vendhyan; northwestern Ghulistani, similarly, speak Turanian.

Names

Ghulistani names are of Afghan form: Yar Afzal, Ashraf, Babur, Nader, and Tahmasp. Other Ghulistani bear Vendhyan or Turanian names.

Ghulistani Adventure

Pathfinders. The PCs are hired by the kingdom of Turan to locate a new pass through Ghulistan into Vendhya which the Turanians may fortify and protect against the Ghulistani bandits. But the Ghulistani hills are not empty; the route they attempt leads to an ancient citadel. Is this the legendary home of the Black Seers? The palace of the Katari assassins? Or an ancient temple of Grondar or Valusia?

Hyperborea

"There are few more dramatic events in history than the rise of the rude, fierce kingdom of Hyperborea, whose people turned abruptly from their nomadic life to rear dwellings of naked stone surrounded by cyclopean walls . . ."

—The Hyborian Age

Hyperborea is one of the two "evil empires" of the Hyborian setting: a wintry, mysterious land ruled by powerful sorcerers.

Hyperborea is involved in several stories in the saga. First, Conan is captured by the Hyperboreans in "Legions of the Dead," and is fleeing from this captivity at the beginning of "The Thing in the Crypt." Later, he fights a Hyperborean sorcerer in *Conan the Champion*, and saves a Hyperborean woman in "The Lair of the Ice Worm." Much later, Conan rescues his son Conn from the Hyperboreans in "The Witch of the Mists."

History

Two thousand years ago, the Hyborian invaders swept down from the north, conquering the post-Cataclysmic nations which had inherited the remnants of Atlantean civilization. Their dominance of the West in the Hyborian Age is unquestioned, yet the secret of their impetus lies hidden in the ancient fastness of icy Hyperborea.

At the beginning of the Hyborian drift, a Hyborian tribe called the Hyperborei took refuge in a hastily-built barricade of uncut stones. Their refuge was crude, and intended only to protect them from yet another group of raiders. But their success laid the first roots of Hyborian architecture.

The Hyperborei and their allies quickly abandoned their horsehide tents and built stone houses surrounded by cyclopean walls. These crude "castles" gave the Hyperborei a potent advantage over their neighbors, and within their defenses the Hyperborei grew strong.

Over time, the Hyperborei began raiding other tribes, conquering many and driving others south. Their strength, however, was tied to their fortresses, and when the remainder of the Hyborei went into the warmer southern lands (partially due to the Hyperborei), the Hyperborei kept their icy fortresses and, adopting the name of the Khari empire to the south, established the kingdom of Hyperborea.

The Hyperborean defenses were called into play nearly 1,500 years before Conan, when a tribe of Hyrkanian horse-nomads made their way around the northern tip of the Vilayet Sea and assaulted the northern kingdom. These disorganized raiders were quickly driven back by the Hyperboreans which (all unwittingly) acted to protect the weak northern flank of the forming Hyborian nations.

Centuries later, another danger approached from the north. The light-skinned Nordheimr (see p. 74) banded together against the Hyperboreans. The Nordheimr enlisted the aid of the Cimmerians and together they drove the remaining Hyborei south. But they were impotent against the Hyperborean fortifications. The

Nordheimr still suffer from Hyperborean slave raids (although not as badly as in earlier times), and the Hyperboreans and the Nordheimr (especially the Æsir) are still implacable foes.

Friends and Foes

Hyperborea is opposed by its Hyborian neighbors, the Cimmerians and the Æsir. It has no allies, per se, although the mystical White Hand is in supposed contact with other similar orders, such as the Black Ring and the Scarlet Circle. The few reports which filter out from Hyperborea imply that these relationships are constructed of mutual distrust.

Geography

Hyperborea is "a bleak plain broken by naked hills" (TWM) north of Brythunia and the Border Kingdom. It is cold through most of the year, and one month each winter Hyperborea gets no sunlight at all. The land is perennially cloudy, with fogs and misting rain common.

Gazetteer

Haloga — a Hyperborean fortress, ruled by Queen Vammatar. Conan was captured by the Hyperboreans of Haloga while rescuing the daughter of an Æsir chieftain (LOD).

Pohiola — a fortress in Hyperborea, ruled by the witch Louhi, priestess-queen of the Hyperboreans. Louhi is the leader of the White Hand, and the Hyperboreans believe her to be an incarnation of their death-goddess (TWM).

Sigtuna — a fortress in Hyperborea. According to Æsir skalds, Sigtuna is ruled by a sadistic witch-queen who lives on human blood (LIW; TWM).

Skull Gate — the primary pass through the Eiglophian Mountains from the Border Kingdom to Hyperborea. A huge mammoth skull (with tusks removed) marks the pass, and bears an inscription in Hyperborean: "The Gate of Hyperborea is the Gate of Death to those who come hither without leave." This inscription deters those few who wander north unintentionally (TWM).

Flora and Fauna

Wolves roam the barren plains, cave bears lair in stony mountain caves, and herds of reindeer, musk-ox, and mastodon migrate across the plains annually, providing most of the food for the Hyperborean people.

Mana Level

Hyperborea is a high-mana region, especially near the stone citadels. The White Hand (see below) maintains the population's belief and fear of magic, contributing to the efficacy of sorcery in the region.

Society

The Hyperboreans are a tall, unnaturally thin people, with pale skin, slate-grey hair, and green eyes. The ruling Hyperboreans dwell in stone citadels, but most Hyperboreans live in tiny clusters of drab hovels, farming the barren soil. These serfs are the remnants of tribes conquered by the Hyperboreans; they live in constant fear of their sorcerous rulers.

The citadels of Hyperborea are impressive even by Hyborian standards. They are made from

mortarless stones carefully fitted together and dressed smooth to give no foothold for a climber. The walls are turreted and crenellated, fifty feet high and twenty paces thick, giving the fortresses a squat appearance. Windows and arrow-slits are set into the walls, too high to be entered, but low enough to allow effective defense. The ironwood gates are protected by iron portcullises and decorated with protective runes formed by patterns of iron nails.

The Hyperboreans are ruled by the re-incarnating priestess Louhi (Status 8 — she is considered divine); other levels are Priest-Sorceress of the White Hand (3); assassin (2); warrior (1); peasant (0); poor peasant (-1); beggar (-2); bandit, brigand, or thief (-3); slave (-4).

Law

Hyperborea is ruled by the White Hand — a coven of sorcerers not unlike the Black Ring of Stygia or the Scarlet Circle of Khitai. The White Hand "Witchmen" are the priests and priestesses of Louhi as well as accomplished sorcerers. Their magic focuses around the cold of their land and control of the dead. Hyperborean sorcerers are highly prized in the northern wilds, but they are little respected in Hyborian lands.

In addition to their sorcerous powers, the White Hand supports teams of assassins who travel for the Hand. These assassins wear black robes, capes and cowls and a white, flat mask which is transparent only to the wearer, giving them the appearance of having no face at all. They use a wooden baton tipped with two egg-sized metal spheres (see p. 17) with which they strike nerve centers to immobilize, torment or kill their victims. These assassins are said to be extremely swift and skilled.

Religion

The Hyperboreans worship Louhi (see above).

Armed Forces

The Hyperborean soldiers are Medium Infantry (MI) of Average to Seasoned quality. In any major undertaking, they are magically supplemented (see *Mass Combat*, p. 103).



Language

Hyperborean is a Mental/Average language which derives from the ancient tongue of the Hybori, with no taint from the Atlantean and Khari influences which mark Hyborian languages. Hyperborean is written with a runic script, part-alphabet and part-hieroglyphic; most Hyperboreans are illiterate.

Names

Hyperborean names are Finnish in style: Kamoinen, Ilga, Louhi, Vammatar.

Hyperborean Adventures

Escape from Pohiolo. The Hyperborean Witchmen have captured an important NPC (dependent, noble ruler, etc.). Can the PCs rescue the victim before he is sacrificed to Louhi?

Hyrkania

"Hyrkania whose riders wore steel and silk and gold . . ."
— *The Nemedian Chronicle*

Hyrkania covers the huge grassy plain which extends from the Vilayet Sea to Khitai. The Hyrkanian steppe is inhabited by horse-nomads, corresponding to the Mongols of the Middle Ages.

Hyrkania's origins are described in the article "The Hyborian Age." The Hyrkanians are mentioned briefly throughout the saga, but only one story, *Conan the Marauder*, addresses them in detail.

History

When the Lemurian Isles sank beneath the waves, the few survivors fled to the eastern coast of the Thurian continent. There, they were enslaved by the Khari.

In 1,500 years of repression, the Lemurian culture was crushed. Those who rose against the Khari were sacrificed to demons; most preferred a quiet life of slavery to eternal torment of their souls. As time went on, they even lost most knowledge of their origins, becoming Hyrkanians ("Easterners" in the Khari tongue).

Eventually, the Khari declined; their slaves rose up and destroyed them. Those few Khari who survived fled west, eventually founding the kingdom of Stygia (see p. 80).

The Hyrkanian Drift

For a time the Hyrkanians battled amongst themselves over the bones of the fallen Khari civilization. Soon, however, surrounding aborigines moved into the void, and there was nothing left for the Hyrkanians to scavenge. They mingled with the aborigines, and drifted westward, much as the Hyborians were doing in the West.

The Hyrkanians spread across the eastern steppe, developing a nomadic warrior culture. Those who paid tribute became part of the widespread Hyrkanian empire; the rest were destroyed.

After nearly 2,500 years, the Hyrkanians reached the end of the steppe at the eastern shore of the Vilayet Sea. A few attempts were made to pass north of the Vilayet, but these were turned back by the Hyperboreans.

Tarim and Erlik

The primary figure in Hyrkanian history is Tarim, a Hyrkanian shaman who made the difficult journey into Puthenia. When he returned in 1072 A.A., he preached the doctrines of the

flame-god Erlik, and led a large group of Hyrkanian tribes into the fertile lands at the southern end of the Vilayet. Once there, Tarim's followers conquered the indigenous Shemitish and Yezmite peoples and established the kingdom of Turan (see p. 83). By 1092 A.A., when Tarim disappeared (called to Erlik, according to legend), Turan was a thriving empire.

Now, the Hyrkanians are the rising tide against Hyborian dominance in the west. The Hyborian kingdoms perceive Turan (and the Hyrkanian tide behind her) as their newest enemy, but do not feel sufficiently threatened to cease their wars with one another. "The Hyborian Age" reveals that five hundred years after Conan's time, the swords of the Hyborians will be gone, replaced by the spears of the Picts and the lances of the Hyrkanians.

Current Affairs

The Hyrkanian tribes continue to drift westward. Where once their horsemen were welcomed in Turan, however, time has widened the gap between the horse-nomads and their "civilized" brethren. The Hyrkanians have called for an Ushi-Kagan (see below), to once again conquer Turan and wrest it from their "weakened" kinsmen. Should the Turanians be unable to quiet the differences, they may find themselves defending the very lands they conquered from more of their own race.

Friends and Foes

Hyrkanians are on good terms with the Khitan kingdom of Kusan, and the kingdom of Turan. They maintain an uneasy truce with the caravan cities of the steppe and with the primitive tribes of the northern Vilayet.

Some of the Hyrkanian tribes are aware of the kingdom of Meru, although most shun these mountain people. The Vendhyans and Kosalans despise the Hyrkanians as barbarians, raiders and thieves, as do those Khitans behind the Great Wall.

Geography

The Hyrkanian steppe is a roughly square plateau approximately 1,200 miles on a side. Its western edge meets the eastern shore of the Vilayet Sea; its eastern edge is marked by the Great Wall of Khitai. Its southern edge is the Talakma sub-range of the Himelien Mountains, while to the north the steppe extends to the pine forests of the subarctic wastes.

Gazetteer

Bukhrosha — a trading city on the caravan route from Turan to Khitai, inhabited by a mixed people of Hyrkanian and Vendhyian heritage. Bukhrosha is relatively close to Khitai, and much of the city's commerce stems from the huge drying and preserving facilities which allow the spices to be shipped across the steppe (CMR).

Lakmashi — a trading city on the caravan route from Turan to Khitai, also inhabited by a Hyrkanian/Vendhyian people. Lakmashi is known as the "City of the Silver Gates," and is a city of goldsmiths. Although Lakmashi does not have the reputation for quality that Khorusun in Turan has, its work is free of Turanian taxes, and the smiths of Lakmashi are kept busy (CMR).

Loulai Plateau — a plateau in eastern Hyrkania (TFK).

Malikta — a trading city near Lakmashi, and where Lakmashi works gold and silver. Malikta is the home of the jewelers of the Khitan trade (CMR).

Pathenia — a frigid region north of Hyrkania, where the dreaded man-apes live (TFK).

Sogaria — the westernmost city of the steppes, just north of

the Turanian border. Sogarian weavers merge the silks of Khitai with the dyes of Vendhya to provide the eastern fabrics prized by Turanian and Hyborian nobles (CMR).

Wuhuan Desert — an arid region of eastern Hyrkana, running from the southern edge of Lake Ho to the eastern edge of Vendhya (TRC).

Flora and Fauna

The Hyrkana horses thrive on the steppe, as do the goats, sheep and cattle which the Hyrkans herd. Other plains creatures include aurochs, creodonts, dire wolves, mammoths and various kinds of small game.

The steppe is high, somewhat arid, and covered with tough grasses. During the winter, rains bring astonishing variety to the flora of the steppe, but in the summer the rains cease, the grasses turn brown, and brush fires (caused either by careless men or lightning) rage out of control.

The steppe is not absolutely flat: there are innumerable tiny valleys and hills across the rolling landscape. Nevertheless, a valley ten feet in depth is unusual, and to a Hyrkana, a drop of 20 feet is a cliff.

Mana Level

The Hyrkana steppe is a normal-mana area. Some of the kakabas (see p. 60) are based on ancient Khari ruins, and many of these are high-mana sites.

Society

The Hyrkans are tall and slender, with hooked noses and brown or black hair. Their skin is naturally light, but is darkened by the sun and wind of the steppe to a deep brown, almost like a Zingaran ("The Hyborian Age," by Robert E. Howard; CMR). The men wear moustaches, and beards are not uncommon.

Hyrkans wear tall, peaked, felt caps with earflaps, tunics, loincloths, golden jewelry and soft boots with upturned toes. Hyrkana women always wear veils when in the presence of men other than their own kinsmen.

Hyrkana clothes are made from the hides of sheep or oxen, or from cloth stolen from caravans traversing the steppe. Many warriors wear leather armor, while the most successful use metal armor bought or captured from the caravans. All warriors carry shields, which are usually made from thick leather stretched over a wooden framework, although some Hyrkans have metal shields.

Hyrkans are raised in the saddle. They rarely walk more than a few steps from their horses to their yurts and back, and they are amazed by the apparent stamina of non-Hyrkans walking several miles in a single day. Life in the saddle makes them bow-legged and gives them a waddling, uncomfortable gait.

This lack of nimbleness afoot should not be confused with clumsiness or weakness. A troop of Hyrkana cavalry can travel nearly 100 miles in a day, bringing four to five horses per rider, and fight at the end of that day without resting. When traveling, Hyrkans do not stop to change horses; rather, the warrior vaults from horse to horse, taking his bow case and arrows with him.

Hyrkana Warriors

The Hyrkans are fearsome warriors. Their horsemanship, combined with their carefully made saddles and skill at their chosen weapons, makes them a terrible raiding force. They do not fight the "set piece" battles of the Hyborian armies; rather, they fight when and where they choose.

Hyrkana military rank is as ornate as in many more "civilized lands." Hyrkana warbands are led by the Kagan, or War-Chief (Rank 7); other ranks are Commander of Five Hundred (5); Commander of Fifty (4); Commander of Ten (2); and common warrior (0).

Hyrkana troops coordinate their activities in various ways, depending upon the circumstances. When stealth and surprise are required, the Hyrkans use flags (by day) and lanterns (by night) to signal to their warriors. But when the time for secrecy is passed, or when the horde has no need of it, huge copper kettledrums are used both to signal the Hyrkana troops and to terrify their enemies.

Occasionally, the Hyrkana tribes combine against the cities, and form a horde. This is rare, however, sometimes happening only once in a century. In addition to the vast distances which separate tribes, much of which are required to provide proper grazelands, the tribes often have mutually antagonistic customs. Some tribes eat horseflesh; others forbid it. Some herd oxen, and consider goats unclean; for others, the reverse is true. When a great danger threatens the Hyrkana peoples (or when the promise of great plunder overcomes these obstacles), the kagans of the participating tribes appoint one of their number Ushi-Kagan, or supreme chief (Rank 8).

Hyrkana Weaponry

The primary Hyrkana weapon is the recurved composite bow. These bows are made from wood, horn and sinew glued together, and take over a year to make and season. The Hyrkans get the bows from artisans who live in villages on the western slopes of the Mountains of Night in Khitai. The strength of one of these bows is rated by the number of men required to string it. Youths use a "one-man" bow, most warriors use a "two-man" bow, which can also be strung by one man with the aid of a special harness, and the strongest archers use a "three-man" bow. Since these bows cannot be left strung for more than two hours without cracking or losing resiliency, Hyrkana warriors generally carry two bows.

Hyrkana archery is legendary. A Hyrkana Bowman, riding at full gallop, can put an arrow into a man at 100 yards more than half the time. In game terms, this requires a Bow skill of 20. This level is common among Hyrkana archers. Most can grasp the barrel of the horse with their legs and shoot beneath the horse, using the animal for cover.



The other Hyrkanian weapon is the lasso. The lasso rope is braided from horsehair or human hair; some Hyrkanians believe the best rope is braided from the hair of an enemy. The lasso is primarily used for herding, although the Hyrkanians use it in raids when live captives are needed.

The Hyrkanians do not take slaves, at least not adult male slaves. Sometimes they take young children or non-Hyrkanian concubines, but otherwise they kill those who stand in their way. "We do not want to rule over conquered peoples," say the Hyrkanians, "but over great pastures."

The Clans

The Hyrkanians are divided into myriad clans. Clans contain 40 to 60 households, 300 to 500 horses, and 800 to 1,200 sheep, oxen, or cattle, and can typically field around 100 male warriors. The clans survive by herding over a traditional "territory" of the steppe (typically 100 miles on a side). These territories overlap slightly, but the clans generally remain far enough apart to prevent overgrazing.

Some of the southern clans also raid caravans which pass through their territory. This is not a primary source of income (as it is in Ghulistan, for example), and many caravans make the long trek across the steppe without any problem.

In a region, a dozen or so clans combine together to form a tribe. These tribes are usually based on some (possibly mythical) blood relation, and there is considerable intermarriage among the clans in a tribe. The tribe leaders decide the grazing lands for the individual clans, and the tribe's warriors band together to raid the cities of the caravan route.

The Hyrkanians have little fixed territory to defend. Their nomadic way of life makes them immune to the territorial imperatives of more "civilized" lands.

There is one outstanding exception to this impermanence: each Hyrkanian tribe maintains a burial ground, called a *kakaba*, or City of Mounds, for its kagans and Ushi-Kagans. The *kakaba* is a secret field of barrows, often concealed in the most inhospitable regions of the steppe. As a sign of reverence to the dead, horse-riding is not permitted in the *kakaba*. Similarly, it is forbidden to fire arrows into the *kakaba*, for fear of striking the spirit of one of the tribal ancestors. This makes it difficult to drive invaders from the *kakaba*. Although these *kakaba* constitute a weakness in the Hyrkanian defense, they are not exploited: the Hyrkanians ensure that no enemy who enters the *kakaba* is permitted to leave alive.

Status within Hyrkanian clans is a complex affair. The clan-leader is either the Elder or the Kagan (Status 3), depending upon the issue; other ranks are shaman (2); commander (1); warrior (0); herdsman (-1); oath-breaker (-3); slave (-4).

Religion

The Hyrkanians are ancestor worshippers, who respect the accomplishments of men and the Everlasting Sky. They have no gods, as Hyborians know the term, and whatever cultural influence the Khari had upon their religion has long since been rejected. Some of the westernmost Hyrkanians follow the deities of the Turanians (see p. 82).

Armed Forces

Hyrkanian horse-nomads are considered Medium Cavalry (MC) of Seasoned or better quality. The Hyrkanians are the finest horsemen in the world, and are masters of the hit-and-run.

Language

Hyrkanian is a tonal language, distantly related to modern

Khitan. It is a Mental/Average language. Modern Turanian is closely related to Hyrkanian, and both languages default to one another at -2.

Hyrkanian is written with an alphabetic set of characters similar in appearance to Khitan ideograms. Most Hyrkanians are illiterate, but some beautiful poetry has been written in Hyrkanian.

Names

Hyrkanians have primarily Mongolian names: Bartatua, Boria, Guyak, Kuchlug, Mazdak, Torgut.

Hyrkanian Steppe Adventure

Far Pathenia. The PCs are sent on a trading mission to the primitives of Pathenia, north of the Loulan Plateau. The Pathenian "culture" has been isolated since the Cataclysm. What strange people will they find there? And what of the legends of powerful sorcery hidden in Pathenia's ancient Temple of Erlik?

Iranistan

Iranistan is a loose confederacy of the tribes south of the Vilayet, now driven south of Turan.

Iranistan is described in only one story in the saga: "The Flame Knife." This saga describes Conan's brief stint in the service of Kobad Shah, the King of Iranistan.

History

The tribes which surround the Vilayet Sea date back (some say) to before the Cataclysm. In any event, they have lived on the shores of the Vilayet since the time of the Hyborian drift, periodically melding into a kingdom, growing wealthy on the caravan trade between the East and West, and then after a time falling apart into separate tribes once again.

Iranistan is the latest incarnation of that kingdom. In 925 A.A., an adventurer named Dibul welded the tribes into a fighting force to defend the region from the Hyrkanians. At its peak, just before Dibul's death in 970 A.A., Iranistan extended from Zamboula to Kosala, and from the Vilayet Sea to Zembabwei.

After Dibul's death, the tribes began bickering over the rulership of the coalition, making it that much easier for the Hyrkanians to conquer in the north. Once the Hyrkanians had secured the northern caravan routes for themselves, they ignored the weakened kingdom, and began the development of the kingdom of Turan (see p. 83).

For the intervening 250 years, the Iranistani have been at a standstill against the Turanians. The southern reaches of Iranistan are too stony for the Hyrkanian horse-tactics of Turan to be effective, but the Iranistani foot-soldiers are no match for the Turanian horse in the north. Turan has often ignored the Iranistani presence, only to be reminded by an ineffectual invasion.

Another practice which disturbs Turan is that Iranistan provides a caravan route around the southern Vilayet. Although bringing a caravan along the stony roads of Iranistan and through the Ilbars Mountains is a slow and difficult journey, Iranistan's low tariffs encourage merchants to evade Turan's tax collectors.

Current Affairs

Arshak Shah, the current ruler of Iranistan, has been trying to shore up his control of the outlying regions. As the usual military and economic solutions to these problems are beyond

his resources, he has resorted to lightly spurring Turan, in hopes that her vengeful troops will raise the ire of his many tribes and unite them once again. This dangerous tactic has many of his closest advisors questioning his sanity, but it is beginning to have its intended effect. However, some chieftains are speculating that the best way to placate the Turanians is to give them Arshak Shah.



Friends and Foes

Iranistan's primary enemy is Turan. The kingdom of Turan occupies much of what Iranistan maintains is her own soil, and the Shah accuses the Turanians of enslaving his subjects. The Turanians generally ignore him.

Iranistan is loosely allied with Shem and Kosala, only so far as the partners oppose Turan. Iranistan also has trade agreements with Zembabwei.

Geography

Iranistan is a warm land, with moderate rains, especially on the seacoast. The land itself, however, is stony and infertile, and most Iranistani supplement their diet with hunting and fishing from the extensive wilderness.

The Ilbars Mountains are arid with few trails, many box-canyons and twisting gorges. In the northern portions of the Ilbars, these mountains contain occasional small plateaus where Ilbari tribesmen eke out a hunter-gatherer existence. In Drujistan, the lands are more precipitous, and there are few places to settle.

Gazetteer

Anshan — the capital of Iranistan (TFK).

Drujistan — a southern portion of the Ilbars Mountains. Drujistan is nearly uninhabitable, and has long held a reputation for being haunted (see *The Yezmites*, p. 35) (TFK).

Kushaf — tribal land of the Kushafi in the Ilbars Mountains (TFK).

Ilbars Mountains — a mountain range in western Iranistan.

Passes through the Ilbars Mountains bring those caravans which choose Iranistan over Turan to the eastern edge of the Kharamun Desert and (eventually) to Shem (TFK).

Yanaidar — a city of the Yezmites in Drujistan, near the Gorge of Ghosts (see *The Yezmites*, p. 35). Yanaidar was built (according to legend) by the ghoul-king Ura, and the ghosts of Ura and his servitors are said to still haunt Yanaidar (TFK).

Mana Level

Iranistan has low mana; Drujistan has normal mana, contributing to its mysterious reputation.

Society

The Iranistani are a short, stout, broad-shouldered people. They have light brown skins, blue or brown eyes, and steely-blue hair (much like the Shemites, to whom they are distantly related).

The Iranistani people are divided into a myriad of tribes banded together against the threat of Turan. Although this common enemy gives the kingdom some strength, the varying origins of the Iranistani make the kingdom fractious.

Each tribe has ancestral lands which they have held for millennia. These lands may not be tremendously valuable, nor might they be extensive, but they represent the tribe's independent spirit. "Let the king rule in Anshan," one tribal leader has said. "These lands are ours."

Iranistan is ruled by the Shah (Status 5); other levels are Caliph (4); Amir (3); Sheikh (tribal leader) or military officer (2); craftsman or merchant (1); commoner or common soldier (0); servant (-1); beggar (-2); bandit, brigand, or thief (-3); slave (-4).

Law

Iranistan does not have a formal legal system. Minor infractions are resolved by the tribal leader, without recourse to "national" courts. In more significant cases, the king's word is theoretically absolute, but a tribe who disagrees with the king simply withdraws to its ancestral lands and ignores him. Depending upon the monarch and his state of mind, such withdrawals are viewed either as the right of the independent tribe, or as willful disobedience and treason. The former response usually allows for resolution of the dispute, while the latter quickly involves Iranistan's soldiers in putting down the "insurrection," further weakening the teetering nation.

Religion

The Iranistani pantheon and the Yezmites are discussed in *Hyborian Religion*, pp. 34-35.

Armed Forces

Iranistan's forces are primarily infantry, mostly Light and Medium (LI and MI), and of Seasoned or Average quality. Arshak Shah has hired some Seasoned Medium Cavalry (MC) and Heavy Infantry (HI) mercenary units, but his continued attempts to forestall paying them may soon leave his capital without defense.

Language

Iranistani is a Mental/Average language and is related to Shemitish; these languages mutually default to one another at -3.

Names

Iranistani names are Persian or Arabic: Balash, Hakhmanni, Kohad, Nanaia, and Sassan. Turanian names would also be appropriate.

Iranistani Adventure

The Tomb of Dibul. Arshak Shah, King of Iranistan, has located a map to the tomb of the adventurer Dibul. Legends tell that Dibul was buried deep in Drujistan with the powerful magics he used to unite the tribes of the southern Vilayet. Arshak Shah wishes to use those magics against the Turanians, as well as using the fabulous treasures to improve his legions. But the tribes which live nearby not only know of the tomb, it is their holiest shrine!

Keshan

Keshan is one of the northern Black Kingdoms. It lies south of Stygia, east of Kush and Darfar, and west of Punt. It is a barbaric kingdom, with few of the more civilized customs provided by its fallen Shemitish rulers.

Keshan is described in the story "Jewels of Gwahlur," and its sequel, "The Ivory Goddess."

History

In the early days of the Hyborian drift, Hyborian attacks and divisiveness in Shem scattered small Shemite factions throughout the far south. Shemite leaders who had lost in the perennial battles among the city-states brought their followers south, to make a new life safe from their persecutors.

One such group traveled beyond Stygia to a valley in eastern Kush, bringing a mysterious collection of glowing gems, the Teeth of Gwahlur. They built an enormous stone city named Alkmeenon, concealed their gems within, enslaved the surrounding Kushite peoples, and settled back to enjoy their exile.

As the generations passed, these Shemites lost their civilized ways, although they kept themselves separate from their Kushite servants. Over time, they forgot they had built the great stone city, and attributed the city to the gods. Shortly thereafter, they abandoned Alkmeenon, and founded the city of Keshia.

One oracle, Princess Yelaya, was revered above all others. The Princess was one of the last pure-blood Shemites in Alkmeenon, and upon her death her body was enshrined in the royal palace. According to the priests, the gods spoke through Princess Yelaya, and she was consulted upon all matters essential to the kingdom of Keshan.

The priests and shamans returned to Alkmeenon, of course, to consult Princess Yelaya and to view the Teeth, which had gained great religious significance. Originally, their visits were frequent, and announced by pomp and ceremony, but as the generations passed and Alkmeenon became less familiar, the visits grew rarer. Eventually, the priests sealed up all but a few secret ways into the "city of the gods," and declared it taboo.

Bit-Yakin

Such taboos, even when combined with secrecy and stone walls, are made to be broken. A Shemitish conjurer named Bit-Yakin entered Keshan in 766 A.A., found Alkmeenon and settled there. He brought with him a band of half-human servitors, bound to his will by terrible sorcery and promises sworn on altars shunned by civilized men.

Bit-Yakin's life was nearly over, his sorceries mostly devoted to controlling his servants and preserving his life. He discovered the oracle of Yelaya and through a combination of sorcery and fakery convinced the priests that Yelaya's body actually spoke. The most effective part of this deception was the simplest: Bit-Yakin had carved a speaking-tube from a concealed chamber to make it sound as if the voice were higher and coming from the vicinity of the throne. He instructed the priests

to hide the jewels in the city, in hopes of stealing them when the priests tired of their oracle.

The Keshani priests were convinced. They began to question "Yelaya" on all issues, and Bit-Yakin found himself trapped by his deception. He dared not reveal himself, for he would be slain outright as an unbeliever. Similarly, he dared not stop his imposture for fear the priests would recognize the deception and hunt him down. So "Yelaya" continued to speak, and the priests kept coming.

Bit-Yakin was old, even for a sorcerer. Eventually, his magic could no longer keep him alive. He instructed his bestial servitors to mummify his remains and entomb him in a cavern just outside the city.

This did not stop the priests. The next time they consulted the oracle, however, they became suspicious of its silence, and began to explore the city. They encountered Bit-Yakin's servants, now free of his influence, and the priests died. Only a few managed to flee Alkmeenon, and their rantings frightened everyone away for over one hundred years, until the events of "Jewels of Gwahlur."

Friends and Foes

Keshan maintains friendly relations with Punt, Zembabwei and the southern Black Kingdoms, although the difficulty of traveling through the jungle generally makes contact infrequent at best. Of course, as in the Black Kingdoms, such alliances are broken quickly.

Keshan's major adversary is Darfar, where the Yoggites hold sway. The Yoggites often raid the western Keshani villages for their sacrifices, and much of Keshan's military might is bound in the defense of her western border.

Geography

Keshan is a hot, hilly kingdom, with thick jungles. Its central region contains many steep escarpments which make it difficult to traverse. Ocelots, snakes, tigers and other beasts abound in Keshan's jungles, and the mountains swarm with goats, bears and other wildlife.

Gazetteer

Alkmeenon — the capital of the Shemitish kingdom which preceded Keshan. Alkmeenon is in a small, circular canyon with only a few carefully concealed entrances (JOG).

Keshia — the modern capital of Keshan. Keshia is described as "a swarm of thatched huts crowding about a mud wall that enclosed a palace of stone and mud and bamboo" (JOG).

Mana Level

Keshan is almost uniformly a normal-mana area, with only small patches deviating into low- and high-mana regions. There is little organized exploitation of the more potent regions, as the magical skills of the Keshani are poor.

Society

The Keshani are lighter skinned than their neighbors in Darfar and Punt, although they are still "dark" when compared to any Hyborian people. They are tall and slender, with oval faces, and they wear heavy jewelry in their earlobes which stretches their ears as much as six inches.

The Keshani draw much of their culture from their Shemitish ancestors. Keshani villages are built upon stone foundations, with carefully cleared roads linking them throughout the kingdom.



Keshani is ruled by the King (Status 3); other levels are Priest or noble (2); craftsman, merchant or military officer (1); commoner or common soldier (0); servant (-1); beggar (-2); bandit, brigand, or thief (-3); slave (-4).

Religion

The Keshani worship Yelaya (see p. 62).

Armed Forces

Keshani warriors are considered Light Infantry (LI) of Average to Crack quality. There is little interest in the "higher" forms of warfare, and almost no mercenary employment in the jungle land.

Language

Keshani is a Mental/Average mixture of Kushite and Shemitish, and defaults to either of those languages at -6. Keshani has no written form, although some few of the priesthood can still read and write archaic Shemitish.

Names

Keshani names are African, and have lost all trace of the kingdom's Shemitish origins: Bakumbe, Gorluga, Gwarunga, Yelaya. Other Kushite names would also be appropriate.

Keshani Adventure

Return to Alkmeenon. The Teeth of Gwahlur are still in Alkmeenon, albeit at the bottom of a rapid river channel. The city is once again abandoned by all save Bit-Yakin's servants. Brave adventurers, undeterred by the bizarre inhabitants of the city, might well salvage the jewels, which are reputed to be the most valuable in the world. And even if the Teeth are unreachable, what other mystic treasures might the Shemites have brought with them? And what sorcerous knowledge did Bit-Yakin leave as a legacy?

Khitai

Khitai is the mysterious land of the East, home of powerful sorceries and ancient mysteries. Khitai is nearly legendary to the average Hyborian, although the more easterly peoples (such as

the Turanians and Vendhyans) maintain considerable commerce with the kingdoms of Khitai.

Khitai is described in several of the stories. Conan's first visit to Khitai is in "The Curse of the Monolith." He encounters men from Khitai in other stories, most notably "The Flame Knife," but does not again travel so far east until "The Return of Conan," to recover his queen, Zenobia, from the Khitan sorcerer Yah Chieng.

History

Before the Cataclysm, Khitai was occupied by the Khari. When the Cataclysm struck, Khitai was relatively undisturbed. Soon, however, Lemurian refugees washed ashore; the Khari enslaved the refugees, as they had all the other "primitive" peoples in the region.

Centuries passed. Eventually, as with all despotisms, the slaves overthrew the masters. The Khari were forced to flee their lands to escape the terrible vengeance of their ex-slaves, abandoning the cities and mystical treasures of their ancient homeland. (For more of the history of the Khari, see *Hyrkania*, p. 58, and *Syrgia*, p. 80.)

The slave peoples who remained did not understand the higher arts of Khari civilization. The Khari texts describing agriculture, technology and sorcery were gibberish to the illiterate ex-slaves. Those few who were literate or who had the confidence of the Khari were killed as sympathizers. Instead of becoming the heirs of the Khari empire, the slaves found themselves ignorant scavengers picking the bones of a dead civilization.

The "new empire" quickly crumbled. Local warlords appropriated Khari fortresses or other defensible works and established their own local satrapies, some few benevolent, but most as cruel as the just-overthrown Khari, and all claiming rulership of the now-fallen empire. The Lemurians drifted westward, preferring the open lands of the steppe to the continual warfare of the Khari lands. Within a century, these satrapies had become city-states, each small region subject to its local king, with no overall "confederacy" to unite them. Only the abandoned husks of the Khari cities reveal the civilization that once thrived on the eastern coast.

For 15 centuries, the fragmented city-states of Khitai have bickered like crows picking at a corpse, each maintaining the fiction that it (and it alone) represents the fallen Khari empire. Periodically, a powerful ruler rises and unites some of the city-states, and the long-imagined Middle Kingdom of Khitai is (temporarily) established. But the huge distances involved in governing such a kingdom, combined with the demand for independence which burst forth at the time of the original slave-revolt, always bring these empires to collapse.

Current Affairs

Recent contact with Turan has re-opened trade relations with the West. Regular caravans now cross the Hyrkanian steppe to reach the kingdom of Kusan and the central city-states. Some traders have even approached Kambuja, hoping to curry the favor of Pra-Eun with their western trinkets. Some Westerners urge caution, however, worried that too much contact with Khitai may bring them to move westward, like their Hyrkanian predecessors, and challenge Hyborian supremacy with swords and forbidden Khari magic.

Friends and Foes

Khitai has no alliances (except a few loose trade agreements) with Western lands. Internally, some of the kingdoms have

treaties with Turan, others with Vendhya, and yet others with Hyborian kingdoms beyond the Vilayet Sea (although these latter are mere formalities), but collectively Khitai is too far away to be involved in the alliances of the West.

Within Khitai, the city-states slip in and out of alliances with blinding speed. Only in the Black Kingdoms are treaties so easily broken. Some treaties last for centuries, of course, especially those with distant city-states, but within any region the city-states constantly jockey for dominance.



Geography

Khitai's borders are ill-defined, as no other "kingdom" lies near it. The Khitans themselves mark their western boundary at the Great Wall and the mountains upon which it is built. This mountain range runs north to the trackless, icy wastes, and south to the Southern Sea.

Within the kingdom, there are semi-tropical jungles, swamps and deserts. Most of the arable land is too steep to plant in the Hyborian fashion, and to counter this, the Khitans have adopted the Khari system of terraced fields. These terraces not only provide more level ground, but they inhibit erosion by preventing runoff from carrying the good soil away.

Gazetteer

Angkhor — the capital of the city-state of Kambuja (TWM).

Great Wall of Khitai — a giant stone wall built by the Khari to protect their farmlands from the mastodons and other huge creatures (many now extinct) which wandered the Hyrkanian steppe before the Cataclysm. The wall serves the modern Khitans, protecting them from Hyrkanian raids. Despite the superior construction abilities of the Khari, however, the wall is beginning to crumble in places. The Khitans are trying to repair it, but they do not have the stonemasonry necessary to properly reconstruct the Wall (TRC).

Kambuja — the southernmost city-state of Khitai. Kambuja is ruled by the God-King Pra-Eun, a powerful sorcerer of the Scarlet Circle. The people are strictly controlled by the government (even more so than in most Khitan city-states). In addition to the normal precautions of police and an army, Pra-Eun employs a mysterious corps of black-cloaked assassins, the Walkers in Night, to eliminate political and criminal "enemies

of the state." Local legend and rumor imply that the Walkers in Night are demons summoned by Pra-Eun (TWM).

Kusan — a Khitan city-state lying west of the Great Wall, officially "outside" Khitai, but nevertheless part of that civilization. Its ruler, King Shu, is strong but generous, although his court contains many dissident political factions. Kusan trades regularly with the Hyrkanians and Turan. In particular, Kusani villagers make recurve bows for the Hyrkanians (see p. 59), and Kusani caravans, carrying the silks and gold of Khitai, are rarely disturbed as they cross the steppe (COM).

Paikang — a city-state of northern Khitai. Paikang is ruled by the sorcerer Yah Chieng, supreme master of the Scarlet Circle (TRC).

Ruo-gen — a warlike city-state of northern Khitai, north of Paikang (TRC).

Shu-chen — a warlike city-state of northern Khitai, south of Paikang (TRC).

Swamps of the Dead — a swamp in far northeastern Khitai, where the gray lotus blooms (RIH).

Economy and Loot

Khitai produces many rare items, including peacock feather fans, carved jade, and porcelain. Gold and gems are commonly in use, especially for transferring large sums of money.

Mana Level

Most of Khitai has high mana, particularly around the ruins of the early Khari civilization. There are numerous sites with very high mana, but the superstitious Khitans avoid these sites, believing them the homes of demons.

Society

Over the centuries, the peoples of Khitai have merged into a homogeneous race: slender, of medium height, with parchment-yellow skin, slanted eyes, sharp features, high foreheads, and oval faces. Some regional variation exists (southerners, for example, tend to be shorter and thicker about the waist), but the distinctions are almost invisible to westerners. (They are very visible to the Khitans.)

Khitai behavior is wrapped in complex ceremonies designed to emulate their Imperial predecessors, the Khari. Each member of Khitan society has a place in the structure and codes of behavior which must be followed.

These codes do not prevent personal initiative. The Khitans believe that those who best obey the codes will be rewarded by the gods. From this, they deduce that "the winner was right," and this success-oriented approach gives them a penchant for treachery and double-dealing which would cause a Hyborian noble to blush.

One confusing aspect of these codes is the extreme politeness of the Khitan demeanor. Most Western traders find this unctuousness irritating, if harmless; successful traders recognize the traps concealed in this veneer of respect and watch their backs.

Each city-state of Khitai is ruled by a King (Status 6); other levels are Prince (5); Duke (4); Count (3); wealthy merchant, military officer of Rank 6-7, or priest (2); craftsman or merchant (1); commoner or common soldier (0); servant (-1); beggar or foreigner (-2); bandit, brigand, or thief (-3); slave (-4). Occasionally in Khitai's history, many city-states have been bound together by a single Emperor (Status 7).

Law

Khitai law flows from the overlord of the city-state. The

overlord makes the laws and often personally judges major criminal cases, although most overlords appoint jurists to try and punish criminals.

The laws, when combined with the customary codes, are designed to maintain the overlord in a position of power. The laws not only address common crimes, but also such strange (to Hyborian minds) laws as "having too many retainers" and "dressing above one's station." Fines are common, although for serious crimes or those who upset the status quo, mutilation and death are the usual punishments.

Unlike the Hyborian lands, where judges are often subject to financial influence, it is very difficult to bribe a judge in Khitan. On the other hand, a judge is often subject to the political concerns of his clan or faction, and may well ignore the law and the truth to accomplish some "higher" political purpose.

The Scarlet Circle

Just as Stygia has its Black Ring, and Hyperborea its White Hand, the sorcerers of Khitan are bound into a brotherhood of power: the Scarlet Circle. The Circle, like its counterparts in the West, is a hierarchy of dominance. Each wizard is served by those weaker, and in turn serves those more powerful in the sorcerous arts. At the pinnacle of this pyramid stands the sorcerer Yah Chieng, ruler of the city-state of Paikang, whose demons and sorceries are feared by all the East.

The Scarlet Circle is active in the unearthing and translation of ancient Khari manuscripts. Their scholars have discovered sorceries lost by the Khari as they fled the East, and which are therefore unknown to the modern sorcerers of Stygia. For a sampling of some of the sorceries of the Scarlet Circle, see p. 99, *Spells of Khitan*.

Armed Forces

The troops of the Khitan city-states are well-trained and well-organized. Regular patrols and border skirmishes keep quality high (Seasoned to Elite), and morale is maintained through a rigid set of moral strictures and esprit de corps. Infantry (including pikemen) is preferred, although some forward-thinking city-states (such as Kusan) maintain small cavalry contingents. Siege warfare is an art in Khitan, and siege engines, mining and other siege tactics are part of every officer's basic training.

Language

Khitan is a Mental/Average language descended from the tongue of the Khari, intermingled with the many slave tongues in use when the Khari civilization fell. The language has many dialects (which default to one another at -3), each associated with a particular city-state or geographic region.

Written Khitan is ideographic, with little punctuation. Complex concepts are described by collections of ideographs, some of which are arbitrary and assigned from "traditional" use. This ideographic structure facilitates communication across long distances, where alphabetic writing would suffer from differences in dialect. Few Khitans are literate. The ten thousand characters of Khitan are reserved for the nobility and the scribes.

Names

Khitan names are composed of a single syllable clan-name, followed by a one or two-syllable personal name: Yah Chieng, Kang Hsiu, Kang Lou-dze, Leng Chi, Yo La-gu. Dishonored clansmen do not use their clan-names; some sorcerers (such as Pra-Eun) also abandon the clan-name, to indicate that they have risen above their clan's station (or think they have).

Khitan Adventure

Return to Kusan. The Golden Pheasant faction of the Kusan government has acquired enough political support to attempt a coup. They have King Shu under house arrest, and have represented themselves as his new spokesmen. Can the PCs rescue King Shu, and restore the monarch to his throne? Or do they treat with the Golden Pheasants, who want to stop contact with the "barbaric West?"

Kosala

"Your head, Cimmerian! I shall take it with my bare hands, twisting it from your shoulders as the head of a fowl is twisted! Thus the sons of Kosala offer sacrifice to Yajur."

— *Shadows in Zamboula*

Kosala is the largest of the Vendhyan satellite states, maintaining their independence from their larger neighbor through close alliance with their western neighbor, Iranistan.

Kosala is never visited in the saga, and is mentioned briefly in only three stories: "Shadows in Zamboula," "The Flame Knife" and "Red Nails."

History

Kosala was founded by the same refugee slave peoples who came to Vendhya at the time of the Cataclysm. Most of the refugees remained in the fertile Vendhyan peninsula, but some groups continued onward, hoping to find a land of their own. They found it only slightly farther west, in a more arid region devoid of other inhabitants.

When the Kshatriyas invaded the Vendhyan subcontinent, they first sought the fertile fields of central Vendhya, and then spread outward (see *Vendhya*, p. 85). Their advance stopped at the Jhunda River, whose swollen waters offered no ford for the horse-nomads. The Kosalans maintained their fragile independence, but watched sullenly as the Vendhyan free states were swallowed up by the Kshatriya empire.

For 1,500 years, the Kosalans have watched the Vendhyan empire grow, and prepared themselves to repulse an invasion which has never come. Now, they have been flanked by Turan, and join with the other states of the region (notably Ghulistan and Iranistan) in a fragile alliance which seems doomed in the face of the Hyrkhanian forces.

Current Affairs

Recently, the Prefect of Yota-pong has proposed that the Kosalans turn to their age-old enemies, the Vendhyans, to stave off Turanian invasion. "What good is our freedom from Vendhya," he asked in a recent speech, "if we wear Turanian shackles?"

Friends and Foes

Kosala's primary allies are Iranistan and Ghulistan, although Kosala has acted as a neutral nation mediating between Turan and Vendhya. Should it be necessary (and possible), however, the rulers of Kosala would throw Iranistan to Turan to preserve themselves from domination.

Geography

Kosala is a hilly, semi-arid region, less fertile than Vendhya, but more livable than Ghulistan or modern Iranistan. Its coast along the Southern Sea holds few viable ports, and the Kosalans are indifferent sailors.

Gazetteer

Yota-Pong — the largest city-state in Kosala.

Mana Level

Kosala is a low-mana region, with occasional patches with normal mana and even some no-mana areas in the wilds.

Society

The Kosalans have a varied society. Each city-state practices a different religion and social system. Some city-states have a rigid caste structure, where the behavior of each member of the society is ritually prescribed; others have free social movement, where anyone with the wealth and the soldiers can declare himself noble.

The only constant in Kosalan society is the universal religious fervor of the inhabitants. No matter what their religion, the Kosalans pursue its tenets with a vigor wished for by Hyborian priests.

Such piety makes Kosalans subservient to their priesthood. Although custom and canon law prohibit the priests from owning property, or even riding in a cart, centuries of imagination have circumvented most of the restrictions. For example, although a priest cannot own property, he can (and often is) assigned as caretaker-in-perpetuity, and is permitted use of the property as part of his caretaking activities. He can even trade these covenants, giving up "care" of a pouch of gold in return for a covenant regarding a plot of land. After hundreds of years of this kind of manipulation, true ownership is all but meaningless, and almost everything is held in one form or another by covenant.

Similarly, a priest leaves his covenants (and his priestly sinecure) to his heirs, so children are raised to perform their liturgical functions from toddlerhood.

The Kosalan city-states are each ruled by a Prefect (Status 6; the Prefect of Yota-Pong is Status 7); other levels are High Priest (5); Priest (4); Acolyte or wealthy merchant (3); merchant or military officer of Rank 6-7 (2); craftsman or military officer of Rank 3-5 (1); commoner or common soldier (0); servant (-1); beggar (-2); bandit, brigand, or thief (-3); slave (-4).

Religion

Kosalan religion is a mystery to outsiders. Each city-state has its own religion, separate and independent in every way from its neighbor. Religious freedom is unheard of in Kosala; everyone follows the state religion, and refusal to participate in the rituals is a grave insult at best.

Armed Forces

Most Kosalan troops are Light and Medium Infantry (LI and MI), and cavalry has never been popular among the city-states. Pikemen are unknown here, although Arshak Shah has offered to send mercenaries to train Kosalan levies in the use of polearms in return for further military and economic support against Turan.

Language

The Kosalan tongues are all Mental/Average dialects of Vendhyan. Default any Kosalan tongue to Vendhyan-5, or to any other Kosalan dialect-3.

Names

No Kosalan names appear in the saga. Vendhyan names can be used.

Kosalan Adventure

Strangers. The PCs enter Kosala, and due to ignorance rapidly violate several local religious tenets. They find themselves quickly imprisoned in the local temple. Can they explain their way out, or will they have to try to escape by force?



Koth

"Koth, which borders on the pastoral lands of Shem."

— *The Nemedian Chronicle*

Koth is one of the oldest countries of the West, pre-dating the Hyborian invasions. It is ruled by a stingy despot, Strabonus of Koth, whose activities are a constant threat to his neighbors in Argos, Shem and Ophir.

Conan's first recorded visit to Koth is in *Conan the Mercenary*, where he serves Queen Ialamis of Khauran.

After the events in *Conan the Mercenary*, Conan leaves Koth and does not return for many years, until the events of "Black Colossus," "Shadows in the Dark" and *Conan the Renegade*. He leaves Koth for a year to join the kozaki of the Turanian steppe, then returns as the commander of the royal guard of Queen Taramis of Khauran in "A Witch Shall be Born."

Conan does not return to Koth for a long time, until "The Scarlet Citadel," when the wizard Tsotha-lanthe kidnaps Conan and places him into the Pit beneath his citadel. Shortly thereafter, in "The Return of Conan," he passes through Koth briefly to see the sorcerer Pelias.

History

Koth has its roots in the pre-Cataclysmic Thurian kingdom of Valusia. When the Cataclysm devastated the western civilization, the Valusians faced the collapse of their civilization and the invasion of the Atlanteans and the Picts. Despite Valusian valor, the two warring peoples drove the Valusians back into the southern hills.

Once there, however, they were immovable. The natural defenses of the terrain stymied Pictish attempts to harry them. The Valusians settled into their new land, calling it the kingdom of Koth.

Koth has survived for thousands of years, although it has

not remained unconquered. When the Khari came, Koth became a vassal of Acheron. Later, when the Hyborian tribesmen overran Acheron, Koth became a Hyborian land.

Koth's physical location has allowed it to keep its identity. Although the land is not the best, Koth's central position straddling the western continent makes its few passes valuable to its neighbors. Koth is always careful to tax as much as the market will bear.

Current Affairs

Strabonus' efforts to increase tax revenues have redoubled, as several of his most valued mercenary units have drifted toward the better-paying pastures of Shem. He has established a series of road-forts on the Shemitish border, and is stopping passing caravans. He confiscates the goods of those who refuse to pay tariffs. This has angered the Shemites, particularly the Pelishti of Asgalun, whose east-west caravans have been hit repeatedly by this unprecedented taxation. If Strabonus does not reverse this dangerous policy, he may find himself embroiled in another war.

Friends and Foes

Koth maintains adequate relations with most Shemitish cities, Ophir, and Corinthia. None of these could be considered true allies, and each has been betrayed by Strabonus more than once, but Koth's trade routes make maintaining good relations sensible for these nations.

This veiled hostility is uncovered as one travels farther north. Both Aquilonia and Nemedia view Strabonus as a dangerous upstart whose practices endanger all the Hyborian peoples. Strabonus has attacked Nemedian troops in surprise raids, and more than Aquilonia's fair share of caravans disappear in the twisting Kothian canyons.

Geography

Koth is a long east-west band of rocky highlands lying between Ophir, Corinthia, and Zamora in the north, and Shem in the south. It is broken by occasional passes, which are blocked by snow during the winter months. The cities are usually in valleys, some of which are quite wide (20 to 30 miles); most cities are walled, and some of the walls date back to Koth's Valusian origins.

Gazetteer

Khanyria — a city in Khauran (TRC).

Khauran — a semi-independent principality of Koth, with nominal freedom from the king in Khorshemish, but still owing tribute and some obedience to Strabonus. Khauran is ruled by the matrilineal Ashkauri dynasty. This Hyborian lineage of queens has a curse on them, such that once every century, an evil sorceress is born into the family. It is said the sorceress can be identified by a crescent-moon birthmark between her breasts (CTM; WSB).

Khoraja — a principality of Koth. Khoraja is, like Khauran, semi-independent from Koth, and is ruled by a hereditary monarchy. Unlike Khauran, however, Khoraja's ruler is typically male, although women can be regents in the absence of the rightful male monarch (SHD; CRE).

Khorshemish — the capital of Koth. In an effort to increase caravan traffic through western Koth, Strabonus has invested huge sums of public money to improve Khorshemish and make it the "Queen of the South." The public buildings and monuments (as well as the efficiently run hostels and caravan facilities) are as wondrous as Strabonus intended, but caravans

have been slow to change their routes. The extravagance of Khorshemish has overextended Strabonus' finances, leading to his reputation as a skinflint.

Tantusium — a small vassal-state of Koth. Tantusium is in constant rebellion against Strabonus of Koth. It is too far from Khorshemish for Strabonus to risk a legion putting down the rebellion, so the "impertinence" goes unchallenged. Politicians predict that it is only a matter of time before Strabonus is sufficiently secure to turn his attentions to the errant province (CRE).

Mana Level

Most of the barren, poorly-inhabited stretches of Koth have normal to low mana. However, along the western passes, there are several stretches with high mana, and occasional ruins over sites with very high mana (such as the Scarlet Citadel in Khorshemish). Needless to say, such sites are prized by the wizards of Koth, and Tsotha-lanthi requires his spies to report all such discoveries immediately.

Society

The Kothians are a mixed people of Hyborian and Shemitish strains, with a touch of Stygian blood. They are of medium height and build, although they tend to be overweight. Their people are much like those in other Hyborian nations, albeit more heavily taxed.

In addition to the peoples of civilized Koth, there are several tribes which inhabit the inhospitable highlands. These hillmen are fiercely independent, and they generally keep to their mountain homes. As they do not oppose Strabonus, but rather merely ignore (and occasionally annoy) him, the king has not tried to exterminate them. But they dare not become a severe nuisance, as a village of 200 hillmen is no challenge to a cohort of Kothian heavy infantry.

Koth follows the Hyborian pattern of social hierarchy: it has a King (Status 7); Prince (6); Count (5); Baron (4); Mayor (of a city) or Knight (3); Patrician, wealthy merchant, or military officer of Rank 6-7 (2); craftsman, merchant or military officer of Rank 3-5 (1); commoner or common soldier (0); servant (-1); beggar (-2); bandit, brigand, or thief (-3); slave (-4).

Law

Kothian law is like that of most other Hyborian lands. There is a system of justices and courts and a fair number of professional lawyers, particularly in Khorshemish. The primary distinction is the tax laws, which have increased taxes almost to the point of causing armed insurrection.

Strabonus of Koth

The current King of Koth, Strabonus, is notable for several reasons. First, his rise to the throne was accomplished not only through birth but also by blackmail, intimidation and political manipulation. Seven others stood ahead of him in line for the throne; four died, and the other three declined the crown.

Although Strabonus' behavior is only slightly more cold-blooded than that of most Hyborian kings, neighboring kingdoms distrust him. He claims to maintain his armies for internal defense, but this has not stopped occasional external aggression. He has repeatedly broken treaties with Ophir, Shem, Corinthia and Nemedia; he has invaded Argos twice, and Shem and Ophir once each.

Most serious, however, is his association with the sorcerer Tsotha-lanthi. This secretive being inhabits the Scarlet Citadel, which adjoins Strabonus' palace in Khorshemish. Tsotha-lanthi's citadel contains horrors that those few who have entered

and returned only hint at. (Perhaps the most frightening account of the horrors there can be found in "The Pit," a masterwork of poetry by the mad Aquilonian poet Rinaldo.) For most Hyborian kings, association with sorcerers is an act of desperation; for Strabonus of Koth, Tsotha-lanthi has become an integral part of his government.

Religion

Kothians worship the gods of Shem. This worship, however, is still tainted with the beliefs of the ancient kingdom of Acheron, giving Kothian religion a Stygian cast.

Mitra is not popular in Koth. In the past, Mitra worshippers have been persecuted, but Strabonus of Koth has allowed the worshippers of Mitra to build a large temple in Khorshemish.

Armed Forces

Koth uses mostly Heavy and Medium troops, preferring to raise Irregular troops when necessary, as opposed to maintaining a significant contingent of Light forces. For decades, Koth's troops have been considered Crack to Elite, but Strabonus' recent fiscal difficulties have diminished his forces to Seasoned or even Average status, as the more experienced warriors left to join the better-paid mercenary forces of Shem.

Kothian armies look strange to a Hyborian because of their mix of Eastern and Western equipment and tactics. The same force will have armored heavy infantry and desert nomads on camels.



Language

Kothian is a Mental/Average language primarily Hyborian in origin. It is related to modern Ophirean, but not closely enough for a default skill. Many Kothians speak either Ophirean or Shemitish.

Names

Kothians have Latin-like names in the Hyborian fashion: Amalric, Constantius, Ivga, Ivor, Salome, Strabonus, Taramis, Taurus, Thespides, Valerius, Vateesa, and Yasmela.

Kothian Adventure

The Taxman Cometh. Strabonus of Koth, desperate to pay his debts on the "Queen of the South," has escalated the taxes

on caravans passing through Khorshemish. Late in the season, an Aquilonian merchant is dodging the new taxes by taking his caravan through a hidden pass he found on an old Acheronian map. He hires the PCs to protect his caravan from the hillmen. But the map shows more than an ancient road; the route passes by a large, ornate complex whose name has been obliterated from the map. Is it a rich tomb? A temple? Or a demon-haunted ruin from ancient Acheron? And can the caravan get through before the snows make the road impassable?

Into the Pit. The PCs are hired to rescue an Ophirean princess who has been captured and taken to the Pit beneath the Scarlet Citadel. What bizarre creatures lurk in Tsotha-lanthi's den?

Kush and the Black Kingdoms

The Black Kingdoms are a group of nations south of Stygia, ruled by a constantly changing collection of dominant tribes.

Kush is the northernmost Black Kingdom, lying on the coast of the Western Ocean just south of Stygia. Hyborian merchants and explorers encountered Kush as they sailed south past Stygia, and often (incorrectly) refer to all of the Black Kingdoms by the generic name of Kush.

Conan makes several forays into the Black Kingdoms. Conan and Belit prey upon ships of the Black Coast in "Queen of the Black Coast," and *Conan the Rebel*, where he earns the name of Amra, the Lion. He leads the fierce Bamulas in "The Vale of Lost Women," although he is fleeing from them by the beginning of "The Castle of Terror," and leaves Kush at the end of "The Snout in the Dark." Conan returns to the Black Kingdoms while pursuing Black Zorano in *Conan the Buccaneer*, and returns later with the warrior-woman Valeria in "Red Nails." He then travels east, passing through Keshan and then into Punt in "The Ivory Goddess." Many years later, Conan travels to the southern end of the continent chasing Thoth-Amon in "Shadows in the Skull."

History

The Black Kingdoms have little recorded history. As far as can be determined, the tribes of the Black Kingdoms have resided here since the beginning of the Hyborian Age. Boundaries are fluid, and the oral histories of each tribe are little more than listings of the tribe's victories. Minor defeats are not appended to the historical liturgy, and major defeats leave no one to remember.

The Black Kingdoms are dotted with huge pre-Cataclysmic cities. Some are abandoned, empty ruins buried in impenetrable jungle; others retain small remnants of their original populations, sometimes horribly changed over the millennia; yet others are occupied by small groups of modern people who fled from the "civilized" lands and took refuge in the ancient citadels.

The Book of Skelos mentions a mysterious people "descended from serpents" near the Fires of the South. Whether these people are Set worshippers from ancient Stygia or a remnant of the serpent people of Valusia is unknown.

Current Affairs

Rumors have been trickling northward of a growing kingdom along the central coast. This new power seems to be using Turanian military polearm tactics to increase its territory. According to the reports, the Amazon kingdom is in disarray, and the kingdom of Atlaia is on the defensive. The new region is ruled by a warrior named Juma; it is unknown whether this Juma is the same as Conan's old companion, or another who is pursuing goals of conquest.

Friends and Foes

Alliances with the Black Kingdoms are limited at best. The Stygians and the Shemites trade weapons for slaves with the Ghanatas and other tribes, but the northern armies have no interest in the southern jungle.

The greatest enemies each Black Kingdom tribe faces are other Black Kingdom tribes. The constantly shifting alliances make the life of a chief probably short, but definitely exciting.

Geography

The Black Kingdoms begin at the southern border of Stygia, Darfar and Keshan. They extend two thousand miles to the volcanic Fires of the South at the tip of the continent. The Drujistani Mountains form their eastern border; their western border is the Western Ocean.

Jungle dominates the northern Black Kingdoms, although there is a large patch of desert in their northwestern corner, and an extensive savannah in Kush. The jungle eventually thins into savannah, which continues all the way to the Southern Sea.

Gazetteer

Abombi — a town on the Black Coast (TSC).

Amazon — one of the southern Black Kingdoms where women are the warriors and men are virtual slaves. The Amazons control a large portion of the Black Kingdoms. They use quills filled with gold dust for currency, and purchase slaves from the Ghanatas ("The Hyborian Age," by Robert E. Howard; CBU; TWM).

Aphaki — a Shemitish tribe which pushed south, through Stygia, to found Tombalku (DOT).

Atlaia — a mysterious kingdom south of Stygia, presumed to be south of the kingdom of the Amazons ("The Hyborian Age," by REH).

Bakalah — a tribe which lived south of Kush, near the Bamulas. The Bakalah were betrayed by Conan in 1275 (VLW).

Bamula — a warrior tribe of the northern Black Kingdoms. Conan became chief of the Bamulas in 1275, but was driven out by their witch doctors in 1276 (VLW).

Bigharna — a tribe of Tombalku (DOT).

Black Coast — the coast of the Black Kingdoms along the Western Ocean. The Black Coast was one of the more "civilized" regions of the Black Kingdoms, as the coastal tribes traded regularly with merchant ships from Stygia and Shem (DOT; PBO).

Borni — a tribe of Tombalku (DOT).

Darfar — one of the northern Black Kingdoms. Darfar is discussed on pp. 54-55.

Fires of the South — the volcanic mountains of the far southern Black Coast (QBC).

Gamburu — the inland capital of the Amazon kingdom (CBU).

Gazal — an ancient city in the northern desert of the Black Kingdoms. Gazal was built thousands of years ago, and is crumbling to dust. It is inhabited by the Gazali, Mitra-worshipping scholars driven from Koth in 357 A.A. (DOT).

Ghanata — a fierce mixed-race tribe of slavers who live in the deserts of the northern Black Kingdoms (DOT; PBO; TSC).

Jeluba River — a river which flows east from Tombalku (DOT).

Jihiji — a village near the Bamula and the Bakalah (VLW).

Kassali — the capital of Punt (TIG).

Keshan — one of the northern Black Kingdoms. Keshan is discussed on pp. 62-63.

Kordafa — a kingdom south of Kush. Kordafa was the home of the wizard Muru (SID).

Kulalo — a village on the Black Coast, near the northern edge of the kingdom of the Amazons. Kulalo was the capital of the "nation" of Juma the Kushite (CBU).

Matamba — a tribe who live northeast of the village of Kulalo. The Matamba were enemies of the united tribes of Juma the Kushite (CBU).

Meroe — the capital of Kush. The "city" of Meroe is the largest in the Black Kingdoms, with a population of nearly 5,000. It is based on pre-Stygian ruins, and its ancient stone walls are frequently patched with log palisades where the walls have collapsed.

Mindanga — a tribe residing south of Tombalku (DOT).

Nameless Isle — This was an island once occupied by the pre-human serpent people of Valusia, lying somewhere off the Black Coast (CBU). The Nameless Isle was small, and the only structure on the island was a temple to the toad-god Tsathoggua, protected by the ancient Z'thoum Ritual (see p. 97).

Punt — an eastern Black Kingdom south of the Turanian desert and east of Keshan. The people of Punt are said to "sieve gold nuggets the size of goose eggs in the sandy beds of sparkling mountain streams." It is true that Punt is the most wealthy Black Kingdom, in terms of gold and jewels, and its prosperity has made its dynasty of chiefs one of the longest lasting in the Black Kingdoms.

Siojina-Kisua — see *Nameless Isle*.

Southern Isles — the islands off the southern Black Coast. They are inhabited by a warrior tribe related to the Suba. Bêlit recruited her crews from these islands (QBC).

Suba — a tribe of the Black Coast. Bêlit and her family lived with the Suba. Stygian slavers attacked the village, took Bêlit as a slave, and killed her family. Bêlit escaped, and returned to the Black Coast, where she formed the remaining Suba into the crew of her corsair, the *Tigress* (CTR; DOT).

Tibu — a masked tribe of Tombalku (DOT).

Tombalku — a city of the Black Kingdoms ruled by a coalition of neighboring tribes and the Aphaki, a Shemitish people. Tombalku is considered mythical by the Hyborians (DOT).

Wadai — a northern tribe, of the same body-build (but not practices) as the cannibals of Darfar. The Wadai do not file their teeth, and wear their hair closely cropped to their head (BTE).

Winged One, City of the — the city on the poisonous Zarkheba River where Bêlit died. The City of the Winged One was founded in the dim recesses of pre-history, before the Stygians developed civilization, by a race of beautiful human-like creatures. Through a series of disasters, most of the population was killed. The one who remained became the winged ape which haunted the city (QBC).

Xuchotl — an ancient city built by Kosalan refugees. Xuchotl is inhabited by the Tlazitlans, a mongrel race of Stygians and easterners. The Tlazitlans are locked in a continuing struggle for control of the city, as they are divided over a 50-year-old dispute over a woman. The original disputants still live and rule their respective factions (RNA).

Xuthal — another ancient city. This one is inhabited by its builders, who spend most of their lives in lotus-induced dreams. Deep beneath the city, a shadow-demon named Thog sleeps, rising occasionally to devour some of the city's inhabitants (TSS).

Yanyoga — a city in the far south where it is rumored that the serpent people of Valusia reside with their yellow-skinned slaves. Other stories tell of a Vendhyan trade mission blown off course and shipwrecked on the far southern coast of the Vendhyan Sea (SIS).

Zabhela — a harbor city on the coast of Kush. Caravans come to Zabhela to bring shipped goods to the interior.

Zarkheba River — a poisonous river which empties into the Western Ocean. Minerals in the river make the water undrinkable. The only feature of note at the river is the City of the Winged One (see p. 69).

Zembabwei — the easternmost Black Kingdom. Zembabwei is discussed on pp. 88-89.

Climate

The Black Kingdoms lie within 15 degrees of the equator: they are hot. Temperatures exceed 100° in summer, and even in winter it rarely dips below 60°. The northern jungles are humid, but the southern savannah is dry for most of the year, with monsoons in the early spring providing whatever water they will receive for the year.

Flora and Fauna

The animals which roam the Black Kingdoms are among the fiercest of the Hyborian Age. Nowhere else on the Hyborian continent, except perhaps in the Pictish Wilderness, can such a variety of dangerous creatures be found.

Nearly any animal in the "Jungle Animals" chapter of the *GURPS Bestiary* would be appropriate in the Black Kingdoms, especially those with real or Ice Age origins. Dinosaurs (RNA) and wyverns (RMZ) lurk in the southern jungles. Most "fantastic" creatures should be rare, but there is no reason to believe "extinct" animals did not survive in the Hyborian Age.

Economy and Loot

The Black Kingdoms produce gold dust-filled quills, ostrich plumes and ivory. In addition, many of the abandoned cities contain ancient treasures from the days of the serpent people.

Mana Level

Most of the Black Kingdoms have normal mana, with patches of high-mana areas increasing in frequency toward the south.

Society

The peoples of the Black Kingdoms are black-skinned, with many variations in height, skin color, etc. They are strong, tall and usually very lean, although some chiefs are grotesquely fat. They have little chronic disease, as those who get sick quickly die.

The peoples comprise a number of independent tribes, usually led by a charismatic chief or war leader. The chief is elected semi-democratically, usually by the acclamation of the tribe, but if the tribe is divided among two candidates, the question is decided either by the witch-doctor, who reveals the desires of the gods, or by a duel to the death.

In Kush, the common people are dark-skinned (as in the rest of the Black Kingdoms), but the Ser-worshipping ruling class are light-skinned descendants of the Khari.

Each tribe has a distinguishing ritual scar or tattoo which identifies its members; in a society where little clothing is worn, such marks make it difficult to infiltrate an enemy tribe.

Commerce is limited, as alliances are fragile: the tribe which helped you last month may join your enemies and raid your village this month. Such raids are aimed at capturing food and slaves, especially women, and at demonstrating the raiders' prowess.

Despite this, some allied tribes have developed sophisticated means of passing information through the jungle. The

priests of Nebethet in Punt and Keshan use a code of beat patterns on log drums to send messages across the deep jungles.

Although women are captured in tribal raids, friendly marriages between tribes are rare. Marriages are informal affairs and can be broken by either spouse simply by renouncing the marriage in front of the tribe. Unmarried women are free to sleep with whomever they choose without prejudice, and even married women have some variety. In many tribes guests are offered the host's wife for the evening — and are expected to reciprocate in kind.

In Kush, there is a King (Status 3) of Khari descent who rules the local tribal chieftains. Within the Black Kingdoms, status counts for little outside one's own tribe. Status levels include Tribal Chief (Status 2); Warchief (1); warrior (0); servant (-1); beggar (-2); bandit, brigand, or thief (-3); slave (-4). Members of other tribes (even friendly ones) get a -1 on reaction when outside their home territories; hostile tribesmen can look forward to an unpleasant reception despite their status.

Law

Each tribe is ruled by its chief, who dispenses justice for the tribe and keeps the tribe's members together. Often, however, the tribes are fragmented into political factions, with dissidents led either by challengers to the chief's throne or the witch-doctor, who usually represents the conservative elements in the tribe.

Except for conquered tribes, which usually obey the whims of their conquerors, there is no standard of justice in the Black Kingdoms. Decisions are based on political expediency, public sentiment, or the chief's whim.

Religion

The gods of the Black Kingdoms are described in *Hyborian Religion*, p. 33.



Armed Forces

Most tribal warriors are Light Infantry, and generally of Average to Seasoned status. However, the skirmish warfare of the Black Kingdoms makes these warriors unpredictable in a large battlefield situation.

Language

The hundreds of tribal dialects scattered throughout the Black Kingdoms would be impossible to describe here. Most are based on a single pre-Kushite tongue. In the north, Kushite and Ghanatan are used as trade languages, but in the south there is no such tongue.

Treat each dialect of the Black Kingdoms as a Mental/Easy skill, with each dialect defaulting to any other dialect at -4.

Names

The peoples of the Black Kingdoms have African names: Aja, Ajonga, Bajujh, Bombaata, Bwatu, Gobir, Juma, Laranga, Saidu, Sakumbe, Yasala, etc. Other southern names, particularly those from Darfar, Keshan and Zembabwei, might also be appropriate.

Kushite Adventure

Kethmes' Return. Over a decade ago, the dark-skinned inhabitants of Kush overthrew their Stygian masters and slaughtered the rulers of Meroe, establishing a new order without their old masters. The new order has been less than successful, however, as Meroe has become a hotbed of intrigue far worse than it ever was under the late Queen Tananda.

Now, an adventurer named Kethmes has arrived, claiming to be the nephew of Queen Tananda and aspiring to return to his "rightful" throne. The new nobility has no use for this upstart, but the populace seeks a change, and may once again put a light-skinned ruler on the throne.

Kethmes seeks warriors and advisors for his enterprise. Will the PCs back Kethmes in his bid for Meroe's throne? Will they instead help the dark-skinned rulers to maintain their hold on the reins of power? Or, will they work both sides against one another, hoping to achieve their own victory?

Meru

Meru is an isolated land in the heart of the Himelian Mountains. Its origins are known only through legend, and its existence has only recently been revealed to the outside world.

Meru appears in only one story: "The City of Skulls."

History

According to Meruvian legend, the valley known as the Cup of the Gods was once the Roof of the World: a flat, icy plain that ran from the tops of the Himelias to the tops of the Talakmas.

The Meruvian legend continues: "Then Yama, the king of the demons, determined to create this valley for us, his chosen people, to dwell in. By a mighty spell, he caused the land to sink. The ground shook with the sound of ten thousand thunders, molten rock poured from cracks in the earth, mountains crumbled, and forests went up in flame."

When this enormous upheaval was over, the land between the mountain chains was a deep valley, warmed by the heat of the ground, and plants and beasts of the warm countries came to dwell in it. "Then Yama created the first Meruvians and placed them in the valley, to inhabit forever."

Some Hyborian scholars maintain that this is a primitive description of the Cataclysm which sank Atlantis. They point to the presence of rhinoceroses ("nose-horns"), tigers and other jungle creatures, and postulate a meandering immediately following the Cataclysm which could account for the presence of such creatures in the isolated valley.



Friends and Foes

Meru has little contact with the outside world. A few Hyrkanian tribes trade for gold and jade, but most Hyrkanians leave the Meruvians alone.

Geography

The Cup of the Gods lies between the Talakma and Himelian mountain ranges. The inland sea, Sumero Tso, covers much of the valley floor. The Seven Sacred Cities of Meru — Shamballah, Throana, Paliana, Issedon, Auzakia, Thogara, and Shondakor — are spaced equally around the shore of this lake, at the foot of the mountains.

Meru is warmed by volcanic activity far below the surface. Thus, despite its isolation in the barren mountains, it maintains a tropical climate. Many of the plants and animals of the Black Kingdoms thrive in Meru's clime.

Mana Level

Meru is a high-mana land.

Society

The Meruvians are a short, dark-skinned people, similar to the Vendhyans. Their culture is stagnant, with all behavior regulated by the shamans and priests of the cult of Yama.

Meru is ruled by the Rimpoche (Status 8 — he is the son of Yama, after all); other levels are High Priest (5); Count or Priest (4); Baron or military officer of Rank 6-7 (3); Patrician, wealthy merchant or military officer of Rank 3-5 (2); craftsman, merchant, or common soldier (1); commoner (0); servant (-1); beggar (-2); bandit, brigand, or thief (-3); slave (-4).

Customs

The Meruvians believe that all good and ill fortune comes as a result of karmic debt. If they have bad luck, they are atoning for prior misdeeds; if they have good luck, they are being rewarded for virtuous acts in a previous life. Thus, the Meruvians are very accepting of their fates.

The Meruvians also give full obedience to the priests. This is partially due to the belief that the priests are born into their lot

due to their spiritual purity, but also because of the threat of the vengeance of Yama (see p. 35).

The head of the government (and of the priesthood) is the Rimpoche (god-king) Jalung Thongpa, Terror of Men and Shadow of Heaven, the ever-reincarnating son of Yama. When Jalung Thongpa dies, the priests scour Meru for the child born at the time of the previous Rimpoche's death; this child, no matter how deformed or unfit, is declared Jalung Thongpa's re-incarnated form.

The Law

Meruvian law is simple: obey the priests. The priests are the source of all law (as the spokesmen for mighty Yama), and their word is by definition the will of Yama.

To a Meruvian, death is not the ultimate penalty. Death frees the soul for reincarnation, and is therefore neither reward nor punishment, but merely a transition without moral value.

The greatest offenders, therefore, are enslaved, and forced to row the galleys which continually circle Sumero Tso. In the Meruvian view, slavery removes the humanity and individuality from a person without giving them the surcease of resuming their incarnations. These slaves rarely revolt, even if unjustly sentenced, as they feel they are atoning for unremembered misdeeds.

Religion

The Meruvians worship Yama (see p. 35).

Armed Forces

Meruvian troops are Light and Medium Infantry (LI and MI), with a substantial contingent of Pikemen. Cavalry is unknown in the Cup of the Gods.

Language

Meruvian is only distantly related to any living language. It is Mental/Average. Some Meruvians, particularly those living in the north, also speak halting Hyrkanian.

Names

Meruvian names are Tibetan in form: Jalung Thongpa, Tan-zong Tengri. Other Meruvian names resemble those of Vendhya or Hyrkania.

Nemedia

Nemedia is the second-ranked kingdom of the Hyborians, and is Aquilonia's chief rival. Where Aquilonia has always had a tradition of independence which has often brought its outlying provinces into revolt, Nemedia has a feudal structure which permeates every aspect of the kingdom.

Conan is a thief in Numalia in "The God in the Bowl"; his exploits against Nemedian law end with him imprisoned in *Conan the Warlord*. He leaves Nemedia for several years, returning to Belverus in *Conan the Defender* after a sojourn in the far north. Finally, Nemedia invades Aquilonia in *Conan the Conqueror*, with the help of the Acheronian sorcerer Xaltotun.

History

Nemedia's history begins with the coming of the Khari, and the founding of ancient Acheron. When the Khari, fleeing their Hyrkanian ex-slaves, reached the fertile lands of the West, they founded three kingdoms: Old Stygia, Hyperborea the Elder, and Acheron. Acheron covered the lands now known as Nemedia, Brythunia, Corinthia, and Ophir; Hyperborea the Elder covered

eastern Aquilonia, the Border Kingdom, and southern Hyperborea; and Old Stygia covered Shem, modern Stygia, and the Turanian desert.

When the Hyborian invasion swept down from the North, the central portion of Acheron was quickly conquered. Purple-towered Python, which fought with all the sorceries available to ancient Acheron, was obliterated from the knowledge of men. The Hybori claimed all that remained for their own, and founded the new kingdom of Nemedia.

Nemedia has survived unconquered ever since. Its kings have ruled from the Dragon Throne in Belverus for nearly 3,000 years. As time has passed, the great kingdom has been superseded in military might by its younger sibling, Aquilonia, but it still remains the cultural center of the Hyborian civilization.

Current Affairs

Nemedia has been biding her time, waiting for Aquilonia to be wrapped in the throes of civil war before beginning a new war of conquest. Conan's sudden execution of Numedides eliminated any chance of a drawn-out conflict and robbed King Nimes of the opportunity for gains in eastern Aquilonia. Conan's reputation as a general, furthermore, has made Nimes unwilling to risk his troops in a conventional assault, and has even caused him to make friendly overtures to the new dynasty. Nimes's conciliating posture is unpopular with many of Nemedia's nobles, who favor striking quickly while Aquilonia is still weakened from internal strife, but Nimes is not a king who bows to pressure, and such an invasion seems unlikely.

Friends and Foes

Nemedia's primary rival is Aquilonia, and much of Nemedia's efforts are devoted to outdoing the larger Hyborian nation. Nemedia has also had disputes with Koth, Zamora, Brythunia and Ophir, although most of these are quick to blow over.

Her only major ally (actually a client-state) is Corinthia, which, in addition to acting as a buffer for Koth, provides a caravan route for Nemedian goods headed for Aghrapur along the Road of Kings.

Geography

Nemedia is a fertile land, similar to eastern Aquilonia. Few of the wild creatures which plague Aquilonia's western reaches are found in Nemedia; the land has been civilized for nearly three millennia.

Mountains surround Nemedia on two sides; only the northern and eastern borders are level. The mountains help secure Nemedia's territory, as foreign troops can be stopped at carefully chosen mountain passes.

Gazetteer

Belverus — the capital of Nemedia. Belverus is a marvelous city of great cultural and architectural accomplishments. It is rivaled in the West only by the upstart Khorshemish, whose recent kings have spent heavily to allow themselves to be compared to the splendor of the Nemedian capital.

Hanumar — a city in northern Nemedia. Hanumar is the center of worship of the Nemedian cult of Ibis.

Numalia — the second largest city of Nemedia. Numalia lies on the Road of Kings, which ties the West together; roads south of the city lead into the caravan routes of Ophir, Koth and Shem.

Python — the ancient capital of Acheron. Python is a lost city; its treasures have lain unrevealed for centuries. Modern

Hyborian scholars believe that the City of the Purple Towers lies in northeastern Nemedia, in the wilds near the Border Kingdom.

Tor — a barony of Nemedia.

Economy and Loot

Nemedia produces many manufactured goods, including armor, weapons, looms and other complex machinery, and worked jewelry. Nemedia's own mines produce little wealth, but her domination of the Road of Kings brings extensive tribute.

Mana Level

Nemedia has mostly low to normal mana, with regions with no mana near the Border Kingdom. The eastern regions of Nemedia, which are co-incident with ancient Acheron, have high mana, with several Acheronian shrines marking very-high-mana sites.

Society

Nemedia is primarily Hyborian, with a slight admixture of the old Khari strain from the conquered Acheronians. The kingdom is very similar in structure to Aquilonia, although there is more emphasis on feudal bonds and less on personal freedom.

Nemedia has long been Aquilonia's primary rival. Many of Nemedia's political efforts are directed toward demonstrating that Nemedia is more important than Aquilonia. However, despite Nemedia's cultural depth and intellectual freedom, the land simply does not have the raw materials which Aquilonia can provide. This continued rivalry has left the two kingdoms stalemated.

Nemedia is ruled by the King (Status 7); other levels are Prince (6); Count (5); Baron (4); Knight (3); Mayor (of a city), Patrician, wealthy merchant, or military officer of Rank 5-6 (2); craftsman, merchant or military officer of Rank 3-4 (1); commoner or common soldier (0); servant (-1); beggar (-2); bandit, brigand, or thief (-3); slave (-4).

Feudal Obligations

Nemedia maintains the feudal hierarchy more strictly than in other Hyborian nations. All citizens have a place in the feudal hierarchy; they must swear allegiance to their overlord, and they hold specific obligations and rights under Nemedia's detailed feudal code.

Fiefs and noble offices are passed from father to eldest son, on the basis of blood ties alone. Should no son be available to take the throne, complex rules of consanguinity are invoked to determine the proper heir.

Noble birth is also a prerequisite for many positions of state. Only those with noble lineage (Status 4 or more) are permitted to hold Rank 7 or higher in the military, to serve on the Courts of Justice, or to head an Inquisitional Council. Only in the field of scholarship are bloodlines ignored, although a noble's sponsorship is required to get any scholarly grant from the Dragon Throne.

Law

The laws of Nemedia are codified into an elaborate and specific code: The Nemedian Doctrines. This legal system includes rights for citizens accused of crimes, specification of punishments for crimes, and even allows a noble (but not a commoner) to take the king to court over official policy actions.

Nemedian courts have a reputation for justice. The members of the Courts of Justice are appointed by the king (for the national courts) or the ruling noble for the region. The Inquisitional

Councils are fact-finding bodies who investigate crimes and prosecute accused criminals.

Recalcitrant debtors are dealt with harshly. If a person is unable to pay outstanding debts, the courts may sell that person (and his family) into slavery, using the proceeds to pay the creditors. Such "debt-slaves" are branded on the shoulder with a cross to indicate their debt-status.

Slavery, on the other hand, is more liberal than in most Hyborian nations. The law protects slaves from excessive cruelty by their masters, and permits the children of a slave and a free person to remain free. Slaves, even debt-slaves, may be manumitted by their masters, although many would refuse such an offer. In Nemedia, many would rather be well-fed slaves than starving freemen.

Religion

Nemedia is the most liberal of the Hyborian kingdoms when it comes to religion. In addition to Mitra worship, which is nominally the state religion, Nemedia supports philosophical orders such as the Skeptics, as well as temples to the Shemitish deities, the mysterious cult of Ibis (unknown elsewhere), and even the Stygian god Set!

This religious chaos is one of the sources of animosity between Aquilonia and Nemedia. The temple of Mitra in Aquilonia has near-total control of the religious life of Aquilonia's citizens, and over the centuries have pressured Aquilonia's kings to sue with the Dragon Throne for similar concessions in Nemedia.

Scholarship

Nemedia is a society of inquisitiveness and scientific learning. The greatest scholars of the West are employed by the Dragon Throne to produce theological, scientific and historical works. Included in these are the Nemedian Chronicles, a running historical record produced by the Court Historian of Belverus. The Chronicles are startling in their lack of bias, and it is to the Nemedian Chronicles that we owe our knowledge of the Hyborian Age.



Armed Forces

Nemedia's troops run the gamut from Light Infantry to the heaviest cavalry, and all of them are excellently trained

(Seasoned or better). Their troops are regularly rotated through postings to ensure intimate familiarity with all potential war terrains, and the War College in Belverus is renowned for its studies of modern Hyborian warfare.

Language

Nemedian is a Mental/Average language related to Aquilonian (defaults to Aquilonian-3). Its alphabet is the same as that of Aquilonia, although some of the spelling rules have deviated over the centuries. Nemedians are also often fluent in the tongues of neighboring countries, especially Aquilonian and Ophirean.

Names

Nemedian names resemble Aquilonian names, with the same Latin basis: Alcimedes, Altaro, Amalric, Arideus, Astreas, Bragoras, Caranthes, Demetrio, Diana, Dionus, Enaros, Octavia, Ostorio, Posthumus and Promero.

Nemedian Adventure

A Little Larceny is a Dangerous Thing. The Temple of Kallian Publico, a famous house of rarities in Numalia, has possession of a valuable golden statue which is reputed to have the ability to make a person fall in love. Caranthes Azgarian, a young noble of Numalia, wants to use the statue to woo a lady who has refused his favors. He wants to hire the PCs to steal it for him, and then return it when he has used it. Do they follow through, or reject his offer of a pouch of gold? And what are the true powers of the statue?

Nordheim

Nordheim is the northernmost land of the Hyborian Age. Divided into two regions, Asgard and Vanaheim, Nordheim is the home of the fair-skinned barbarians who provided the initial impetus for the Hyborian drift.

Conan first met the Nordheimr at an early age. Clearly, by sixteen, he had begun to adventure with them (see "Legions of the Dead"). Over the years, Conan returned to adventure with the Æsir, as described in *Conan the Champion*, *Conan the Valorous* and "The Frost Giant's Daughter."

One of Conan's companions, Sigurd of Vanaheim, was a Nordheimr. When Conan met Sigurd, in *Conan the Buccaneer*, both had been living in civilized lands for a number of years, and in temperament and knowledge bore little resemblance to their countrymen. Thus, it is difficult to extrapolate Vanir behavior from Sigurd, just as it is dangerous to assume that Conan was a typical Cimmerian. Nevertheless, some characteristics of the Vanir have been taken from Sigurd's exploits.

History

The fair-skinned northern barbarians who pushed the Hyborians south were the descendants of Atlantean tribes who had been driven to the far north at the time of the Atlantean-Pictish wars. These tribes had regressed into beast-men, and had then slowly risen again to the status of barbarians.

The Nordheimr (as the Hyborians originally knew them) were fierce warriors, although (much like the Hyborians) they were rarely united into a single coherent force. Nordheimr traditions place the individual hero above the group, making the Nordheimr fighting forces terrible foes in small numbers, but easily repulsed by the more organized armies of the south.

In 74 A.A., a schism developed within the Nordheimr com-

munities. Two great kings, Van and Æs, were joining their tribes together by marriage: Hund, son of Æs, was to be married to one of Van's daughters.

Here the story diverges. The Æsir (followers of Æs) maintain that Hund was to be married to Greta, Van's youngest daughter, said to be as fair as Atali, daughter of Ymir. The Vanir, on the other hand, believe that the deal was for Helga, Van's eldest daughter, who was much less beautiful but who was to be married first under Vanir custom.

When Helga was brought to be Hund's bride, Æs flew into a rage. The two chiefs were prevented from raising weapons against one another only by the pleadings of their retainers, who would not have the ill omen of bloodletting at a wedding. Van took his daughter and left Æs' steading, swearing an eternal feud.

The feud continues to this day. The blond Æsir have settled in the eastern half of Nordheim, known as Asgard; the red-haired Vanir control the western half, known as Vanaheim.

Geography

Nordheim is a rugged land, made of snow-capped mountains, glaciers, tundra and taiga in the southern sections. It is divided roughly down the middle by the Blue Mountains, which separate Asgard from Vanaheim.

The mountains of Nordheim are occupied by cave bears, polar bears and mastodons; the taiga supports moose, fox and musk ox. The Nordheimr do not farm or herd animals; they hunt, fish, and trap for food, moving on when an area has been "hunted out."

Mana Level

Nordheim has low to normal mana.

Society

The Nordheimr are tall, fair-skinned, broad-shouldered and strong, like their Cimmerian neighbors. The Æsir have blond hair; the Vanir have black, brown or reddish hair. Both Æsir and Vanir wear beards.

The Æsir and Vanir tribes are ruled by a King or Chief (Status 3); beneath him are Warchief (2); War Leaders (1); warriors (0); servant orthane (-1); beggar (-2); bandit, brigand, or thief (-3); slave, outlaw or oathbreaker (-4).



Customs

Nordheimr customs are simple, as befits their simple lives. A Nordheimr chief rules his domain and his warriors from a sod-house. Spoils are divided among the chief and the warriors. No individual except the chief has a "right" to the spoils; however, a generous chief attracts many warriors.

The Vanir are the more somber and isolated of the two groups. They supplement their hunting by sea-fishing along the coast, harpooning seals and large fish from tiny kayaks. They are enemies of the Cimmerians, but rarely raid to the south, as Cimmerian tribes often retaliate more forcefully than the Vanir would like.

The Æsir are more friendly and more cheerful than the Vanir. An Æsir sod-house is usually filled with the sounds of singing and boisterous laughter early in the evening. "Live today," says an old Æsir proverb, "tomorrow you may be dead."

Law

The Nordheimr maintain a straightforward code of honor and truthfulness. This does not mean, of course, that they are not sometimes sneaky and treacherous, but rather that the basis for trust in this northern land is a man's word. The reputation of a Nordheimr lasts only as long as he is well spoken of; a "good name" is prized above wealth.

The Nordheimr penchant for violence often leads to death, even within a tribe. When such occurs, the Nordheimr law is simple: a life for a life. However, rather than dying, one who kills in a fair fight can offer the deceased's family weregild, or blood-money, to repay them for their loss. Weregild for a death is equal to seven years' income for the deceased; maimings demand somewhat less.

This does not mean a rich Nordheimr can murder with impunity. Weregild is generally accepted when the death resulted from a fair fight, brought on by the passions of the moment. If there is a suspicion of pre-meditated murder, or if the fight was not "fair," the deceased's heirs may refuse weregild, and declare a blood feud instead. Blood feuds end only when all on one side or another are dead; some blood feuds (such as the one between the Æsir and the Vanir) have lasted generations and even centuries.

There is another way for a dispute to be settled. Periodically, Nordheimr hold a kind of fair, called a *Thing*, where all feuds are suspended for three days before and after. *Things* are widely announced, and may be seasonal or tied to a specific celebration.

A man who has been wrongly accused of killing another may come to the *Thing* and defend himself. Even outlaws and exiles can come to the *Thing* safely, although they would do well to leave before expiration of the three-day limit.

Religion

The Nordheimr worship Ymir, the Frost Giant, Atali, his daughter and various ancestor spirits (see p. 34).

Armed Forces

Nordheimr warriors are considered Medium Infantry (MI), although they know little of the formal fighting drills of the Hyborian nations. Their morale is frighteningly high; they receive a +1 morale above and beyond their base!

Language

The language of Nordheim is loosely based on ancient Atlantean, much as Cimmerian is. Consider it to be Mental/Average, with a default to Cimmerian-5. There is no written form.

Names

Nordheimr names are Norse in nature: Bragi, Egil, Gorm, Heimdul, Horsa, Niord, Njal, Rann, Sigurd and Wulfhere. Both men and women use patronymics; sons use the form Njalsson, daughters the form Njalsdatter.

Nordheimr Adventure

Njalsdatter. An Æsir warrior in northern Nemedra is seeking warriors to help him rescue his daughter from the Vanir. He is offering gold and a share of the loot from the raid, as well as help in returning Vanir slaves to civilization for sale.

Ophir

Ophir is the wealthiest of the Hyborian kingdoms. It does not have the population or the agricultural base of Aquilonia or Nemedra, but it has something of great value, gold mines.

Ophir is the site of three stories: *Conan the Triumphant*, in which Conan leads a Free Company in defense of the kingdom against an evil cult; "Shadows in the Dark" in which Conan rescues the King of Khoraja from Ophir; and "The Star of Khorala" in which Conan brings the gem of that name to the Queen of Ophir.

History

Ophir was founded about 300 years before Aquilonia by a Hybori sub-group who settled the western wilderness. Ophir was founded around the same time as other Hyborian regions (like Gunderland or Bossonia), most of which have been absorbed by the larger Hyborian nations.

Ophir would have ended up as part of Aquilonia were it not for her great mineral wealth and the cleverness of one of her earliest kings, Alvaric of Ianthe. When Aquilonia and Nemedra turned their covetous eyes toward the fertile lands and valuable mines of Ophir, Alvaric approached each of the other kings secretly, offering gold and mercenary support in return for protection against their rival. Both kings signed peace treaties with Ophir, swearing eternal defense against the aggressions of the other, and prepared to fight the battle which would decide Ophir's fate.

The battle never came. Alvaric arranged the routes of the two "defensive" forces so that they met at the Aquilonian-Nemedian border. Both sides claimed their territory had been invaded, and yet another Aquilonian-Nemedian war began. Ophir swore support to both sides, promising to defend Ophir's borders against raiders so that a surprise attack could not be arranged, and loaning both sides huge amounts to fund their war efforts.

By the time the war was over, both kingdoms were grossly in debt to Ophir. Ophir's payment has been defense against outside aggression, as both kingdoms (and, more recently, Koth) have preferred to accept Ophirean financial "loans" as tribute rather than involving themselves in a costly war, with the added opposition of the best mercenaries money can buy.

Current Affairs

Recently, Ophir's gold mines have begun to play out. The Ophirean miners are furiously searching for more gold veins, but if they are unsuccessful, Ophir's delicate balancing act may quickly collapse.

Friends and Foes

None of the tributary nations really likes the Ophirean situation, but the gold is essential to financially strapped nations



(especially Koth), and Ophir has mediated disputes between the countries. In addition, the near-legendary Ophirean generosity has made it difficult for any of the neighbor nations to feel slighted.

Geography

Ophir is mostly rolling plains, with forested regions throughout. In the east, it turns mountainous, merging into the rocky Nemedian-Corinthian border at its eastern end.

Ophir is slightly rainy, with western storms pouring along the western edge of the mountains. There is little snow, except on the highest peaks, but the winters can become bitterly cold, with sudden drops below freezing.

Gazetteer

Frosol — a county of Ophir.

Ianthe — the capital of Ophir.

Lodier — a barony of Ophir.

Mecanta — a county of Ophir.

Ronnoco — a city-state of Ophir, near the Plain of Shamu.

Shamu, Plain of — a battleground in southeastern Ophir, near the Kothic border.

Terson — a barony of Ophir.

Economy and Loot

Ophir abounds in gold, silver and gems. Some of the finest jewelers in the West reside in Ophir (where their raw materials are in the most abundance).

Mana Level

Ophir is a low-mana land. The western reaches, where the mines are, is largely a no-mana region.

Society

Ophir has a Hyborian culture, very similar to that of Aquilonia. The most striking difference is the presence of wealth

among the populace. Ophir's military wears gilded armor, and almost every bourgeois person has a sizable quantity of gold jewelry and gemstones.

This wealth, and the associated standard of living in Ophir, has given the Ophireans a reputation for generosity unsurpassed among the Hyborian nations. It is said that no one goes hungry in Ophir, and that no one sleeps in the cold. Though this is a slight exaggeration, it is true that the Ophireans are free with their belongings, and their "charitable contributions" to other nations are unsurpassed.

Ophir follows the Hyborian pattern of offices: King (Status 7); Prince (6); Count (5); Baron (4); Mayor (of a city) or Knight (3); Patrician, wealthy merchant, or military officer of Rank 6-7 (2); craftsman, merchant or military officer of Rank 3-5 (1); commoner or common soldier (0); servant (-1); beggar (-2); bandit, brigand, or thief (-3); slave (-4).

Religion

The Ophireans are devout Mitra worshippers, although this belief is tempered with more religious tolerance than is seen in Aquilonia. Nature worship (see pp. 33-34) has a following here, but it is limited to the more remote villages and towns.

Armed Forces

Ophir has the best troops money can buy. Many of them are foreign mercenaries, hired for top pay and light duty, but others are totally Ophirean; wealth has not corrupted the Hyborian warrior tradition.

Ophirean troops may be of any type, but will always be Seasoned or better. Most are Crack, and the Ophireans have the highest percentage of Elite forces in the West: if rolling randomly for troop quality, add +5 to the roll.

Language

Ophirean is a Mental/Average language which defaults to Aquilonian-5.

Names

Ophirean names are Latin in form: Barras, Chelkus, Fronto, Garus and Marala.

Ophirean Adventure

Casks of Silver, Casks of Gold. The PCs are hired in the Ophirean city of Ianthe as guards for a trader traveling north with a very mysterious cargo. Shortly after the caravan leaves Ianthe, it is attacked by bandits. The bandits are driven off, but the "trader" is slain in the attack.

When the PCs investigate the wagon, it is filled with gold ingots, marked for the treasury of Nemed. Do the PCs deliver the gold? If not, how do they get it out of the mountains? And what about other bandit raids — and the Nemedians?

Pictish Wilderness

The Pictish Wilderness, or Pictland, is the last remnant of the great uncivilized West which remains after the Hyborian invasion. This region, which once stretched from the Western

Ocean to the borders of ancient Acheron, now is reduced to a strip of wilderness a tenth its original size.

Pictland is the site of four Conan stories: "Beyond the Black River," "Moon of Blood," "The Treasure of Trancos" and "Wolves Beyond the Border." All stories about the Pictish Wilderness are inextricably intermingled with Aquilonian involvement in the Westermarck.

History

When the Cataclysm destroyed Atlantis, it also destroyed the Pictish Isles. Only a remnant of the barbaric Picts remained, ensconced in a small colony in the mountains of southern Valusia. The Picts, who were less advanced than the Atlanteans, were less affected by the Cataclysm, and quickly rose against the collapsing colonies.

For 500 years, the Atlantean colonies fought the Pictish nation. At the end, the Atlanteans had lost knowledge of speech and fire, and the Picts had reverted to a stone-age culture.

Thus the Picts remained, serving their dark, mysterious gods and ruling over the devastated West. They were unable to conquer the other peoples, the Shemites and the Zhemri, who had retained some of their previous technology, but similarly these less populous peoples could do nothing against the overwhelming tide of the Picts.

The founding of Acheron and Stygia lost the Picts only a small amount of territory. The Picts now not only fought the weapons of the southern peoples, but also sorcery from the forbidden East, but the Khari seemed uninterested in conquering the trackless Pictish wilds.

When the Hyborians came, the Picts were driven back still farther. As they had done before, they moved back slowly, individual tribes resisting for a time, then dying or fleeing west. For over a thousand years, the inexorable march of the Hyborians drove the Picts farther and farther west.

Eventually, the Picts had nowhere else to flee, so they began fighting in earnest. The Hyborians quickly learned that the land beyond the Thunder River belonged to the Picts. Only recently, with the founding of the Westermarck, has this claim been seriously challenged.

Current Affairs

There are continuing problems all along the Aquilonian border. The Westermarck suffers constant sniping attacks from the Picts, and the threat of re-unification of the tribes is constantly on the minds of the Hyborians. Until the Hyborians retreat beyond the Black River, a mass attack is a growing threat to the welfare of the westernmost settlers.

Friends and Foes

The Picts' major foes are the Aquilonians, who have driven them to this narrow stretch of land, and most active fighting today is with the settlers of the Westermarck. The Picts also have occasional clashes with the Zingarans and have long-standing enmity against the Cimmerians.

Geography

Pictland is bounded on the north by the Eiglophian Mountains, on the east by the Black River, on the west by the ocean, and on the south by Zingara.

Flora and Fauna

The Pictish Wilderness is virgin forest, filled with oaks and maples, and haunted by creatures thought extinct by the

Hyborian world. Its weather is temperate, like that of Aquilonia, although the winters are softened somewhat by the warm currents of the Western Ocean.

Hyborian scouts have reported saber-tooth tigers, giant pythons, apes and stegosaurs, as well as the more usual wolves, bears and elk. Nearly any forest creature (either modern or prehistoric) in the *GURPS Bestiary* might be found somewhere in Pictland; mythical creatures require more GM consideration, but the Pictish forests could conceal anything.

In addition to the wide variety of normal animals, there are many creatures in the Pictish Wilderness who "remember" the worship of Jhebbal Sag (see p. 33). Such animals are generally slightly larger and more intelligent than normal (+1 to IQ and ST), and are more easily controlled by Pictish shamans.

Mana Level

The Pictish Wilderness is a high-mana region.

Society

Picts are a primitive people, short and swarthy, with broad shoulders, deep chests, and black eyes and hair. Their culture is primitive (TL2), and only possesses occasional "modern" weapons either bought from the Zingarans or stolen from Aquilonian troops.

Pictish tribes are ruled by their chief (Status 2); below the chief are the tribal shaman (1); warrior (0); woman (-1); slave (-2).

The Ligureans

Early in the days of the Hyborian drift, a group of Acheronian sorcerers called the Ligureans fled deep into the Pictish Wilderness. There, their sorcerous practices became involved with their new forest home. Over time, the Ligureans lost their Acheronian culture, began to adopt Hyborian members, and slowly became nature priests in opposition to the power of Jhebbal Sag.

The Picts, of course, tried to exterminate the Ligureans. Ligurean sorceries easily repulsed the crude magic of the priests of Jhebbal Sag, and today the Picts leave the Ligureans alone.

Where Jhebbal Sag represents the power of the beast, the Ligurean Goddess represents the power of nature fulfilled, including animals, trees and the weather. The Ligureans spend most of their lives in sacred groves, contemplating nature and improving their relationship with their environment.

The Ligureans do have another role. Although they have all but forgotten their Acheronian origins, they have not forgotten the distortion of nature involved in Khari magic. At various times in the late Hyborian Age, Ligurean priests have come to the assistance of Hyborian rulers against the power of Set and Stygia. Indeed, some scholars believe that the worship of Mitra and Ligurean practices are identical, save only for the gender of the bodiless creator spirit, and that the original Ligurean sorcerers may have been Mitraic exiles. The Ligureans do not respond to such questions.

Customs

The Pictish tribes are very independent of one another. Each tribe is named for its totem animal: there are thus tribes such as Eagle, Hawk, Turtle, Bear, Wolf, Wildcat and Raven.

The tribe is ruled by a chief, who is usually the best warrior, with the co-operation and support of the tribal shaman. Pictish life does not provide for those who cannot defend themselves, so rarely is the chief position held by an "elder."

Picts are consummate hunters and trackers. They have no agriculture or animal husbandry; their dinners are brought in through their hunting skill alone. They are also nearly invisible in the woods; western Aquilonian fortresses have a large ring of bare "killing ground" to prevent Pictish ambush.

Not all Pictish relations are hostile. Zingarans occasionally sail north, trading Kushite ostrich plumes, jewelry, and weapons for skins, copper ore, and gold dust. Such trading is not without risk. A careless captain can quickly find himself on a sacrificial altar with Pictish hands at his ship's tiller.

Religion

The Picts worship the Animal Gods of the pantheon of Jhebbal Sag (see p. 33).

Armed Forces

Pictish warriors are Irregular Infantry of Seasoned to Elite quality. Although these troops can be faced by equal numbers of Hyborian troops safely, the real problem is the huge numbers of Picts who pour from the woods when attacking Hyborian troops.



Picts at War

Picts wear special paints to invoke the power of their totem when they go to war. Killing a Pict in paints is considered self-defense and can be understood by their rough code as a death in war. On the other hand, it is a deadly insult to kill a Pict who is not wearing paints; any Pict who is not at war with the dead Pict's tribe will go immediately and tell them, bringing the wrath of Pictish warriors down on the murderer.

Picts have no understanding of Hyborian chivalry. To a Pict, there is nothing wrong with sneaking up on your enemy and slitting his throat before he knows you are there. On the other hand, Picts in pursuit of an intruder run screaming through the forest as they get close, to bring fear to their enemies.

Pictish weapons are the bow and the cast spear, the war club and the hatchet. They have little use for Hyborian swords and battle axes, although they prize steel daggers and hatchet heads. They wear no armor.

Picts take heads for trophies; they hang them inside their

huts or bind them to the altars of their villages. The Picts believe that if they bring the head of their enemy home, the spirit of the enemy will be forced to serve them in the afterlife.

Despite Pictish bloodthirstiness and the feuds between Pictish tribes, there is hope for one who is pursued by Picts. Certain sites in the jungle are reserved as "sanctuaries": a fugitive, taking refuge in a sanctuary, is safe from the tribe which made it. Such sanctuaries are only effective once the victim is being pursued, but one who reaches a sanctuary is free from further trouble: the Picts turn their backs and walk away.

The Picts say that these sanctuaries are the abodes of demons and evil spirits, and that the demon will punish the transgressor far more sharply than the pursuit. Although several Hyborians have lived to tell of the sanctuaries, there may have been others who reached sanctuary and were slain by supernatural inhabitants.

Language

Pictish is a Mental/Average language unrelated to any Hyborian or Atlantean tongue. It has some relation, however, to other, more ancient mystical languages. There is no written form.

Ligurean is a Hyborian sub-tongue with strong Pictish and Khari influences. It is a Mental/Average language.

Names

Pictish names are primitive and guttural: Sagyetha, Zogar Sag.

The Ligurean names are Latin in structure. Diviatix is the only name mentioned in the saga, but other Aquilonian names would be appropriate.

Pictish Adventure

Silence is Dangerous. In a sudden and unexpected move, all the Picts have pulled back from raiding the Westernmark region of Conawaga. The PCs must discover whether the Picts are massing, and if so, what their target is, and bring this information back to the Hyborian commanders in time to defend the unlucky site.

Punt

See *Kush and the Black Kingdoms*, pp. 68-71.

Shem

Shem is the central nation of the West, acting as a buffer between the Hyborian nations, Stygia and Turan. It is a land of warring city-states, where mercenaries thrive and gold rules.

Shem is described in many stories. Bélit was Shemitish, and some Shemitish history is told in *Conan the Rebel*. Other references to Shem are made throughout the saga, but the only stories actually taking place in Shem are "Hawks over Shem" and *Conan the Raider*.

Some of the other stories take place with the Zuagir nomads. Conan was a chief of the Zuagir, beginning in "A Witch Shall Be Born," and continuing through his ousting at the beginning of "Black Tears." He returns briefly to the Zuagir in "The Return of Conan."

History

In the early days of the Hyborian invasion, a nomadic people from the desert regions south of the Vilayet Sea began to drive their herds in the farthest reaches of eastern Stygia. These people, the Sons of Shem, were seeking better grazing lands in the face of the growth of the Zamoran desert.

As the Sons of Shem came west, the Stygians tried to drive them off, and when that failed the Stygians offered the nomads grazing rights in return for tribute. The Sons of Shem became vassals of Old Stygia and continued their westward migration. The Stygian priests tried to teach the Shemites the worship of Father Set, but the nomads' own pantheon of gods held more interest than the labyrinthine doctrines of Set.

When the Hyborians conquered Koth, the Stygians withdrew south of the River Styx, leaving the Shemites to fend for themselves. In 588 A.A., the Shemites rebelled against the increasing Stygian demands for tribute. Unfortunately, to assure their success, they allied with Koth, who quickly replaced Stygia as Shem's oppressor.

By 923 A.A., the Shemites had had enough. They drove their Kothian overseers out of Shem, and began to live independently of outside influence. Unfortunately, the Shemitish leaders, united in war by the common enemy of Koth, were unable to come to an agreement for peacetime leadership. Shem decayed into a squabbling collection of independent city-states.

Now eastern Shem (at least) is a steady source for mercenary employment. The constant squabbles and disputes between the city-states are magnified by the raids of the Zuagir nomads. Only in western Shem, where the heartland of the kingdom remains under the rule of the kings of Asgalun, is there a measure of peace.

Current Affairs

Eastern Shem shows no signs of peace. Continuing difficulties with Koth, combined with several expeditionary forays by the Stygians and Turanians, have further stirred up the region. However, some moderates in the councils of the city-states have been urging re-unification in the face of the Hyrkanian threat. Turanian emissaries have maintained a veneer of peace, so these moderates are generally out of favor, but continued advancement across the Zamoran desert may well bring their cautionary policies to the fore.

Friends and Foes

The Shemitish city-states bicker, but collectively they still fear and despise their prior masters, Stygia and Koth. Most of the revolutionary fervor which achieved Shem's independence has faded over the centuries, but this does not keep them from watching Strabonus of Koth and the priests of Set with care.

Despite this distrust, the Shemites trade with Koth and Stygia, as well as with Turan and Zamora. None of these trade agreements are true alliances.

Geography

Shem lies between Koth and Stygia. Its western border is the Western Ocean; its eastern edge fades into the great Turanian desert.

Western Shem is made up of fertile, hilly meadowlands. Eastward the land becomes drier and flatter, and the lush grasses of the west become dry scrub.

Gazetteer

Abbadrah — a city-state of southern Shem. Abbadrah is heavily influenced by Stygian culture and has an extensive necropolis outside the city in the Stygian fashion (CRA).

Akbitania — a northern city-state near Khoraja in Koth. Akbitania is well-known for its blacksmiths, who produce fine steel weapons and armor (BCO).

Akhlat — "the Accursed," an oasis and pre-Shemite trading city in the Makan-e-Mordan region of the Shan-e-Sorkh. Akhlat

was ruled by a demon of the Elder Night, called the Gorgon, which leeched the life out of the surrounding region, and may have been responsible for the Shan-e-Sorkh, if ancient Acheronian texts are to be believed (BTE).

Akkharia — a city-state of southwestern Shem (HOS; WSB).

Anakia — a city-state of western Shem (HOS; WSB).

Asgalun — the capital of Pelishtia. Asgalun is Shem's most important seaport. It is situated at the mouth of a river, along the coast of the Western Ocean. The days of Asgalun's glory have passed, however, and the city is now a bizarre mixture of squalid huts scattered about beautiful stone monuments (HOS).

Dan-marcah — a coastal village of Pelishtia (CTR).

Eruk — a city-state of Shem.

Ghaza — a city-state of Shem, famous for its wine.

Kuthchemes — a ruined city of far southeastern Shem. Kuthchemes was a city of the Khari migration and was one of the earliest cities founded by them in the West. Kuthchemes was ruled by the wizard Thugra Khotan and was overrun by the Hyborians when they conquered the kingdom of Koth.

Kyros — a city-state of Shem, famous for its wine.

Libnum Hills — a large range of hills in Pelishtia, south of Asgalun. The Libnum Hills contain some of the most fertile grazing lands in Shem.

Makan-e-Mordan — a section of the Shan-e-Sorkh reputed to be haunted.

Nippr — a city-state of Shem.

Pelishtia — the largest and westernmost kingdom in Shem. Pelishtia is the site of the capital of the short-lived Kingdom of Shem and is often considered to be Shem, especially by seafaring peoples like the Zingarans and the Argosceans.

Sabatea — a city-state of Shem. Sabateans have an evil reputation, due in part to their worship of the Golden Peacock (see p. 33). The Sabatean Peacock cult provides expert torturers, whose services are used by the rulers of most Shemitish city-states.

Shan-e-Sorkh — "the Red Waste," an extremely barren desert in eastern Shem, marked by reddish sands and a paucity of oases.

Shumir — an ancient city-state in the east. According to legend, the Shemitish god Bel was born in Shumir.

Shushan — "the Imperial," the largest city-state in eastern Shem. Shushan is Pelishtia's primary rival for the position of chief nation of Shem, and a dispute between Shushan and Asgalun provided the original dispute which fragmented Shem after the Kothic rebellion (BCO).

Economy and Loot

Shem's cities provide all manner of goods, from armor and weapons to cloth, jewelry and leatherwork. Each city specializes in one or two products, and their expertise is parlayed into a standing trade.

Mana Level

Western Shem is a normal-mana region, while eastern Shem has low mana.

Society

Shem comprises numerous city-states at constant war with one another and with the desert nomads who raid the western cities indiscriminately.

Most of these city-states are small. The largest one is Pelishtia, which covers much of western Shem; in the east, each individual city and market square maintains its own independence.

Caravan routes crisscross Shem. Despite their mutual hostility, none of the city-states is sufficiently independent to thrive without trade. Some city-states specialize in the manufacture of weapons, others in wines or foodstuffs, and still others in the raising of cattle and goats.

The Shemites themselves are of medium height, broad-shouldered and solid, with hooked noses, dark eyes, and blue-black hair. Their thick, curly beards are cut into a single tapering column dangling from their chins.

The King of Pelishtia is nominally the ruler of all of Shem (Status 4); kings of the other city-states (3) generally ignore his pronouncements. Other status levels are: wealthy merchant or military officer of Rank 6-7 (2); craftsman, merchant or military officer of Rank 3-5 (1); commoner or common soldier (0); servant (-1); beggar (-2); bandit, brigand or thief (-3); slave (-4).

The Zuagir

The Zuagir nomads live in the eastern deserts of Shem. These Shemitish tribesmen have built a life from raiding the caravans of the eastern desert, although they have spread their influence as far west as Khauran.

The Zuagirs are not aligned with any of the city-states. They raid Shemitish, Zamoran and Turanian caravans and steadings for their food, weapons and wealth. Much of the mercenary work available in eastern Shem is due to fear of the Zuagir, and the kings of Turan have repeatedly sent forces into the desert to drive the Zuagir away.

Law

Each Shemitish city-state has its own laws, and these laws vary wildly. Most peculiar laws have exemptions for foreigners, or the city will have a "foreigner's quarter" where a more simplified, liberal code applies, so that the caravan masters are not constantly bombarded with violations. Occasionally, however, strange laws (such as prohibiting public consumption of food or ale, or unusual sumptuary laws) are used to extort small fines from itinerant travelers or to drive them from the city.

Religion

The Shemites have their own pantheon of gods, which is discussed in *Hyborian Religion*, p. 32. Each city has its own idol which the Shemites consider the actual presence of the god.



Armed Forces

Shemitish troops are a hodge-podge of differing troop types. Some cities favor cavalry, with limited infantry forces; others favor pikemen and light infantry over cavalry, heavy cavalry and infantry over light troops, and even forces specializing in miners and siege engines over "regular" troops. The continuous action in Shem makes most forces well trained and experienced (Seasoned or above), and the best troops are independent mercenary bands, selling their swords to the highest bidder.

Language

Shemitish has been influenced slightly by both Hyborian and Stygian neighbors; treat it as a Mental/Average language, but with no defaults to other languages. The Zuagir tongue is a dialect of Shemitish; it too is Mental/Average, and they mutually default to one another -3.

Names

Shemitish names are Assyrian, Babylonian or Semitic in flavor: Afrit, Aramas, Bêlit, Dathan, Eblis, Ebenezzeb, Elohar, Enosh, Gilzan, Gomer, Isaiab, Mattenbaal, Mena, Nahor, Nitokar, Uriaz, Yin Allal, Zebah and Zillah.

Shemitish Adventure

Ten Little Shemites. The PCs are in a mercenary band on garrison duty in the Shemitish village of Urgul in eastern Shem. While there, a mysterious plague, marked by huge splotches on the skin of the victims, begins killing individual villagers in their sleep, focusing primarily on the village leaders and the senior members of the mercenary troop. Is this plague really a poison, being used by agents of a hostile city-state, or even a hostile nation? Or, worse, is it the work of a wizard's demonic servant?

Stygia

Stygia is the second "evil empire" of the West. These survivors of the Khari are deeply disliked; their own policies do little to encourage friendly relations.

Stygia is the home of Thoth-Amon and the Black Ring; its exiled sorcerers have populated many a Conan tale. The stories only describe the mysterious interior of Stygia in a few places: *Conan the Rebel*, *Conan the Raider*, *Conan the Buccaneer*, and "Black Sphinx of Nebthu."

History

After the Cataclysm, the region now known as Stygia was inhabited by the ancient serpent people of Valusia (p. 14) whose race was in decline. Many of the serpent people had migrated south, to settle in the distant unknown jungles. Their great monuments and cities remained, populated now by their human slaves, and by a few remaining serpent lords.

When the Khari fled ancient Khitai and came east, they discovered this civilization and conquered it. Those few serpent people who remained were treated as gods; their appearance and bearing matched many Khari legends. The slave races, on the other hand, merely changed masters.

The Khari kingdom, now known as Stygia, quickly extended to reach the Mountains of Fire to the north, covering much of what is now Shem. Their sister kingdom, Acheron, extended north of the Kothian mountains, covering the Hyborian lands of the modern age.

When the Hyborian migrations destroyed Acheron, the Stygians withdrew behind the River Styx, leaving their Shemitish subjects to meet the barbarian tide. The Stygians had had little success in the northern grazelands, and when the Shemites struck out for independence, the Stygians only put up token resistance before granting them their "freedom."

Today, Stygia is the dark, brooding empire of the South, gateway to the Black Kingdoms and stronghold of the Empire of Set.

Current Affairs

Hints have drifted from Stygia that the leadership of the powerful Black Ring is in dispute. Several powerful sorcerers have established dominance over portions of the serpent-haunted land, and the premier sorcerer of the Ring, Thoth-Amon, is nowhere to be found.

Friends and Foes

The Hyborian nations universally despise Stygia as the stronghold of Father Set, Mitra's ancient enemy. Stygian sorcerers are nevertheless in demand in the more depraved courts of the West, where their sorcerous talents can be used to stiffen the grasp of the powerful.

The kingdom of Turan has made friendly overtures to the Stygians, whom they do not identify with their ancient oppressors. Diplomatic efforts have been slow, in great part because of the conservatism of the Stygian aristocracy, but should these two great powers ally, the Hyborian nations would have an enemy to fear.

Geography

Stygia is a rough rectangle of land south of Shem and north of the Black Kingdoms. Most of Stygia is desert, with tombs and ruins sprinkled throughout the region. Stygian legends imply that the desert is due to a sorcerous curse; some of those legends describe Khari magic gone awry, while others point to the last revenge of the serpent people upon their conquerors.

There is a small strip of marsh and forest along the shore of the Western Ocean, and the Purple Lotus Swamp, which lies in south-central Stygia, is fed from runoff from the southern jungles. Another relatively fertile strip can be found along the Styx, whose periodic inundations carry fertile soil along its entire length. The northeastern region known as Taia is particularly fertile, as a considerable amount of rich soil is deposited along the bend in the Styx.

Gazetteer

Bakhr River — a tributary of the Styx, running from the interior of Stygia northward, to meet the Styx north of Luxur. The Bakhr was at one time navigable, but the increasing dryness of the Stygian terrain has made it too shallow for large vessels.

Harakht — a city on the River Styx, where the ancient hawk-god of Stygia is worshipped.

Khajar, Oasis of — an oasis in the Stygian desert. It is reputed that the wizard Thoth-Amon resides here.

Khemi — the priestly capital of Stygia. This black-walled city is located at the mouth of the River Styx, and is Stygia's primary seaport. Unlike any other port on the Western Ocean, however, Khemi is a sealed city, and does not permit non-Stygians entrance. Thus, all trade with Stygia must be done with Stygia's ships, captains and crews.

Kheshatta — a city of magicians in southern Stygia.

Luxur — the administrative capital of Stygia, site of the Ivory Throne.

Nebthu — a city on the banks of the Bakhr River, near the Styx. Nebthu is well known for the large stone jackal-sphinx which looms over the town.

Nilus River — see River Styx.

Pteion — a ruined, demon-haunted city in Stygia.

Purple Lotus Swamp — a supposedly haunted swamp in southern Stygia, where the purple lotus grows.

Siptah, Isle of — an island off the coast of southern Stygia where the Stygian wizard Siptah once resided. Siptah himself is believed dead, but the demons and sorcerous creations which he left behind still populate the island (GIT).

Styx, River — the largest river of the South, also known as the Nilus River. The Styx marks the northern boundary of Stygia; it is navigable along its entire east-west length. Its headwaters are in Punt, near the Mountains of Gold; it travels north to Taia, then turns sharply west for 2,000 miles, to reach the Western Ocean.

Sukhmet — a city of southern Stygia, near Darfar.

Taia — a mountainous region in northeastern Stygia, near the "right angle" bend of the River Styx. Taia is occupied by Mitra-worshipping Shemites who wandered across the Styx centuries before the rest of Shem overthrew Stygian rule. Taia is a source of constant annoyance to the Stygians, and has rebelled on numerous occasions.

Thuran-on-the-Height — the capital of Taia. Thuran was founded by a Mitraic hero during the original Shemitish settlement of Taia, and the city is still holy to the Taians.

Flora and Fauna

Snakes of all sizes populate Stygia's wastes, as do jackals, lions and other carnivores. Huge crocodiles and river horses (hippopotami) thrive in the Styx and Bakhr rivers. Bizarre half-human creatures such as manticore, lamia and mermecolion haunt the ancient, pre-human ruins.

Economy and Loot

Stygia trades little with the outside world. When they do, they offer lapis lazuli, fine quartz and other precious stones in return for agricultural products (such as grain and cattle) which their blasted land will not support.

The Stygian economy is based on nomadic herding, fishing and harvesting of date palms. The barrenness of most of Stygia's terrain, combined with the constant need for sacrifices, keeps the population low.

Many Stygians make their livings producing amulets, medicines and charms. Others manufacture weapons and silks for export, although Stygian weapons are not favored by the peoples of other lands. Stygian merchants also transport ivory, pearls, skins and slaves from the Black Kingdoms along the River Styx and out to sea, to trade in the ports of Shem, Argos and Zingara.

Mana Level

Stygia is a land of high mana, particularly near Luxur and Khemi. Some of the eastern deserts of Stygia have low mana, however, and some ancient tomes whisper that this region was once very magically potent, until the mysterious spell which made it a desert was invoked.

Society

Stygian society is dominated by the priesthood. In Stygia, the priests rule: the temple owns most of the arable land, and the government bureaucracy is filled with priests. This Stygian theocracy is very conservative, with only minimal trade seen as beneficial for Stygia.

The Stygians are divided into castes, based to a great degree on racial type. At the top of the caste structure lie royalty and the most ancient nobles, who claim to be pure-blooded Khari. These people are tall and slender, with black hair and fair skin; however, they have dwindled as a race, and few of this upper caste survive in Stygia.

The second caste of Stygia are the aristocracy and middle class, who are dusky-skinned and hawk-faced. It is this core group which most non-Stygians consider to be true Stygians. This aristocracy holds the reins of power in the temples and the government, leaving the "nobles" to lounge about the court at Luxur.

Beneath this aristocracy lies the peasantry, a hybrid stock of Kushite, Shemite, Hyborian and Stygian ancestry. Those few foreigners who come to Stygia are lumped into this lowest class.

The true ruler of Stygia is the High Priest of Khemi (Status 8); just below him lies the King of the Ivory Throne at Luxur (Status 7). Other levels are Prince or High Priest (6); Count (5); Priest (4); minor noble, high aristocrat or military officer of Rank 7-8 (3); aristocrat, wealthy merchant or military officer of Rank 5-6 (2); craftsman, merchant or military officer of Rank 3-4 (1); commoner or common soldier (0); servant (-1); beggar (-2); bandit, brigand, or thief (-3); slave (-4).



Customs

Stygian customs are sheathed in mystery. The priesthood controls most aspects of Stygian life, and the limited trade and foreign visits to Stygia have given little insights into the ways of the Stygian people. It is known that they have no inns and taverns, and that Stygians in foreign lands do not eat in the presence of strangers. The Stygians themselves are unwilling to discuss their homeland; those who plan to return seem to fear reprisals for criticisms, while those who do not have no wish to contemplate the place.

One extremely strange (to Hyborian eyes) practice in Stygia is the presence of snakes and hippopotami in the streets and byways of Stygia. These animals are sacred, and it is against Stygian law to injure them in any way. The sight of a hip-

popotamus causes no particular consternation, but at the sight of a serpent (particularly one of the giant constrictor snakes of the Styx river valley), all the Stygians lie down and await its choice. If the snake selects a Stygian for dinner, he is considered "blessed" by the gods. No other will try to save him, and he himself may go quietly into the jaws of the serpent.

Law

There is only one court system in Stygia, covering both civil and ecclesiastical crimes. Punishments are harsh, including mutilation and death; the bodies of executed criminals are allowed to rot, thus denying them the eternal life proffered by Father Set.

Stygian laws are very restrictive. Permits are required to change your place of residence, to travel more than 20 miles from your home, or to own weapons or armor. These permits provide the bureaucracy with a steady source of income and prevent undesirable concentrations of dissidents. Permits are often denied, with no recourse available to those who feel abused. Those who travel without permits are subject to fines, confiscation of goods, and even hamstringing.

Religious crimes are punished even more severely. Fines are applied to those who do not attend services, or who fail to tithe to the temple. Every farmer is required to have his crops blessed by the priests (for a fee, of course); every child must be consecrated to Father Set. Repeated refusal or evasion of temple obligations may bring a citizen up on charges of heresy; the punishment for heresy is death, confiscation of all property, and enslavement for the family.

Religion

Religion in Stygia is dominated by the worship of Father Set. No other religion is tolerated. Temples to other sects are forbidden, and worship of other gods is considered treason. For more details of Set worship, see p. 31.

Armed Forces

Stygian armies tend towards Heavy and Medium Infantry (HI and MI), with some Pikemen (PI) and Light Cavalry (LC), of Average to Seasoned quality. Stygia's military is rarely exercised, and the tradition-bound commanders of her forces have not adapted well to the modern nature of Hyborian warfare. Cavalry is only used for road patrols and messengers, and the Stygians do not subject their populace to the peasant levies so popular in the embattled Hyborian lands.

Language

Stygian is unrelated to most other languages of the West. It has some common vocabulary and structure with the ancient tongues of Khitai, however. Treat Stygian as a Mental/Average language, defaulting to Khitan-5.

Names

Stygian names are Egyptian in form: Amnun, Bahotep, Ctesphon, Hakketh, Heterka, Hotep, Khafra, Khaza, Kutamun, Menemhet, Menkara, Nebekba, Ramwas, Shuat, Siptah, Thoth-Amon, Thothmekri, Thutmekri, Thutothmes, Tothapis, Tuthamon and Zeriti.

Stygian Adventure

Return of Varanghi. The Mitra-worshipping Taians have risen once again against the lords of Khemi, but this time they claim that the Mitraic hero Varanghi, who founded their capital centuries ago, has risen from the grave to fight by their side. Is

Varanghi truly returned from the dead, or is the new "Varanghi" a fraud? And if he is, what is his true purpose — to free Taia, or to crush it?

Turan

Turan is the "new kingdom" of the Hyborian Age; a potent mixing of the hill tribes of Iranistan with the Hyrkanian horse-nomads of the east. Turan's power is felt far outside her nominal borders, and her expansionistic policies challenge all the kingdoms of the West.

Conan first goes to Turan in *Conan the Unconquered*, in which he fights a decadent cult. He joins the Turanian army, and serves for two years, leaving at the time of *Conan and the Spider God*. During those two years, he traveled widely and learned about organized warfare.

Conan returned to Turan several years later at the head of a mercenary band; there he joined the kozaki who raided Turanian outposts, where he stayed until "Shadows in the Moonlight." He quickly returned to this life at the head of a Zuagir band, starting in "A Witch Shall Be Born" and ending in "Black Tears"; another time he led the kozaki and the Red Brotherhood in "The Devil in Iron." Over the several years of his raiding, he earned a reputation for fearsomeness which lasted in Turan to the end of his days.

History

Turan's origins lie in a mystic seer of the Hyrkanian steppe named Tarim. Tarim traveled to the mystic land known only as Pathenia, and there received (according to Turanian doctrine) the revelations of the Pathenian god Erlik. Returning to his clan, he began to preach a holy war of conquest in the name of Erlik against the weaker peoples of the west.

Tarim's brilliant oratory and not-inconsiderable generalship quickly united several of the Hyrkanian clans into an invading horde, which poured against the hill tribes of the southern Vilayet Sea. In the face of this army, these tribes united into the kingdom of Iranistan.

The tribesmen of Iranistan were no match for the Hyrkanian horsemen. Within seven years, the Hyrkanians ruled the entire coast of the Vilayet, from the southern tip to the northernmost port at Rhamdan to the east, and Shahpur to the west.

The Hyrkanians did not devastate their conquest. To these horse-nomads, raised in the barren steppes east of the Vilayet, the comparatively fertile lands around the Vilayet were a fatal temptation. Instead of retaining their horse-nomad ways and disdaining civilization, they moved in as the new rulers of the region, occupying the palaces and wearing the crowns so recently held by their Iranistani opposition. Tarim's strictures of morality and the warrior's life are paid lip service, but are ignored by most Hyrkanians. The lower classes detected little change, except perhaps a new vitality in their leadership and a decrease in the incessant graft.

Turan is a kingdom on the rise. They have adopted some of the customs of their Iranistani servants, and have lost some of the rough tenacity of their horseman heritage, but they are still a powerful force in the West.

Current Affairs

Turan's forces have continued their expansion. Within the last two decades, they have conquered the Zamoran steppe which stands between the Vilayet Sea and the eastern border of Zamora, Khauran, Shem and Stygia. Turan's fortifications now harass these borders, crowding the latter nations. Further ad-

vancement westward risks uniting the Hyborians or the Shemites against Turan, or inciting Stygia to defensive action, and Turan is not yet prepared to fight the combined might of the West.

Friends and Foes

Turan's strong allies are few. The Hyrkanians, of course, still view their relatives as allies, although they have lost some respect for them since they have "softened" to the ways of civilization. The King of Zamora is a virtual vassal of Yezdigerd, while Koth, Brythunia and some Shemitish tribes pay tribute. Aghrapur has also made some advances towards the Stygians, although nothing currently has come of this.

Turan's enemies, on the other hand, are legion. Her imperialistic attitudes and occasional raids of conquest have angered Nemedra, Ophir, Corinthia and Vendhya. Some of Turan's difficulty with Stygia comes from continued Turanian raids on the Taia region.

Geography

Turan occupies a hilly strip of land surrounding the southern edge of the Vilayet Sea, and the desert lands to east and west. To the east, it extends to the edge of the Hyrkanian steppe; to the west, recent conquests have brought its satrapies to border on Zamora, Koth, and Stygia.

Turan is generally dry, with heavy storms in the late fall and winter. The Vilayet is notorious for its sudden storms, as it is a shallow body of water, and easily tossed into a tempest strong enough to capsize the largest ship.

Gazetteer

Aghrapur — the capital of Turan. This large seaport lies on the Ilbars River, across the Vilayet Sea from Rhamdan. In addition to being the capital of Turan, Aghrapur is the primary trading city of Turan, with caravan routes headed west, south, and east (by ship).

Aghrapur is a beautiful city, filled with monuments, palaces and statues. The collective wealth of the Hyrkanians, the traders, and the subject Iranistani have combined to produce a strong rival to the beauty of the western cities of Tarantia, Belverus and Khorshemish.

Akif — a city of Turan.

Colchian Mountains — a minor mountain range south of the Vilayet Sea, extending from Zaporoska in the east along the southern edge of the Vilayet Sea.

Ilbars Mountains — a minor range running through the center of old Iranistan, now marking the border between Iranistan and Turan.

Ilbars River — a river flowing north from the Ilbars Mountains along the western edge of the Misty Mountains. The Ilbars flows into the Vilayet Sea north of the Misty Mountains, at Aghrapur.

Iron Statues, Isle of — a small island in the northern Vilayet Sea. The Isle has ancient ruins, chief of which is a great hall where rows of iron statues stand. The island is reputed to be haunted, and is shunned by the sailors of the Vilayet Sea.

Khawarism — the southernmost western port of Turan.

Kherdipur — a city in northern Turan.

Khorbul — a Turanian stronghold north of Ghulistan.

Khorusan — a city of goldsmiths in western Turan.

Maypur — a city in western Turan, north of Fort Wakla.

Misty Mountains — a mountain range along the western shore of the Vilayet Sea, south of Aghrapur.

Nezwaya — a large river west of the Vilayet Sea in northern Turan.

Rhamdan — a port on the eastern shore of the Vilayet Sea, where the great caravan route from Turan to Khitai begins. Rhamdan lies approximately directly east from Aghrapur; goods are taken by ship west to that city, and from there sold to all the nations of the West.

Samara — a Turanian city.

Secunderam — a large Turanian city on the edge of the Hyrkanian steppe. The region around Secunderam is not part of Turan proper, but is held as a military satrapy with its own military governor.

Shahpur — a Turanian port on the western coast of the Vilayet Sea.

Sultanapur — "the Golden Queen of the Vilayet," a Turanian port on the Vilayet Sea. Sultanapur, like Aghrapur, was developed from an older Zamoran city, long independent from its origins.

Vilayet Sea — a large body of water north of Turan, whose shipping and ports are almost totally controlled by Turan. There is some piracy (see *The Red Brotherhood*, p. 85), and Turanian ships rarely go farther north than Shahpur, but the omnipresence of the Turanian navy gives the Vilayet the reputation of a "Hyrkanian lake."

Wakla, Fort — a fortress at the edge of Shem, where Turanian soldiers defend caravans from the raids of the Zuagir (see *Shem*, p. 78).

Xapur — an island in the Vilayet Sea, where a pre-Hyrkanian race built an ancient city. Xapur is now deserted.

Zamboula — a major trading city of the Turanian desert. Zamboula is a hybrid city, built by Stygians, occupied by Shemites, and ruled by Turan. There are numerous Kushite and Darfar slaves in Zamboula, and the Yoggite cult of Darfar is so strong there, it is considered unsafe to sleep on the city streets.

Zaporoska — a hill-tribe region on the southeastern coast of the Vilayet Sea. The Zaporoskan terrain was sufficiently rugged to make subduing it difficult for the Turanians, and Zaporoska remained effectively independent throughout Conan's time.

Zaporoska River — the main river of Zaporoska. There are many pirate camps along this river, which is navigable for several miles, but Turanian expeditions to exterminate the pirates have often resulted in vanished Turanian ships.

Zhurazi Archipelago — a small archipelago in the Vilayet Sea, consisting of two large islands and several smaller islands, in the southern portion of the Vilayet. The Zhurazi are a favored pirate rendezvous, with many treacherous shallows to dissuade the deep-draft Turanian galleys.

Economy and Loot

Turan produces pearls (from the Vilayet Sea), precious gems, and many kinds of foodstuffs. It is also a major portion of the cross-continental trade route between Khitai and the West.

Mana Level

Turan is a low- to normal-mana area, and Turan makes little use of the mana they have.

Society

The Turanian culture is a hybrid of the independent ways of the Hyrkanian horse-nomads with the older and more decadent civilization of Iranistan. The Turanians have adopted Iranistani titles and administration, but have not accepted the tribal independence which was Iranistan's downfall.

The Turanian leadership is still essentially Hyrkanian, with the characteristic hawk noses, black hair, and light skin. The native tribes are shorter, with brown skin and steely-blue hair.

There has been little time for the two cultures to have mingled, thus preserving this distinctive appearance, and making the Turanian leadership readily identifiable.

Turan is ruled by the King (Status 7); other levels are Shah or Prince (6); Caliph (5); Amir (4); Khan (3); military officer (2); craftsman or merchant (1); commoner or common soldier (0); servant (-1); beggar (-2); bandit, brigand, or thief (-3); slave (-4).

Customs

The kings of Turan are hard taskmasters. They brook no rebellion, and are quick to send in troops to quell any uprising. Should the people take arms against the Hyrkanians, fifty men, women and children are executed for each Turanian soldier killed putting down the rebellion, in addition to any convicted of the crime of treason. These harsh measures, combined with a light hand on those who obey the strictures of the Turanian throne, allow the less-numerous Hyrkanians to maintain their hold upon the hillmen population.

Turan is a culture of the East. Women are veiled, and in more conservative regions are even required to wear the *khalat*, which conceals the entire body. Men wear turbans, sashes and loose-fitting trousers; the favored weapon is the curved blade, or scimitar, and the recurved bow of the Hyrkanians. It is, of course, forbidden for non-Hyrkanians to possess such weapons, unless they are Hyrkanian bodyguards or members of the military.

Law

Turanian law is based on the absolute rights of the Hyrkanian rulers. A commoner who murders a Hyrkanian, even in a fair fight, suffers death by torture; in the reverse, the Hyrkanian slayer may suffer a small fine.

Crimes within a given class are more equitably decided. A system of blood money is used for most civil crimes, including assault. Theft requires the repayment in triple of the value of the lost good plus return or replacement of the item, or else the loss of the offender's right hand. Treason, and crimes against nobles, are of course capital, usually in grimly creative ways.

Religion

The Turanians worship Erlik, as well as the Living Tarim, the prophet who brought them the words of their god (see *Hyborian Religion*, p. 32).

Armed Forces

Turan's regular forces are primarily Light and Medium Cavalry (LC and MC), although some Heavy Cavalry (HC) and Medium Infantry (MI) units have recently formed. All such regular troops are of at least Seasoned quality, and many are Crack or even Elite. When infantry is required, the local peasantry is pressed into Irregular Infantry forces (II), and are forced to fight for the Hyrkanian conquerors.

The Turanian Army

Turan's expansionistic policies and domination of the native hill tribes would be impossible without its well-disciplined army. The army is the mechanism for non-Hyrkanians to improve their lot in Turan.

Turanian officers are promoted from the ranks; there is only slight preference given to the scions of the noble families. All Turanian troops are skilled with the lance, the scimitar and the bow, although not to the extent of the steppe-riding Hyrkanian nomads. Unlike the "fixed" armies of the West, the Turanian

army provides a carefully considered succession of command, so that the death of the commander is at worst a temporary setback.

The army itself is well disciplined (as a general rule), with a specific code of honor which allows it not only to act as Turan's expeditionary arm, but also as the local peacekeeping force, without fomenting active rebellion.

The Turanian navy is not quite so well regarded. The laws of Turan allow the navy to confiscate any ship sailing the Vilayet, by declaring that it "infringes upon the interests of the Turanian Empire." This broad policy discourages other nations from attempting shipping on the Vilayet, particularly when Turan has control of all of the best ports. The navy is thus relegated to policing pirates, and to the looting and raiding which often accompanies such absolute power.

The Red Brotherhood

Turan needs a better navy. The ready availability of ships combined with the uncharted islands and hideaways of the coast make the Vilayet ripe for piracy. The Red Brotherhood, as the pirates are known, comprises foreign ship-captains raided once too often, Turanian naval captains tired of escorting wealthy ship-caravans for meager pay, and others who have fled the indiscriminate raids of the Turanian navy or other Turanian "justice."

The Brotherhood primarily raids the ships which sail across the Vilayet from Aghrapur to Rhamdan and back; these ships contain the wondrous cargoes of the East, and the gold, silver, and copper payment from the West. When such looting is scarce, the Brotherhood smuggles goods across the Vilayet for those unwilling to pay Yezdigerd's excises or to have Turanian authorities know their cargo.

Naval efforts to eliminate the Brotherhood have been worthless. Repeated attempts to hunt the pirates down in their own strongholds have cost Turan ships and captains, but have not deterred the raids. Only strong complements of warships accompanying each fleet keep the treasured cargo from vanishing into the pirate nests.

The Kozaki

If the Red Brotherhood were Yezdigerd's only problem, he might well have solved it by now. Unfortunately, there are also the kozaki, a mixed force of mercenaries, rebel hillmen, and Zuagir nomads who raid Turanian caravans crossing the southern desert.

The kozaki are, however, more easily handled. There are few oases in the desert, and Turan's armies are more than capable of setting a trap. More than once, Turanian cohorts have captured hundreds of kozaki in box-canyons or between two forces, and slaughtered them to the last man. Like the scrub of the desert, however, the kozaki always seem to reform a few years later, with different leaders, but the same aim.

Language

Turanian is the language of the Hyrkanian conquerors; it is Mental/Average, and defaults to Hyrkanian-2.

Low Turanian is the tongue of the hill-tribes of the southern Vilayet. It is in fact a dialect of Iranistani; Mental/Average, defaulting to each other at -3.

Names

Turanian names are Arabic or Turkish in flavor: Abdul, Aram Baksh, Atalis, Bakra, Banaric, Ghurran, Hamar Kur, Hormaz, Jamal, Jelal, Khalid, Mulai, Munthassen, Murad, Shapur, Tavik, Tureg, Vardan, Yezdigerd, Yildiz and Zosara.

Turanian Adventure

Island of Mystery. Strange noises and nocturnal activities have been reported from one of the uninhabited islands in the Vilayet Sea. Is it a pirate stronghold, a ruined pre-human city, or something even more horrible?

Vendhya

Vendhya is Howard's India, a land of ancient gods and jewels.

Conan first visits Vendhya in *Conan the Victorious*. Later, when he is a chief of the Afghulis, he kidnaps the Devi of Vendhya in "People of the Black Circle."



History

Vendhya's history begins during the Cataclysm, when violent earthquakes thrust the uninhabited Vendhyan peninsula against the main portion of the Thurian continent. Whether this collision was the cause of the Cataclysm or merely one of its myriad effects is not known.

In any case, this seismic event had several effects. First, it increased the already steep Himelian Mountains to their modern precipitous heights, and may well have created the kingdom of Meru (see p. 71). Second, it provided a haven for refugees fleeing the Khari domination, in a land the Khari were not even aware existed.

For centuries, these refugees spread across the Vendhyan peninsula, building cities and pastoral villages. Their society remained isolated from the other developing nations, and they lived in relative peace.

Approximately 1,500 years ago, this realm was invaded by an Hyrkanian tribe, the Kshatriyas, who had wandered far beyond their normal range. They arrived at the northeastern edge of Vendhya, near modern Kosala, and conquered city-state after city-state, spreading their domination south and west across the Vendhyan peninsula.

Today, Vendhya is a single kingdom, ruled by a Kshatriyan elite. Only a few minor city-states, grown adept at diminishing themselves in the eyes of their Kshatriyan neighbors, remain governed by the original refugees.

Current Affairs

The Devi Yasmina, sister of the late king, rules Vendhya. Her courtiers continue to pressure her to marry and bear an heir to the throne, but thus far she has resisted their entreaties. As a precaution, however, she has recently named her cousin, Prince Satish, as her rightful heir. Satish is a young man who has shown great diligence as an administrator, but he is easily swayed, and has already attracted a horde of sycophants. Under their influence, Satish has proposed several reforms of the inflated nobility and bureaucracy of Vendhya, horrifying the Devi's counselors. Under Vendhyian law, Yasmina has the right to withdraw her designation, but she is unlikely to do so, and appears to be enjoying the discomfiture of those in her court who had pressed so hard for an heir.

Friends and Foes

Vendhya's primary foe is Turan (which covets Vendhya's wealthy western provinces). The two empires have nearly come to war over the regions east of the Vilayet and west of the Himelians; the Turanians covet Ayodhya and the mines of the Himelians as much as the Vendhyans covet Secunderam and the trade routes to Khitai.

Vendhya's allies are more "enemies of her enemy." Iranistan is on good terms with Vendhya, although the eastern empire hardly considers itself equal with the Iranistani "government in exile." Vendhya has also attempted to encourage Khitan trade, thus bypassing the northern caravan routes, but thus far have not been successful.

Geography

Vendhya is a roughly triangular peninsula lying between Kosala and Khitai, south of the Himelian mountains. Vendhya is tropical, with wide expanses of untamed jungle.

Vendhya is a fertile land, except in the stony regions of the Himelian foothills. Vendhya's agriculture is well-developed, and there is also a thriving industry of silk and woven products, especially carpets. In the north, mines provide copper, silver, gold and iron; the southern coast, however, has poor seaports, making most of Vendhya's trade overland.

Gazetteer

Ayodhya — the capital of Vendhya.

Cho-Hien — a small city-state northeast of Vendhya, not yet conquered by the Kshatriyas. Its leadership is adept at redirecting Vendhyian attentions towards Turan.

Jhelai — a mountainous region of northern Vendhya. Hermits of Asura live ascetic lives in the caves of the region.

Jhunda River — a river in Vendhya between Ayodhya and the Ghulistani/Kosalan border.

Maharashtra — an ancient city of Vendhya. Two thousand years ago, when the Vendhyian king Orissa died, his tomb was sealed with ancient rites and demon guardians, and the city was abandoned. Its location is now lost.

Misty Isles — the islands off the western coast of Vendhya where secret herbs are grown.

Peshkhauri — a city and province in northwestern Vendhya, near the border of Ghulistan.

Uttara Kuru — a city-state not properly part of Vendhya, but falling under Vendhyian influence. Vendhya may well annex Uttara Kuru in the future.

Flora and Fauna

Vendhya's jungles provide a variety of fascinating life.

Elephants, tigers, panthers, cheetahs, gazelles and gorillas can be found, and beautifully colored birds fill the trees. Yaks and oxen wander through the highlands of the north, and some have been domesticated by the hill peoples.

Economy and Loot

Vendhyian products include herbs, spices, sandalwood, jade, mother-of-pearl and other natural substances worked into intricately-carved pieces of distinctive beauty. Vendhya is also the source of several drugs, including various forms of lotus blossom.

Mana Level

Vendhya is a normal- to high-mana region, with only limited exploitation of the magical potentials of the region. Local superstition makes organized study of sorcery unlikely.

Society

Vendhya is a stratified society, much like modern Turan, only older. Heading the kingdom is the ruler/scholar caste, the Brahma, made up of the nobility of the original invading Hyrkanian tribes; below them is warrior caste, or Kshatriyas, also of Hyrkanian descent who rule and serve in the armies; below them lie the craftsmen and townsmen, called Vaisyas, who provided the backbone of the Vendhyian manufacturing economy; and finally, the Sudra, or peasants, the most populous caste. Below all lie the Untouchables, Vendhyans whose lowly birth leaves them with the task of cleaning up garbage and corpses.

In theory, birth determines caste. In practice, over the millennia of the Vendhyian civilization, there has been so much interbreeding that there is little outward distinction between the members of the various castes. All Vendhyans have light brown skin; they tend to be short and stocky, with round heads. The Kshatriyas tend to be more slender than average for a Vendhyian, with a characteristic hooked nose.

The King (male) or Devi (female) rules Vendhya (Status 7); other levels are Rajah (6); Governor (of a province) (5); Kshatriya officer (4); wealthy Vaisya or Kshatriya soldier (3); common Vaisya (2); wealthy Sudra (1); common Sudra (0); servant (-1); beggar (-2); bandit, brigand or slave (-3); Untouchable (-4).

Customs

The Vendhyans are well versed in the arts of treachery and double dealing. It is said that every Vendhyian spies for at least two others, and often for more. Their treacheries, however, are less devious than those of Khitai; the Kshatriyan code of honor remaining from their Hyrkanian origins deplores direct lies, and most Vendhyian deception consists of the "truth not told," or the careful shading of words to give impressions, without actually lying. Spying, per se, is not considered treachery; the Vendhyans themselves know it goes on, and it makes the sharing of a secret all that more meaningful in Vendhya. "The whole truth is a gift for your dearest friend alone," says the Vendhyian proverb.

Religion

Vendhyans worship their own pantheon of gods (see *Hyborian Religion*, p. 33).

Armed Forces

Vendhya uses some Light Cavalry (LC), but their primary force is Infantry (LI, PI, MI, and HI). Troops are Average to Seasoned, as Vendhya's wars are generally of limited duration,

with considerable noble influence and politics involved in the securing of officer's commissions and the command of significant forces. Vendhya uses war elephants.

Language

Vendhyan is a strange mixture of the Hyrkanian tongue with some of the other slave tongues of lost Khitai. Treat it as a Mental/Average language which does not default to any other known language.

Within Vendhya, there are numerous dialects and local languages. Each defaults to the other at -3 (or worse); some local languages are unintelligible unless learned separately.

Names

Vendhyan names are Indian in form: Alyn, Bhunda Chand, Chunder Shan, Gitara, Jharim, Kandar, Karim, Naipal, Orissa, Patil, Punjar, Shahal, Vyndra and Yasmina.

Vendhyan Adventure

Assassins! One of the PCs is attacked by a Katari assassin, and scratched with a poisoned knife. Can the PC and his companions find the murderer (and the antidote) before he dies? Legend has it that a plant which grows on the Misty Isles may yield the cure.

Zamora

"... Zamora with its dark-haired women and towers of spider-haunted mystery..."

— *The Nemedian Chronicles*

Zamora is a mysterious land, a buffer zone between the Hyborian nations of the West and the Hyrkanians of Turan, with a culture which is part of each, and part all its own. Its people are disdained by both sides, and even considered "evil by birth" by the Hyborians.

Zamora is featured in several of the stories of Conan's youth. Zamora is the first "civilized" nation Conan visits, in "The Tower of the Elephant." He leaves again in *Conan and the Sorcerer*, but returns in *Conan the Invincible*. After the events in "The Hall of the Dead," Conan leaves Zamora for over two years, returning only after fleeing Turan at the beginning of *Conan and the Spider God*. He stays in Zamora through "The Bloodstained God."

History

The Zamorans trace their lineage from a pre-Cataclysmic tribe known as the Zhemri, who were coincident with Valusia and may have been inhabitants of the ancient state of Grondar. The Zhemri have inhabited the Kezankian mountain region for over 4,000 years, and view themselves as an equal to the Hyborians or the Hyrkanians.

The Zhemri settlements were untouched by the Cataclysm. This near-miraculous passover left the Zhemri with the highest level of agriculture and civilization in the region.

However, the Zhemri did not pursue their advantage. Instead, they spent most of the pre-Khari millennia in a stagnant hunter-gatherer culture, with only limited agriculture and virtually no exploration.

When the Khari came, the Zhemri began to develop again. By the time the Hyborian invaders came down from the north to conquer Acheron and Hyperborea the Elder, the kingdom of Zamora stood on the far side of the Kezankian mountains, a satrapy of Acheron and the lone survivor of that forgotten age.

The Hyborians invaded Zamora several times, but were unable to gain a foothold in the arid lands. The conquering Hyborians always returned westward, and never remained as rulers for any period of time. The isolating barrier of the Kezankian and Karpash mountain ranges has preserved Zamoran culture from Hyborian influence, maintaining Zamora as a separate enclave with its own strange rules.

Current Affairs

Recently, the Turanians have stretched their control across the desert, and have established a line of caravan forts and oases along the Zamoran border. In the face of such military might, the King of Zamora has all but handed his kingdom to the invaders, paying a beggaring tribute to Aghrapur. The Karpash Mountains which preserved Zamora for centuries now obstruct any hope of Hyborian aid.

Friends and Foes

Zamora's primary ally and dominator is Turan. The shadow of Turanian troops can be seen everywhere these days in Zamora, and the tribute being paid to Aghrapur is bankrupting the country.

Zamora's plight has thus far been ignored by the Hyborians, who remain unconcerned by events outside their own sphere of influence. However, Zamora's repeated pleas have gained King Nemed's attention, and Nemed may soon send troops to support Zamora's independence (and keep the trade road open).

Geography

Zamora is an arid, infertile land. The locals live by herding sheep and cattle, which thrive on the thistly scrub of the region, or by mining for tin, copper and other metals. Despite the number of mines, no gold or silver has been found in Zamora.

Gazetteer

Arenjun — "the City of Thieves" is also Zamora's capital. Arenjun's criminal district, known as the Maul, is renowned through the West for its dangerous streets and alleys.

Larsha — a cursed, ruined city near Shadizar. According to legend, Larsha was built in Cataclysmic times, by the Zhemri predecessors of the modern Zamorans, and the giant kings who



once ruled the city remain within, defending their ancient treasures. In 1257 A.A., King Tiridates of Zamora ordered a company of his bravest warriors into Larsha, to loot these treasures. None of them returned, although screams, sounds of running, and odd slurping noises could be heard by those waiting outside.

Larsha suffered serious damage from an earthquake in 1267 A.A., but such is its reputation that none have ventured within since.

Shadizar — "the Wicked." Shadizar is another city of thieves; its ruler, the Satrap of Shadizar, is enmeshed in the intrigues of his advisors, each of which uses bribery, sorcery and other forms of coercion to attempt to dominate the others. Thus, the Satrapy operates nearly ungoverned, wrapped up in its own internal politics.

Yezud — this city is devoted to the spider-god Zath. Only the priests and servants of the temple are permitted to remain in the city after sunset; those few who live nearby reside in small villages outside the walled city.

Zamindi — a trading city on the road between Shadizar and Yezud.

Mana Level

Zamora is a normal- to low-mana region, with some no-mana sections in the Zamoran desert. Hyborian scholars speculate that the Zamoran desert was magically blasted in the wars of the Cataclysmic period, much like the similar barren regions of Stygia.

Society

The Zamorans are a short, dark-skinned race with dark eyes, jet-black hair, narrow features, and stunted limbs.

The Zamorans have a reputation for cruelty, disloyalty and greed. This reputation is only partially earned. Zamoran attitudes reflect more of self-interest than of the high (but often ignored) ideals of the Hyborians. The people are insular, although the increased trade along the Road of Kings has done much to increase Zamoran contact with the Hyborians and Turanians.

Zamora is ruled by the King (Status 6); other levels are Prince (5); Satrap (4); Lord (of a city) or Knight (3); Patrician, wealthy merchant, or military officer of Rank 6-7 (2); craftsman, merchant or military officer of Rank 3-5 (1); commoner or common soldier (0); servant (-1); beggar (-2); bandit, brigand, or thief (-3); slave (-4).

Law

The nobles are the law in Zamora. Sentences are maiming or death, with all property confiscated by the noble. Appeal to the king is allowed, although sentences are usually carried out quickly enough to make appeals futile.

The police force in Zamora is very weak. There is no concept of an investigation; if the criminal is not caught or identified while committing the crime, it is ignored. Witnesses must come forward on their own, as they are not sought out, and should the accused be found innocent, "court costs" are paid by the accusers. Needless to say, the police are rarely called.

Religion

The Zamorans worship many divinities. Some are local, embodying natural forces or places, such as Zath, the spider-god of Yezud. Others are imported, such as Bel, Shemitish God of Thieves, patron of the city of Arenjun. For details of these cults, see *Hyborian Religion*, pp. 31-35.

Lands of the Hyborian Age

Armed Forces

Zamoran troops are generally of Light (LI) and Medium (MI) strength, and of Average to Seasoned quality. They are primarily employed as road-guards, although those posted to the eastern border have begun to experience frequent raids from Turanian "desert bandits."

Language

Zamoran developed from the tongue of the Zhemri; it is considered Mental/Average, and has no default to any other tongue.

Names

Zamoran names are Middle-Eastern or Greek in tone: Abuletes, Artanes, Atossa, Bartakes, Dinak, Eriakes, Feridun, Harpagus, Hattusas, Hissar, Kagul, Kiliya, Lar, Mandana, Mithridates, Nyssa, Pariskas, Roxana, Rudabeh, Semiramas, Stahir, Tigranes, Tosya, Vardanes, Yara and Yazdates.

Zamoran Adventure

The Ruins of Larsha. Drifting out of Shadizar, the PCs hear rumors of fabulous treasures being discovered in the collapsed ruins of Larsha. Even more inexplicably, the rumors indicate that the evil spell which had protected Larsha since the Cataclysm is gone! Can the PCs get their share before all the thieves in Shadizar have picked Larsha clean?

Zimbabwe

"Legend hinted that the blood-soaked corner-stone of Old Zimbabwe had been laid by the uncanny serpent men . . ."

— *Conan of Aquilonia*

Zimbabwe is the most remote part of the Black Kingdoms.

History

The warriors of Zimbabwe are an offshoot of the Kchaka, a powerful tribe of the interior of the Black Kingdoms. When the Zimbabwans were driven from their homes by a more powerful tribe, they fled east, eventually reaching the ruined city which is now known as Old Zimbabwe. The nearby tribes held the region to be cursed, leaving the city free for the Zimbabwans to inhabit, and build a new city upon the ruins.

For millennia, they fought the giant wyverns which soared over the jungle from cave-lairs in an eastern mountain range. A hero of the tribe, Lumbaba, traveled to the mountains and stole some eggs. He reared the hatchlings, and discovered that they could be tamed and used for riding. This enabled the Zimbabwans to extend their rule over the neighboring tribes and form the present kingdom of Zimbabwe. Lumbaba was immediately elevated to the throne.

Lumbaba was one of a pair of twins, and devoted to his brother. When he announced a revelation from the gods, that henceforth the Zimbabwans would be ruled by twins, no one protested. Since that day, Zimbabwe has been ruled by twin kings selected from all the twin boys in the kingdom.

Current Affairs

The new twin kings of Zimbabwe are Mbega and Nenaunir. Both are young and strong, and have large followings among the citizens of Old Zimbabwe. However, Nenaunir also has connections to some darker religious groups, who wish to place Set (or Damballah, as he is known in this region) on the spiritual throne of Zimbabwe.

Friends and Foes

Zimbabwe's southern location makes alliances with other kingdoms unlikely. They are in contact with the Amazon capital at Gamburu, and have trading agreements with the Shah of Iranistan, but otherwise they remain isolated.

Geography

Zimbabwe is primarily jungle, with savannah toward its southern tip. It is among the hottest of the human countries of the South, with daytime temperatures exceeding 110° during the hottest months. In the spring, the rains turn the northern baked-clay plains into muddy swamps.

Gazetteer

New Zimbabwe — this northern city is best known to northerners, and most believe it to be Zimbabwe's capital. Iranian caravans trading with Zimbabwe generally come to this city, trading weapons and manufactured goods for ostrich quills filled with gold dust.

Old Zimbabwe — the true capital of Zimbabwe. Old Zimbabwe is closed to foreigners, both for religious reasons and to protect the secret of the wyvern-riders, who are barracked here. The city is filled with many tall, doorless, roofless towers where the wyverns are stabled. As these towers can only be entered or left by flying beings, they are secure from the depredations of possible non-flying invaders.

Mana Level

Zimbabwe is a high-mana land. Most of its magic, however, is dedicated to the worship of its many gods, and there is little organized sorcerous study here.

Society

The Zimbabweans are of medium stature; the wyvern-riders are chosen for their small size, but most other Zimbabwean warriors are as tall or even taller than Hyborians.

Zimbabwe's culture is conservative and slow to change, with little day-to-day control of the peoples outside the cities. However, the power of the wyverns of Old Zimbabwe is well-respected, and open rebellion (or even disobedience) is rare.

Zimbabwe is ruled by its twin Kings (Status 4); other levels are Priest (3); Wealthy merchant or wyvern rider (2); craftsman, merchant or military officer (1); common spearman (0); woman or servant (-1); beggar (-2); bandit, brigand, or thief (-3); slave (-4).

Law

Ever since Lumbaba made his pronouncement mandating twin kings, the Zimbabweans have maintained this tradition. To avoid conflicts over the succession, it has become the custom that when one of the pair dies, the other either kills himself or is driven from the kingdom. Afterward, the priests select a new pair of twins from the young men of the kingdom and declare them the new kings.

Religion

The most prevalent deity of Zimbabwe is Damballah, the southern version of Stygia's Set. Damballah's followers carry much political weight in the kingdom, and the new king Nenaunir is a great supporter of the Damballah worshippers. His brother Mbega, on the other hand, supports the gentler deities of the jungles, and is considered more of a moderate.



Armed Forces

Zimbabwean wyvern-riders are considered Heavy Cavalry (HC) of Crack quality, with the additional capability that they can be used in sieges. The remainder of Zimbabwe's military is composed of Light Infantry (LI) of Seasoned quality, armed with spears and shields.

Language

Zimbabwean is considered a Mental/Average tongue, as it carries many complexities unknown in the less established Black Kingdoms. It is a dialect of the other Black Kingdoms languages, however: treat it defaulting to any Black Kingdoms dialect at -5.

Names

There are few true Zimbabwean names in the saga: Lumbaba, Mbega, Mkwana, Nenaunir. Other Black Kingdoms names would also be appropriate.

Zimbabwean Adventure

The Serpent and the Wyvern. The PCs are hired to guard a caravan visiting the city of New Zimbabwe. While there, they discover that the Damballah worshippers who are influencing King Nenaunir are secretly agents of Stygia. Can they stop the Stygians from gaining control of Zimbabwe, and with them their terrible aerial weapon?

Zingara

"His armor and garments were rich and ornate after the fashion of a Zingaran grandee."

— *The Pool of the Black One*

Zingara is one of the most advanced of the nations of the Hyborian Age, with considerable technological and cultural sophistication.

Zingara is only featured in two Conan stories: *Conan: The Road of Kings* and *Conan the Buccaneer*. Zingaran characters also play a significant role in "The Treasure of Tranicos."

History

Two thousand years after the Cataclysm, a wandering tribe of Shemite primitives established an agricultural civilization in the broad Valley of Zingg, south of the Pictish Wilderness. Their culture developed from their access to more fertile ground, and from their relative isolation from the warlike tribes which surrounded them.

These primitives remained isolated for several hundred years. Then a tribe of Picts wandered through the mountain passes which separated them from the Valley of Zingg, and conquered the pastoral Shemites. The two peoples mixed for a time, and were then conquered again, this time by a wandering band of Hybori. From this melting pot blossomed the modern kingdom of Zingara.

The Zingarans quickly spread south and west, conquering the lesser tribes which inhabited the arid south of the Zingaran peninsula. They also traveled east, but quickly encountered the Shemitish tribes who would become the Pelishti, and were repulsed.

Zingara benefited greatly from Hyborian influence. In addition to the expansionist nature of the Hybori, they also learned the feudal system, and quickly consolidated their territorial gains into a powerful feudal nation. With their growth east blocked by the Pelishti, and the powerful Pictish tribes to the north, the Zingarans continued their expansion by building ships and sailing the Western Ocean.

Zingara is now master of the Western Ocean. Only the upstart Argos challenges their claim to shipping from the forests of the Pictish Wilderness to Meroe in Kush.

Current Affairs

The Zingarans are watching Conan's rise to power with concern. They are not a strong land power, and Aquilonia has attempted wars of conquest before. A barbarian on the throne of Aquilonia could mean a resumption of the Hyborian expansion, and Zingara (along with the Pictish Wilderness) is a likely target.

Friends and Foes

Zingara has few allies. Their haughty manner and domination of the sea have made them few friends, although their privateer captains have made all the coastal nations respectful.

Her chief adversary and rival is Argos. The Zingarans blame Argos for the current rash of pirate activity, and see the Argosians as "cutting in" on their shipping.

Geography

Northern Zingara is mountainous, with particularly tall peaks running along its northern border. Southern Zingara is a broad, rolling plain, barren and dry in the winter and early spring but fertile and flourishing in the summer.

The eastern border of Zingara is marked by a ghoulish-infested forest (see *Hyborian Bestiary*, p. 27), in the center of which is a ruined city. These ghouls were long considered to be a nuisance, but they have slowed Argosian advance along the Zingaran "panhandle," and the Zingarans have made no recent efforts to eliminate them.

Gazetteer

Guarralid — a duchy in Zingara.

Jerida — a city in Zingara.

Kordava — the capital of Zingara. Kordava sits at the mouth of the Black River, and has one of the finest harbors on the Western Ocean.

Mana Level

Zingara is a normal-mana region, except for the eastern ghoulish forests, which are high mana.

Society

Zingara shares much of Hyborian society, including Nemedia's haughtiness and Aquilonia's strong feelings of independence. The Zingarans are only part-Hyborian, with swarthy skins, dark hair and eyes, and medium builds.

Zingara is ruled by the King (Status 7); other levels are Prince (6); Count (5); Baron (4); Mayor (of a city) or Knight (3); Patrician, wealthy merchant, privateer captain, or military officer of Rank 6-7 (2); craftsman, merchant or military officer of Rank 3-5 (1); commoner or common soldier (0); servant (-1); beggar (-2); bandit, brigand, or thief (-3); slave (-4).

Customs

Zingaran pride and independence has made it a very fractious nation. Internal problems, dissensions, and even civil wars have long prevented Zingara from eliminating her enemies and once more ruling the Western Ocean.

Law

In theory, the law comes from the king, much as in Aquilonia. In practice, each noble makes his own justice, and unless an important noble or commoner is involved, the king ignores it.

Executions are by hanging (for commoners) or beheading (for nobles). Commoners can also be mutilated (hands removed, etc.) for crimes, while nobles can at worst be fined and (for the most serious crimes) exiled.

Religion

The Zingarans are half-hearted Mitra worshippers. Their devotion is not as strong as in Aquilonia, but their isolation has made it difficult for other faiths to gain a foothold.

Armed Forces

The Zingaran king's forces are Heavy and Medium Cavalry (HC and MC) and Heavy Infantry (HI). Most nobles also maintain a sizable force of Medium troops, which may or may not be available for the king's use, depending upon the status of the province at the time. Privateers are Light Infantry (LI).

Language

Zingaran is only slightly related to the other Hyborian languages. Treat it as Mental/Average, with no defaults.

Names

Zingaran names are fractured Spanish in form: Avvinti, Carico, Chabela, Cratos, Destandasi, Ferdrugo, Galbro, Gebel-
lez, Godrigo, Gonzalvio, Julio, Kapellez, Korst, Marco, Mor-
dermi, Murzio, Rimanendo, Rinnova, Sancha, Sandokazi,
Santiddio, Shevatas, Valbroso, Valenso, Valerio, Vancho,
Velio, Zapayo, Zaporavo, Zarallo, Zarono and Zingelito.

Zingaran Adventure

Rebellion. Once again, rebellion is brewing. King Ferdrugo is attempting to maintain order, but the northern nobles have allied together, and are trying to split Zingara in half. Worse, Ferdrugo's daughter Chabela has been kidnapped, and the nobles threaten to put her to the sword if Ferdrugo does not renounce his crown and surrender the city of Kordava to the rebels. Can the heroes save Chabela before Kordava falls?

THE CONAN CAMPAIGN

6

Running a Hyborian Campaign

This section is for the GM planning a *GURPS Conan* campaign, though players may read it as well. Even if you have as yet read nothing from the Conan saga — all the stories are certainly recommended for the serious GM — this section will help you create a campaign with the flavor of the Hyborian Age.

Campaign Settings

Most *GURPS Conan* campaigns will be set in the Hyborian West, during the struggle between the Hyborians of Aquilonia, Nemedia, and Koth, and the Hyrkanians of Turan. Other ideas include an Eastern campaign about the political intrigues of Vendhya and Khitai; a kozaki campaign with the adventurers



Rewriting History

While the Conan history presented in this book is firmly fixed, your campaign does not have to be. If you like, you can present your players with an alternative history. This can be especially handy if your players know *too much* about the Hyborian Age and abuse that knowledge.

What would have happened if Conan had died during one of his early adventures? Would one of the world-conquering schemes he thwarted have succeeded, throwing the social order into chaos? Would the Sons of Yezm now dominate the East?

What if Bêlit had not died in the City of the Winged One? Might Conan and Bêlit now be ruling a new kingdom in the South, challenging Stygia and Shem? Might they have seized control of the Barachas, and be ruling as pirate king and queen over the entire Western Ocean?

What if any of the myriad failed rebellions had succeeded, placing a better (or worse) ruler on the throne of one of the Hyborian nations? How would that country have changed under the ministrations of a different ruler? Koth, Nemedia and Aquilonia might all be very different places if recent rulers had been other than who they are.

What if Thoth-Amon had not lost his Ring (PSW) and had remained head of the Black Ring of Stygia during those lost years? Would the questing coils of Set dominate the South? Would the Hyborian nations be involved in a defensive war to stop the Stygians from ruling the West? Or would other groups of sorcerers be battling over the spoils?

Rewriting history makes it extremely easy to keep the players off balance. The biggest disadvantage is that you will not be able to play off "future" events described in the books. Without Conan to stop them, many of the menaces in his stories would have had devastating effects on Hyborian civilization. Other problems, precipitated by Conan's own actions, might never have arisen. When you make changes in the saga, keep these historical and motivational problems in mind.

either raiding bandits, noble resistance against the Turanian invaders or a little of both; or a Westermarck campaign, with the adventurers staunch defenders of the Aquilonian frontier against the strange powers of the Picts.

Depending upon the group's playing style, PCs may involve themselves in the political and military intrigues of the changing West, either as mercenaries (as Conan himself was) or as agents of one or another of the powers of the Hyborian Age. Alternatively, the campaign may feature exploration of the trackless jungles of the Black Kingdoms, the ruin-dotted deserts of Shem, Zamora or Hyrkana, or the ancient Eastern civilizations of Vendhya and Khitai. It may involve the ancient mystical battles between Mitra and Set, leaders of the spiritual forces of light and darkness, or the bizarre magical remnants of the Atlantean, Thurian or Khari civilizations.

Some campaigns may feature "realistic" adventures, with magic subdued (or entirely absent). Others may involve the hidden magical world lurking just beyond civilization's edge. Conan's saga encompasses all these kinds of stories — and more.

Campaign Style

Most of the Conan saga deals with Conan's adventures. They primarily involve warfare and thievery, with occasional detours to thwart some evil wizard's plan. If this sounds like a stereotypical fantasy gaming adventure, it is only because the original fantasy roleplaying games owe a *great deal* to the Conan stories.

Within this general framework, however, many different adventure styles are possible.

Loot and Blood

The characters are pirates. They may be members of the Red Brotherhood on the Vilayet Sea, Barathan pirates on the Western Ocean, or Argossean or Zingaran privateers. All should be from the same ship, and at least one PC should have captain's rank (for privateers) or be able to defend the captaincy from his fellow pirates. Ally Groups make excellent pirate crews.

Adventures: Pirate adventures need not be solely pillaging expeditions. The pirates can discover unknown islands, become involved in the politics of the northern coast, or even engage in legitimate trade with Kush or the Picts.

References: "Queen of the Black Coast"; *Conan the Rebel*; "The Road of the Eagles"; "The Gem in the Tower"; "The Pool of the Black One"; *Conan the Buccaneer*; and "The Treasure of Trancos."

Brothers in Arms

The characters are all members of the same military unit or mercenary band. PCs should be skilled warriors, though a few administrator types probably would be useful as well (at least one should probably hold high military rank).

Adventures: The PCs might be on garrison duty — which can be boring, but there are always murders, brawls, thefts and minor disturbances which will need to be investigated. They could be a mercenary band in the embattled city-states of Shem, a Turanian guard-outpost monitoring the Zuagir tribesmen or Aquilonian border rangers defending the Westermarck from the Picts. This campaign can emphasize large troop engagements, or it can focus on the small-force raiding common along embattled borders. If the players aren't interested in mass battles, perhaps another campaign type would be more suitable.

As a "turnabout" adventure, the PCs could be a small raiding force trying to infiltrate past a larger military force. This gives them a "Pict's eye" view of the problem of a hostile military force.

References: Many Conan stories deal with military life and action. All the Turanian military stories from "The Hand of Nergal" through "The Curse of the Monolith"; *Conan the Triumphant*; "The Snout in the Dark"; "Black Colossus"; *Conan the Renegade*; "A Witch Shall Be Born"; *Conan the Marauder*; and all the Aquilonian stories from "Beyond the Black River" through *Conan the Conqueror* can be examined for adventure ideas and information about the militaries of the nations of the Hyborian Age.

Trailblazers

The characters can come from practically any background or location, because they are always heading for somewhere else. They might be Hyrkanian nomads "discovering" the civilized West, or Hyborians traveling in the opposite direction. Hyborians could also be exploring the uncharted jungles of the Black Kingdoms. They may live for danger, the thrill of discovery, the desire to help others, or just the desire for easy money — which always seems to involve hard work.

Adventures: Any sort of "stranger in a strange land" or exploration adventure is possible. Almost any campaign where the PCs travel a lot is going to have some aspect of this campaign type. This campaign could be given a military background by making the PCs a scouting party charged with exploring an uncharted territory (perhaps Cimmeria, Pictland, Hyrkania or the Black Kingdoms).

References: Conan had many adventures of discovery, although they usually resembled naked flight into the wilderness rather than a well-planned expedition. Such adventures include *Conan the Victorious*; "The City of Skulls"; "The Curse of the Monolith"; "The Lair of the Ice Worm"; "The Castle of Terror"; "The Road of the Eagles"; "Black Tears"; "The Flame Knife"; *Conan the Marauder*; "The Slithering Shadow"; "Red Nails"; "The Treasure of Trancos"; "The Return of Conan"; "Red Moon of Zembabwei"; "Shadows in the Skull"; and *Conan of the Isles*.



Money in Hyboria

There are many kinds of coin in use in the Hyborian Age. Each country (and in some countries, each individual noble house) produces its own coinage.

The basic Hyborian coin is the Aquilonian silver penny, worth \$1; there are 50 silver pennies to the pound. The Aquilonian gold noble weighs approximately the same amount, but is worth \$20; a copper farthing is produced, but it is only worth \$0.10.

Other countries have different coinage. These can usually be traded freely with Aquilonian coinage on a fairly standard exchange rate; for example, the Nemedian Golden Dragon is worth 5 Aquilonian gold nobles. GMs who wish to introduce more realism (and to remove wealth from the PCs) may apply "money-changing" rates of 2% to 5% to convert foreign coinage into its local equivalents.

Gems and jewelry provide a more portable way of carrying wealth. Ornate jewelry pieces are sometimes pried apart so that the stones may be sold separately.

This monetary system is not realistic — gold was always worth more than this historically. However, it fits into the heroic tradition of a pouch of gold on every hero's belt, and works well for a cinematic campaign. Those GMs running realistic campaigns may wish to use the coinage system described on p. B212. They should not, however, increase the starting wealth — \$1,000 (in whatever coinage) should always be used.

When a woman marries, her husband will expect her to bring a "dowry" — her contribution, in lands, goods and money, to the new household. A customary dowry is equal to four months' cost of maintenance for the bride's social status.

In case of divorce, the wife's dowry must be returned. She will probably receive more, but the dowry is the absolute minimum, regardless of the cause of divorce.

Ransom

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

Playing Conan

Conan offers special attractions as a character in a roleplaying game. He is the definitive sword-and-sorcery hero; strong, brave and always successful. Along with Tolkien's Aragorn, Lieber's Fafhrd, and Moorcock's Elric, Conan is the basis for innumerable warrior characters in games, films and books.

Playing Conan also has special problems. For one thing, Conan is very powerful. Even as a youth in Shadizar, Conan is a 200-point character. Thus, Conan is more appropriate to a "cinematic" campaign than a "realistic" one (see p. B183). Although in many ways the "cinematic" style is true to Howard's vision, the GM may not be comfortable with it.

Also, to remain true to Howard's vision, Conan has a destiny. Playing a character who is guaranteed to be King of Aquilonia makes the usual threats (such as death) rather unthreatening. He can't die, be maimed, or lost forever, and (as you will note in the bibliography) he has a very busy schedule with his already published adventures.

One way to handle this destiny is to ignore it. Begin playing Conan at a certain point in his life, and thereafter ignore his published future. By relieving Conan of his destiny, he has the same chance of failing as any other character. This allows you to use Conan as a player character, but loses much of the published history which can provide adventure ideas.

You could give Conan his destiny, but make him a non-player character. This leaves each player with the same risks and rewards, and at the same time leaves the documented adventures of the Cimmerian as a campaign background. Many of Conan's adventures had far-reaching consequences, which might easily involve other adventurers.

One campaign option is for the PCs to be allies and fellow-adventurers with the Cimmerian, with Conan himself as an NPC. If Conan is their Patron or Ally, he might save them on occasion; if not, they'll be on their own.

Conan in Solo Adventures

Conan seems made for solo adventuring. Although he had occasional companions, Conan was mostly a loner. Howard's stories provide exciting opponents for Conan, and wonderful situations for solo play. Steve Jackson Games has published two Conan solo adventures — *Beyond Thunder River* and *Queen of the Black Coast* — and more are planned. You can, of course, create your own.

Honor Among Thieves

The characters are thieves in one of the large cities, possibly Aghrapur, Shadizar, Belverus, Tarantia or Khorshemish. They rob from the rich and keep it for themselves. Thieves need not be utterly despicable. They can have hearts of gold, stealing only from those who can afford it.

Adventures: Virtually any kind of thievery can be the source for excitement and adventure. Burglarizing a wizard's tower can be very exciting! In the saga, such thefts were often "on commission," allowing itinerant thieves to become involved in the machinations of their "betters."

References: "The Tower of the Elephant"; *Conan and the Sorcerer*; *Conan the Magnificent*; "The Hall of the Dead"; "The God in the Bowl"; "Rogues in the House"; "The Bloodstained God"; *Conan the Raider*; "Jewels of Gwahlur"; and "The Ivory Goddess."

Spies, Spies, All Spies!

PCs in campaigns of this type are spies serving one or another faction of the Hyborian Age. This may be the government of some kingdom (represented in the person of the kingdom spymaster), or a political or mercantile faction within a single kingdom. The characters would all have some warrior and thieving skills, and could perform their missions as either trusted agents, mercenary rogues or sword fodder in the intrigues of Hyborian Age espionage.

The advantage to this kind of campaign is that the spies usually work with limited direction, making them more the masters of their own destiny than in other organization-based campaigns. The disadvantage is that the spy business is extremely dangerous, and the heroes' lives are likely to be exciting but short.

Adventures: Assassinations, thefts, revolts, corruption and graft are the meat and potatoes of this kind of campaign. If the players are interested, considerable espionage is involved in preparing for Hyborian war.

References: *Conan and the Sorcerer*; *Conan the Mercenary*; *Conan: The Sword of Skelos*; *Conan the Warlord*; *Conan the Valiant*; "The Snout in the Dark"; and *Conan the Buccaneer*.

Nobles

The PCs are princes, counts, barons and others involved in the cutthroat world of Hyborian politics. Their responsibilities stem from their holdings. This campaign type can also grow out of an "Army" campaign (when the characters get what they deserve).

Adventures: Espionage adventures are suitable here — although the heroes may well be the victims, as opposed to the aggressors. In addition, political upheavals, civil uprisings, nasty neighbors and border clashes can make for exciting roleplaying adventures and detailed military campaigns.

References: Any of the rebellion tales beginning with *Conan the Liberator*.

Down with Conan!

In this turnabout campaign, the PCs are members of the Aquilonian nobility opposed to the barbarian usurper. Their opposition can range from "malicious obedience" up through a full-scale rebellion. Obviously, to prevent the rebels from being continually crushed, the GM will have to abandon Conan's "script immunity" for this campaign to succeed, but there are few opponents in literature more challenging.

Adventures: Any of the adventures appropriate for a "Spies," "Nobles," or "Army" campaign are appropriate for opposing Conan, depending upon the tastes of the player group and the GM. Of course, should the PCs fail, this can become a campaign of almost any other type!

HYBORIAN MAGIC

Magic in the Hyborian Age is a rare and marvelous thing. Cities have at most a few publicly-known mages, and the concept of the trade-wizard is unknown. Wizards often rule through fear and intimidation, or from behind the scenes through a puppet ruler.

Because magic is so rare, and because its practitioners are so often evil in the stories, we recommend a *secret magic* campaign, in which ordinary folk may know only a very few simple spells. Monsters can have magical powers, and NPCs can (of course) possess great knowledge of the secrets of sorcery. GMs can be somewhat arbitrary about the use of magic.

Secret magic campaigns use the rules for magic on pp. B146-154. The GM should select a few spells available to the PCs (a suggested list is provided in the sidebar), and improvise more powerful NPC magic where necessary.

Of course, it is possible for a secret magic campaign to become a *full magic* campaign, in which the PCs (and many of their foes) will have a wide array of magical powers. The PCs can learn new spells, either by seeing them used or by raiding the libraries of their foes. At some point in this progression, the GM will probably want the *GURPS Magic* book.

The Nature of Magic in the Hyborian Age

The lands of the Hyborian Age are primarily normal-mana areas (see sidebar, p. B147). Only mages can cast spells, and all spells work normally.

Magical knowledge is hoarded. There are no "wizard's guilds" or other organized purveyors of information. The secret societies (such as the Black Ring) are dominated by a few powerful sorcerers; most lower servants are only given scraps of the magical knowledge.

One exception to this general rule is the wizard's schools of Khitai. The Scarlet Circle maintains a school for the training of wizards which possesses a substantial number of spells. The most potent sorceries, of course, are unavailable to the students. The school is both extremely expensive and rather dangerous, but to some it may be worth the risk.

In addition to the tuition (which often must be paid in ancient Khari artifacts rather than money) and the usual rigors of a medieval education, the schools of Khitai insist that their students join and serve the Scarlet Circle. Thus, although some of the finest wizards in the world come from Khitai, they are rarely trusted. They often have secret political or religious agendas of their own regardless of the policies of their hosts.

Adapting Magic to the Hyborian Age

The following spells, described in the *GURPS Basic Set* and *GURPS Magic*, are appropriate to the Hyborian Age, and are therefore available to spell casters in a *GURPS Conan* campaign. Other spells from *GURPS Magic* are less typical of those cast in the Conan saga, but may be allowed at the GM's discretion.

Where spells have prerequisites which are not available, the GM may ignore the prerequisite or enforce a different requirement at his option.

Animal, Body Control, Enchantment, Knowledge, Light and Darkness, Meta, Mind Control, Movement, Necromantic, Plant, and Sound Spells

All the spells of these colleges are available to *GURPS Conan* spell casters.

Campaign Period

Hyborian campaigns can be set in any of several different periods, depending upon whether Conan is to be a player character, and how closely the referee wishes to follow the books.

Campaigns can be set in the time of Conan's wanderings; i.e., anywhere from 1264 A.A. to 1288 A.A. Such a campaign is perfect for those who want to play Conan, or who wish to extract their campaign history from the published stories. This period is well documented (at least as far as Conan's life is concerned), and many exciting historical events can be used to add verisimilitude to your campaign. Unfortunately, such a campaign may be too predictable, especially if the players are avid Conan fans.

A second campaign concept involves starting the adventures during or after Conan's rebellion, i.e. 1288-1290 A.A. Except for a few stories, most of this portion of Conan's life is undocumented. Thus, the GM has much more freedom to create dramatic new campaign events (such as wars, famines, etc.), and can still use Conan as a non-player character.

Of course, campaigns can be run before or after Conan's life, although the GM will have more work to do. Possibilities include a Turanian campaign covering the years of the Hyrkanian invasions and a post-Conan campaign at the time of the fall of Aquilonia. Note that in a post-Conan campaign, some or all of the PCs could be Conan's descendants.

Suggested Spell List for Secret Magic Campaigns

The following spells are described in the *GURPS Basic Set*, pp. B155-164.

Animal Spells: Beast-Soother.

Communication and Empathy Spells: Sense Life, Sense Foes, Sense Emotion.

Healing Spells: Lend Strength, Lend Health.

Knowledge Spells: Detect Magic, Aura, Seeker.

Light and Darkness Spells: Light, Continual Light, Flash, Darkness.

Mind Control Spells: Fear.

In addition, if *GURPS Magic* is available, the following spells are recommended:

Animal Spells: Master.

Illusion and Creation Spells: Simple Illusion, Complex Illusion, Know Illusion.

Protection and Warning Spells: Shield, Armor, Sense Danger.

Sound Spells: Sound, Voices.



Hyborian Psionics

Robert E. Howard formed his ideas and wrote before the modern concept of psionics had evolved. Psi powers are simply not a part of his picture of the Hyborian world. Since psionics is treated in the *GURPS Basic Set*, some allowance for it must be made, but any use of psionics or psionically-gifted characters must have the prior approval of the GM!

A hazard of any psionic use in the Hyborian age is that it will be assumed to be magic. Ordinary people will react as they would to any other wizard, usually with fearful respect and a strong desire not to get involved. Real wizards are liable to resent an interloper and loose their entire arsenal of infernal devices. See p. B170 for rules on direct interactions of magic and psionics.

Telepathy is the only psionic power that appears in the saga, and that only peripherally. Nagas (see p. 25) communicate by telepathy and the Cobra Crown (see p. 100) acts as a telepathic amplifier. Some wizardly powers might be cleverly used telepathy rather than actual magic.

Food Spells and Making and Breaking Spells

None of these spells are available to *GURPS Conan* spell casters.

Communication and Empathy Spells

All of the spells of this college are available except Telepathy, Permanent Possession and Exchange Bodies. Note that if both subjects cast Mind-Sending, Telepathy can be simulated, although only at talking speed.

Elemental Spells

The four elemental colleges (Earth, Air, Fire and Water) all provide the ability to create, summon and control elementals. Such beings appear only rarely in the stories, and when they do, they are generally pre-existing. Thus, Hyborian sorcerers can learn (and cast) Control Elemental and Summon Elemental, but Create Elemental is not available.

Earth Spells

All the Earth spells except Body of Stone, Create Elemental, Earth to Air, Stone to Earth, Stone to Flesh, Stone Missile, Volcano and Walk Through Earth are available to *GURPS Conan* spell casters.

Air Spells

All the Air spells from *GURPS Magic* except Breathe Water, Create Elemental, Lightning, Whirlwind and Windstorm are available.

Fire Spells

Only Cold, Control Elemental, Extinguish Fire, Heat, Ignite Fire, Phantom Flame, Shape Fire and Summon Elemental are available.

Water Spells

Only Control Elemental, Create Water, Dehydrate, Fog, Frost, Hail, Purify Water, Seek Water, Shape Water, Summon Elemental and Walk on Water are available to *GURPS Conan* spell casters.

Healing Spells

Healing spells are very rare in the Hyborian Age. Only the spells in the *GURPS Basic Set* are available; none of the other healing spells from *GURPS Magic* even exist!

Illusion and Creation Spells

All Illusion spells of this college are available, but none of the Creation spells are.

Protection and Warning Spells

All spells except Force Dome and Utter Dome are available from this college.

The Book of Skelos

The Book of Skelos is the great mystical tome of the Hyborian age. It contains the history of the Cataclysm mixed with sorcerous knowledge, prophecy, descriptions of other planes and seemingly insane ravings.

According to legend, the Book of Skelos was written by a blind Valusian seer named Vathelos in the days following the Cataclysm. Among other things, it tells of the Black Seers of Yimsha, the rituals of the ancient Heart of Ahriman, and the powers of the Hand of Nergal. What else it may tell of is a mystery, as only three complete, authentic copies of the Book are known to exist. One lies in a sealed vault beneath King Conan's palace in Tarantia, a second is a relic on an altar to Katari in Vendhya, and the third is in the possession of the wizard Thoth-Amon.

Partial copies abound, however. Various scholars have translated the Book over the millennia, although most omitted at least some passages for the reader's safety and their own sanity. A much-abridged translation with many inaccuracies was disseminated in the Empire of Acheron, and it is this version most commonly referred to by all but the most erudite (and fortunate) of scholars.

Several spells are contained within the pages of the Book of Skelos. A few of these are described below.

Inulnerability

Enchantment

This spell makes the subject's body regenerate from injury at a rate of 1 HT per hour. Injuries caused by fire do not regenerate; dismemberment regenerates very slowly (1 month per body part removed).

Note that in order to use this spell, the caster must first place the subject's soul inside a Soul Jar (p. M64).

Cost: 5,000.

Duration: Permanent.

Prerequisites: Regeneration, Soul Jar, Magery 3.

Simulacrum (VII)

Enchantment

This spell allows the caster to create a stone golem in the exact image of a particular victim. The golem must be prepared for a specific target; this requires either a critical success on a

Shape Earth (see p. B156) roll, or a critical success at Sculpting — the caster need not create the body. The caster must also put some of the original's body (nail parings, hair, blood, etc.) into the creation.

This golem is ST 20, DX 11, HT 14/30, IQ 10. Speed 6, Dodge 6, PD 2, DR 4. Weight 200 lbs., size 1. It can strike with its fist for 2d-1 damage, or use weapons at a skill equal to its DX. Simulacra cannot cast spells.

Once the simulacrum is activated, it takes on the persona of its "victim." However, unlike the original, the simulacrum is under the direct control of the sorcerer who activated it (like any other golem).

The simulacrum does not have all the knowledge of its original; it only knows what the caster knows about the original. Thus, the simulacrum will not know secret passwords, etc. which the original knew unless the caster knows them, too. More common knowledge (names of relatives, etc.) may require an IQ roll for the caster (GM's discretion).

Time to build body: 4 weeks of work; 200 lbs. of stone; critical Shape Earth or Sculpting roll.

Cost to activate: 800.

Prerequisites: Golem, Magery 3.

The Z'thoum Ritual (VII)

Enchantment

This great ritual is designed to protect the holy sanctuaries and treasures of the serpent people. It must be cast over a treasure sepulchre or altar.

When this ritual is cast, it protects the temple and treasures with a powerful curse. Any non-believer who touches the altar or the treasures, or who even enters the sanctuary, will bring the guardian of the temple to life (see *Walking Idols*, p. 27). The Walking Idol will pursue the invaders and destroy them.

This spell can be evaded by using Suspend Enchantment (p. M38). Entering the protected temple while the Z'thoum Ritual is suppressed will not activate the Walking Idol. Cost to suspend the Z'thoum Ritual is 50.

Cost: 1,600.

Duration: Permanent.

Prerequisites: Golem, Mind-Search, Magery 3.

Sorceries of the Black Ring of Stygia

The Stygians are the last remnant of the sorcerously powerful Khari. Many of the ancient magics of Acheron and of the now-lost serpent people of Valusia are still concealed among the crumbling hieroglyphic scrolls of the tombs of Stygia.

Burning Death

Regular; Resisted by HT

This spell causes the victim to burn from within. The subject takes 1d-1 damage per turn from the effects of the spell unless a HT roll is made. The caster must concentrate while maintaining this spell.

Cost: 4 to cast; 3 to maintain.

Duration: 1 turn.

Prerequisites: Heat, Magery 2.

Item: Staff, wand, or jewelry. Energy costs to create: 600; item must include a ruby worth \$500.

Crystal of Communication

Enchantment

This magical device is created by enchanting a large crystal or mirror. A small piece of the crystal is then broken off; anyone holding the small piece of crystal can mentally "call" the larger

portion, allowing the caller and the holder of the larger crystal (who must be expecting the call) to communicate. Each party can see an image of the other, and they can converse normally. Magic spells cannot be cast through the Crystal, nor can pictures or material items be sent. If either crystal is broken, the item becomes useless.

Cost to create: 1,200.

Cost to activate: 4 to activate, 2 to maintain.

Duration: 1 minute.

Prerequisites: Homunculus, Magery 3.

Dust of Flame

The Khari alchemists developed a white, sparkling powder which exploded with great force and threw up a huge wall of flame. Fire must be applied to light the powder; however, it is volatile, and may spontaneously combust. Roll vs. the maker's skill each day; a failed roll means the powder explodes on its own.

The Khari used the powder as a trap. They enchanted it with an Ignite Fire spell, Linked (see p. M55) to some event (such as

disturbing the powder). When the event occurred, the Ignite Fire went off, lighting the powder and causing a tremendous explosion.

Four weeks and \$4,000 worth of materials per pound are required to make a batch of the dust. Explosive damage is 6d×4 per pound; the flames go four yards in the air and burn for two seconds. The flames do 4d burn damage per second to anything in the flame.

Homunculus

Enchantment

This spell allows the caster to grow a fetal-like image from his own flesh. This image, called a homunculus, has ST 1, HT 1, DX 0, and no IQ. It must be maintained inside a glass bottle, and fed at least 1 ST worth of human blood each day to remain alive.

Whenever he wishes, the caster can move his spirit into the homunculus, no matter how far away it is (as per the Possession spell on p. M27). He can then observe and communicate with anyone who is in the homunculus' presence. The caster cannot, however, cast magic from the homunculus, nor can the homunculus perform any physical action (it is trapped inside the bottle). The caster can return to his own body at will.

If a hostile mage gains possession of a live homunculus, he can cast Communication and Empathy spells at the homunculus' creator at no range cost! The enchanter also suffers a -5 on all resistance rolls against such spells cast via the homunculus. A homunculus is thus a great vulnerability, and is only given to the most trusted of servants.

Cost to create: 800.

Mysteries of Mount Yimsha

The Black Seers of Mount Yimsha are one of the oldest continuously existing groups of mages in the world. They live in the Himalian mountains, in the region known as Ghulistan.

Their magics are most clearly revealed in the story "The People of the Black Circle."

Carpet of Yimsha

Area

This spell allows a caster to fly all persons in the area of effect in the form of a giant, swirling conical crimson cloud. The cloud has Move 10. The caster can choose which persons to pick up, and which to leave behind.

Those within the cloud are insubstantial, and cannot be injured by weapons, nor can they fire missiles or cast spells out of the cloud. However, the cloud cannot penetrate solid objects.

Base Cost: 8 to cast, 4 to maintain.

Duration: 10 seconds.

Time to cast: 3 seconds.

Prerequisites: Body of Air, Flight.

Evisceration (VH)

Regular; Resisted by HT + Will

This spell allows a caster to telekinetically withdraw a vital organ from the subject, leaving an ugly hole and probably killing the subject.

Exact damage depends on the organ chosen. ("I think I will take your heart, Kerim Shah.") Loss of the brain causes instant death. Loss of the heart requires a roll against HT-6 each turn; on any failure the victim falls unconscious; he dies five seconds after falling unconscious. Other organs require a roll against HT to HT-5 (GM's decision) to remain conscious. Death comes one minute after loss of consciousness. Only Major Healing can restore a lost organ.

Cost: 10.

Time to cast: 3 seconds.

Cost to activate: 4 to activate, 2 to maintain.

Duration: 1 minute.

Prerequisites: Enchant, Mind-Sending, Magery 2.

The Rapid Journey (VH)

Special

This spell is the same as Teleport, except it allows an immediate return journey. It only works on the caster.

Once you arrive at your destination, you do not stay there. You are drawn back to your place of origin, unless you expend energy to prevent it. In particular, your presence must be maintained (like a spell), at one-fourth travel cost, for each minute after the first you remain.

When you cease maintaining the spell, or whenever you will it, you return to your originating point. This has no chance of failure unless you failed your original spell roll; if you did, you must make a successful IQ roll at the penalties for the distance Teleported listed in that spell to return home again. Only one attempt at this IQ roll per minute is allowed.

Anything carried on your person, up to "heavy" encumbrance, will go with you. You can pick up and drop small items; any item (up to your "heavy" encumbrance) you are holding when you return will travel back with you.

Cost: As Teleport for the trip, plus one-fourth cost per minute of remaining at the site.

Duration: 1 minute.

Time to cast: 5 seconds.

Prerequisites: Teleport, Magery 3.

Item: Staff or wand, usable by mages only. Energy cost to create: 5,000.

Prerequisites: Telekinesis, Magery 3.

Retrogression

Regular; Resisted by IQ

Causes the subjects to remember past lives, and re-experience those things which the caster desires of them. This is used as a torment by the Master of Yimsha, who forces his victims to relive all the worst moments of their past lives.

Different kinds of memories have different effects. Terrifying memories require a Fright Check at -3; memories of wounds or illness require a roll against HT-3, with a failure reducing HT by 1; memories of slavery or degradation reduce all Will rolls by 1 for 3d hours unless a Will-3 roll is made. Nature of the memories is up to the GM. The number of memories in a single Retrogression can be no greater than the Retrogression skill of the caster.

Cost: 5.

Duration: 1 second.

Time to cast: 3 seconds.

Prerequisites: Mind-Search, Mind-Sending.

Spheres of Devastation

Missile

These white, cloud-like spheres of foam can be hurled by the caster like a missile; however, they are slow (Speed 3), and harmless until they touch metal (bronze, steel, etc.), whereupon they burst like an Explosive Fireball (p. M34).

Cost: any amount from 2 to 6; the sphere does 1d damage to everyone in the target hex for each 2 energy points spent in casting it. It also damages things in nearby hexes; 1d less damage in adjacent hexes; 2d less in hexes 2 distant.

Prerequisites: Vapor of Death.

Item: Staff or wand — sphere forms on end of item. Energy cost to create: 1,200; must include a ruby worth \$500. Usable only by a mage.

Strength of the Open Hand

Regular

Raises the subject's physical strength temporarily. Damage with all weapons increases, as does ST for purposes of jumping, etc. This spell does not increase the subject's Fatigue!

Cost: 2 for every point of ST increase (maximum of 5); the same cost to maintain.

Duration: 1 minute.

Prerequisites: Dexterity, Fatigue.

Item: (a) Any item. Always on; wearer's ST is raised while item is worn! A very rare item. Energy cost to create: 1,500 per point of increase (maximum 5). (b) Staff or wand. Usable by mage only; must touch subject. Energy cost to create: 2,000.

Spells of Khitai

Rain of Icy Death

Area

This spell causes sharp dagger-like hailstones to fall in the area of effect, causing 1d-2 *impaling* damage per minute to all within the area of effect. DR reduces this damage. Inanimate objects (like buildings) protect as per their DR, but the rain may be created *within* a building.

Duration: 1 minute

Base Cost: 1/3. Cost to maintain is the same per minute. Cost to make hail doubles on a clear day, and quadruples in a desert or other area (GM's discretion) where rain and hail are unnatural.

Time to cast: 10 minutes.

Prerequisites: Hail, Ice Dagger, Magery 3.

Sorcery of the Blood and the Jewel (VH) Enchantment

This sorcery is concealed in a serpent-skin-bound book written in the ancient Khari tongue in the library of King Shu of

Vapor of Death

Area

Produces a cloud of poisonous green vapor which moves under the caster's control at Speed 3. The caster must concentrate to move the cloud (or to keep it from moving in the wind). A wind above 10 mph will dissipate the cloud; the cloud also dissipates when the spell expires.

The cloud causes 2 points of damage per turn to all within it, unless a roll vs. HT is made each turn to resist the cloud.

Base Cost: 3 to cast; 2 to maintain.

Duration: 1 minute.

Time to cast: 3 seconds.

Prerequisites: Create Air, Sickness, Steal Strength.

Kusan. According to legend, it was originally brought by an elephant-headed god worshipped by the early Khari.

This sorcery is very rare, as it is invariably fatal to the caster, and all aspects of its effects must be performed in a single night.

To cast this spell, the caster must find someone who has been present at two violent human deaths during the night of the sorcery. This person must, after a short ritual by the caster, cut the caster's heart out and pour the blood onto a large jewel (at least \$10,000 in value). The murderer must then give the jewel to the spell's victim as a gift from the caster, and the victim must accept the jewel.

If all these conditions are met, the victim will be drawn into a mystic dimension inside the crystal, where the soul of the caster waits to torment him for all eternity. Both the victim and the caster are trapped forever, and cannot leave the dimension. The jewel vanishes after the victim has been drawn within.

Amulets, Talismans, and Ancient Devices of Power

The Axe of Varanghi

This ancient relic of the Taian of Stygia was theoretically given to their first hero-warrior, Varanghi, by Mitra himself. The Axe has two important aspects. First, it is said that any warrior who holds the Axe cannot be defeated, so long as he remains uncorrupted in the eyes of Mitra. In truth, no hero who has ever wielded the Axe has fallen in battle with it.

Second, and perhaps more important, the Axe is a symbol of Taian unity. It dates to their first arrival south of the Styx, as the forefront of the Hyborian invasion. Although the Axe carries no magical power of command, its presence has done much to make the currently holder, King Ausar, the region's undisputed leader.

The Axe is a huge weapon with a cutting edge (cut, sw +3) on one side and a spike (imp, sw +2) on the other. The Axe gives its wielder Extraordinary Luck (see p. B21) in combat as long as (GM's decision) he is acting as the champion of Mitra. The Axe requires a minimum ST of 13.

Beads of Zath

These enchanted black jet beads are 1/2" in diameter, and are worn in the dancing costumes of the temple virgins of the spider-god Zath in Yezud.

Should a non-believer touch such a bead, it transforms into a spider: ST 2, DX 13, IQ 2, HT 15/2. Speed 2, Dodge 7. PD 0, DR 0. The spider's bite (doing 1d-4 damage) carries a deadly poison, which does 3d damage to the victim within 5 turns. The spiders are not intelligent, and will attack the first person they touch. After inflicting its poisonous bite, the spider dies.

Thus, each time the temple virgins don their ceremonial dance costumes, they are tested before Zath. As a loss of their virginity connotes treason to the god, most virgins are very careful to keep their primary qualification.

However, a few who cannot bear to pass up worldly experiences have had false sets of beads made, which look exactly like the real thing, but have no magical power.

Cost: 50.

Prerequisites: Mind-Search, Shapeshift Others.

The Black Ring

The Black Ring of Thoth-Amon is a massive copper ring in the shape of a serpent holding its tail in its mouth. It is enchanted with the following spells: Sense Foes, Control Person, Shield, Missile Shield, Steal Strength, Steal Health, Animation and Summon Demon, all at Power 20.

In addition to these enchantments, the Ring itself is a talisman which can be used to control demons, providing a +5 for the caster in Contests of Will.

The Burning Skull

This ancient skull is reputed to be the last remains of an ancient evil wizard. Whatever its origins, it hypnotizes those who look upon its face (treat as a Daze spell — p. B164).

Looking at it from any other angle has no effect. The skull is overlarge, and can be worn as a mask, allowing that person to slaughter his enemy without resistance.

The Cobra Crown

This is one of the most powerful talismans handed down from the days of the serpent people. In form it is a coiled snake of gold crusted with diamonds. The stones are cut with facets, a technique almost unknown in Hyborian times. The coils form a cone-like crown and the head of the serpent stares down over the forehead of the wearer like a striking cobra.

The Cobra Crown amplifies the powers of mind control and mental communication of the wearer. In effect it gives him all the psi abilities of Telepathy (see pp. B167-171). All powers are at 16 or at IQ + Magery, whichever is greater. Skills are at IQ + Magery-4. Mages who have learned a spell which would grant the same sort of ability that they are attempting to use (e.g. Mind-Reading for an attempt at Teleceive) can use the spell skill -2 instead. The jewels and gold in the crown have a mundane value of \$100,000.

The Hand of Nergal

According to legend, this talisman of the forces of Darkness fell from the sky onto "the sunset isles of the uttermost West" before the Cataclysm. Since that time, many men have been corrupted by its promise of power beyond all limit, and have in turn received its other promise: "death beyond all despair."

The amulet itself appears to be "a clawed hand of old ivory, worked all over with weird glyphs in a forgotten tongue. The claws clasp a sphere of shadowy, dim crystal." In fact, the amulet is alive, inhabited by the spirit of a demon banished to wander the frigid reaches of Space for all eternity, and returned by a freak of chance.

The owner of the Hand can curse his enemies with diseases that waste their bodies away, or that bring blindness and madness. With the proper sacrifices, the Hand can summon a horde of Black Shadows (see p. 27) to attack its holder's enemies. Perhaps most important of all, the Hand provides the user with the illusion of ultimate power. To that end, the Hand always conceals its independent intellect.

At some point in its usage, the Hand inevitably rebels, and turns on its former master. All of the ills and woes which the user has brought on others are turned on the user himself, and he is destroyed in a paroxysm of magic and agony.

The only true defense against the Hand is the counter-amulet, the Heart of Tammuz. The Heart appears as a heart-shaped stone of golden amber or yellow jade which glows with a soft inner light. The Heart's origins are unknown, but with the proper rituals it can protect the wielder from the evil magics of the Hand.

The Heart of Ahriman

This amulet appears as a large, crystalline gem, intricately faceted and glowing from within. The Heart is a powerstone, capable of holding 30 energy points. Its other powers are not completely known, nor have they been since the Heart was brought to the West by the Khari. However, a few of its lesser powers include Magic Resistance (3 levels, Power 20) for its bearer, Dispel Magic (Power 20), and the ability to bring the dead to life as mummies, and give the mummy the illusory semblance of life. This life is a sham, however, and the holder of the Heart can withdraw it at any time.

The Ring of Rakhamon

This ring's powers have also been lost to antiquity. It is assured, however that it provides Magic Resistance (5 levels, Power 20) for its bearer, and that it adds +3 to Contests of Will with demons.

The Sacred Wingboat of the Styx

The secret of manufacture of these boats has been lost, and all but one have crumbled into dust. The remaining ship ranges the River Styx, traveling without wind or oars at a rate of 10 mph (Speed 20).

The vessel is 50' long with a low-slung, wide-beamed hull made of a silvery metal, and a serpent's head prow. There is a small deckhouse in the center of the craft, and wing-like sails extend from both sides.

The steersman at the tiller must speak the words of control, while raising or lowering his arms to indicate the desired speed. Once the ship is moving, the steersman need only point in the direction he wishes to go.

The ship has only one limitation; it cannot leave the waters of the Styx. If the steersman attempts to force it out into the open ocean, or even up one of the Styx's tributaries, it capsizes, and drifts until it returns to its home currents.



Serpent Amulets

These jade-green stone serpents look like ordinary amulets. However, they are actually guardians placed over the ancient treasures of the Khari. When removed from the chamber they were enchanted to protect, they come to life, with attributes like a large rattlesnake (see p. B143, sidebar).

The Star of Khorala

This ancient gem is reputed to have come from the city of Khorala in Vendhya. Its complete enchantment is unknown, but it is widely held that a woman who wears the ring can bend any man to her will. Despite this obviously great power, the last known holder of the ring, Queen Marala of Ophir, is currently living in exile as Lady Albiona of Aquilonia. Such an end implies that the powers of this ring are not so great after all.

Upas Rope

A cord or rope made of the hair of dead women, which is gathered from tombs at midnight, then steeped in upas wine (see p. 21). It has ten times the strength of rope or cord (see p. B212) and costs 1,000 times as much. It takes the hair of nine average women and two gallons of upas wine to make 10 yards of 3/16" cord. The hair must steep for one year.

MASS COMBAT

This system is *not* a set of "wargame rules." It is not designed to play out the details of a long battle. Instead, it gives a quick answer to the most important questions for a roleplaying campaign: *Who won?*, and *What happened to the player characters?*

Costs are also given for raising and paying military units, for those campaigns in which the PCs are, or want to become, military leaders.

Overview

Each army or other force is divided into *units*, each composed of one type of fighter. Therefore, for instance, the Bossonian archers and Gundermen of an Aquilonian garrison would be treated as two separate units. Most units should be from 10 to 500 men; the GM has the last word on what may be a "unit."

Each unit has a *Troop Strength* reflecting its size, type and quality. The Troop Strength of a force is the sum of the strengths of all its units. All units are recorded on a *Force Roster* (blank form on p. 110). Each force has a designated commander, who may be a PC or NPC.

When battle occurs, the opposing leaders roll a Quick Contest of their Strategy skills. If one force is significantly stronger or has other advantages, its leader receives a bonus to his Strategy roll. The contest determines battle results, including losses taken by both sides.

Thus, a long battle may be reduced to a very few die-rolls. Again, this is *not* a wargaming system, but an adjunct to roleplaying.



Mass Combat Turn Sequence

The system has six basic steps for each battle (or each day of a battle):

1. Calculate the Basic Troop Strength of each unit involved. Total them to get the strengths of the two opposing forces.
2. The GM rolls for Catastrophes for each force.
3. Each PC makes his Survival and Glory rolls.
4. Contest of Skills using the two leaders' Strategy skills, modified by
 - (a) relative size of the forces
 - (b) relative position
 - (c) results of Catastrophes
 - (d) Glory (or death) of unit leaders
 - (e) GM's analysis of the two sides' respective strategic plans
 - (f) Special circumstances.
5. Each PC on the losing side makes a second Survival roll.
6. Assess casualties to each force and (where it matters) to units within a force.

Determining Troop Quality

If the campaign situation or adventure does not dictate the quality of a body of troops, determine troop quality by rolling three dice on the chart below.

Use the same chart when determining the quality of a newly-raised unit (see sidebar, p. 103) or when recruiting replacements — in this case, it gives the average quality of the replacements you were able to hire.

Die Roll	Troop Quality
3	Elite: base morale 16*
4+	Crack: base morale 15*
7+	Seasoned: base morale 14
9+	Average: base morale 13
11+	Green: base morale 11
16+	Raw: base morale 9

*Roll again if you were trying to raise a new unit, or to recruit more than 10 men.



Troop Strength

The first step in resolving a battle is to determine the Troop Strength of the forces involved. The Troop Strength value of each man (or other creature) is determined from his *type* and *quality*. Multiply this value by the number of men

Changing Troop Quality

In a continuing campaign, units will lose troops and replace them — sometimes with experienced men, sometimes with raw recruits. Keep track of the number of engagements a unit fights, counting anything over 20 as 20. When a unit adds new men for any reason, the new Troop Quality is the new average experience of the men.

Example: Arius of Koth commands a crack unit, with average experience of 10 engagements. It has 87 men. Arius recruits 11 more men, of "green" quality. Average experience is computed as follows: 87×10 for the old troops, 11×1 (use the low end of the experience scale) for the new men. 870 plus 11 is 881 . Divide that by 98 men, for an average experience of just under 9. Round down to 8. The company is now considered to have an average experience of 8 engagements, making it merely "seasoned." Two more fights will bring it back to "crack" status.



Determining Commander's Experience (roll three dice)

Use if one or both force commanders are NPCs.

Die Roll	Quality	Battles	Strategy Skill
3	Elite	15+	16+(1d)
4 to 7	Crack	10 to 14	14+(1d)
8 to 11	Seasoned	6 to 9	14
12 to 15	Average	4, 5	12
16 to 17	Green	1 to 3	10
18	Raw	0	9

in a unit to give the Troop Strength (TS) of that unit. Note that in a *siege* situation, cavalry and elephant crews must dismount, and have only the TS of the equivalent infantry type.

Troop Types

This listing covers the most common troop types of the Hyborian Age.

Heavy Cavalry (HC): Armored cavalry with trained warhorses, heavy lances and other "shock troop" weapons. Hyborian knights are considered heavy cavalry. Horse archers of this type normally employ crossbows. TS value 8.

Medium Cavalry (MC): Moderately armored cavalry using medium warhorses (with light barding), light lances, spears and other light weapons. The Hyrkanians are the classic example of horse archers of this type. TS value 6.

Light Cavalry (LC): Troops mounting light horses, with very little armor; javelins, spears and other light weapons. The horse warriors of the kingdom of Kusan in Khitai fall into this category. TS value 4.

Heavy Infantry (HI): Footmen, in full plate or less, with axes, greatswords and other heavy hand weapons. The Black Dragons of Aquilonia are one excellent example of this type of force. TS value 5.

Medium Infantry (MI): Moderately armed footmen, in half plate or less, fighting with polearms, swords and other medium weapons. Most Hyborian troops fall into this category. TS value 4.

Pikemen (PI): Lightly armored — generally leather and light metal combinations, and equipped with pikes, poleaxes or dirks. Pikemen are typical in Hyborian and Vendhyan forces but rare in forces of other countries. TS value 3.

Light Infantry (LI): Regular footmen and trained spear levies wearing little or no armor and fighting with polearms, spears, javelins, short swords and other light skirmish weapons. Most of the militias and tribal warriors of the Hyborian Age fall into this description. TS value 3.

Irregular Infantry (II): Irregular footmen and untrained spear levies employing any armor and weaponry available. Pioneers, miners and other specialists are included in this troop type. They are likely to be experienced. TS value 2.

Miners (MN): Mining crew of 10+ miners and a mining expert. TS value 2 (in an open battle) or 8 (to the attacker in a siege). Miners at TS 8 can comprise no more than 10% (up to 1,000) or 5% (over 1,000) of the TS of a siege force. Miners over this percentage are TS value 2.

Siege Engine (SE): A large stone or dart-thrower, with crew. TS value 50.

War Elephants (WE): A trained elephant, its mahout and up to four archers. War Elephants are used only by Vendhyan and Turanian armies. Elephants are never better than seasoned quality (see below). TS value 250.

Missile Weapons

The troop descriptions above assume that the troops do not use missile weapons. For troops that are also trained with missile weapons, add to the TS value as follows: 1 for slingers, 2 for ordinary bowmen, 3 for Bossonian longbowmen or Hyrkanian recurve bowmen.

Troop Quality and Morale

Troop *quality* is determined by the average experience of its men. This directly determines the base *morale* of the unit.

E: Elite; veterans of 15 or more engagements. Base morale 16. Increase pay by 50%. Double the base TS value.

C: Crack; veterans of 10 to 14 engagements. Base morale 15. Increase pay by 25%. Increase the base TS value by 50%.

S: Seasoned; veterans of six to nine engagements. Base morale 14. Increase cost to raise and pay by 10%. Increase the base TS value by 20%.

A: Average; veterans of four or five engagements. Base morale 13. Use the base TS value and cost to raise and pay.

G: Green; veterans of one to three engagements. Base morale 11. Reduce the TS to 80% of base value. Cost to raise and pay is the same.

R: Raw; trained, but with no battlefield experience. Base morale 9. Decrease cost to raise and pay by 20%. TS is only half of base value.

U: Untrained; civilians with weapons. Base morale 6. Decrease cost to raise by 30%; pay is negotiable. TS is 1/4 of base value. If a U unit survives three battles, treat the survivors as Green troops who have had one engagement.

Battle Magic

Battles in the Hyborian Age can be affected by magic. War magic does not generally take the form of wizards hurling fireballs at enemy troops; rather, the magic is used more subtly, to disable enemy leaders, to conceal friendly forces, or to bring a single morale-shaking disaster to the enemy.

Magic is not considered "proper" warfare. Most nations do not use it; those few who do are distrusted by enemies and allies alike.

Determining Magic Power Available

To determine the magic power available to the troops, a Magical Strength (MS) must be calculated for each magician.

Computing Magical Strength

Compute the Magical Strength (MS) for each force by computing the number of character points that each mage has invested in IQ, Magical Aptitude (or Clerical Investment if it grants battle spells), Strong Will and battle-related skills. If the total is less than 100, the mage is not strong enough to affect a mass combat. If the total is 100 or more, use the following table.

100 character points	= 1/2 Magical Strength point
150 character points	= 1 Magical Strength point
200 character points	= 2 Magical Strength points
250 character points	= 3 Magical Strength points
300 character points	= 5 Magical Strength points
350 character points	= 8 Magical Strength points
400 character points	= 12 Magical Strength points
450 character points	= 16 Magical Strength points
500 character points	= 20 Magical Strength points
Add 1 Magical Strength point for each additional 10 character points.	

Magical Strength Modifiers (for each mage involved)

Mage possesses Powerstone	+1/10 points of Powerstone
Mage possesses enchanted item	+1 to +5 (GM's discretion)
Low mana	-3
Normal mana	0
High mana	+2
Very high mana	+4

Using Magic on the Battlefield

Each player secretly and simultaneously marks the number of magic points expended on each magical effect (including defense — see p. 105), after the

Raising Troops

The cost to raise a body of troops is determined by type — the cost to purchase the equipment and pay a hiring bonus — as follows, per man:

Heavy Cavalry: \$14,000

Medium Cavalry: \$9,000

Light Cavalry: \$5,000

Irregular Cavalry: \$3,000

Heavy Infantry: \$9,000

Medium Infantry: \$5,000

Pikemen: \$2,000

Light Infantry: \$1,500

Irregular Infantry: \$200

Siege Engines: \$25,000 average — varies widely, includes armor.

GMs may modify costs for special circumstances, such as unusually good or bad availability of men, horses and equipment.

Add \$500 per man if the troops are slingers, \$1,000 for ordinary archers, \$1,500 for archers with composite bows.

Normally, troops of Elite and Crack quality cannot be "raised" — there are not that many trained men currently unemployed. It costs 10% more to raise a Seasoned troop, and 20% less to raise a Raw troop.

The GM decides what sort of troops are available. PC leaders will usually want to raise the best troop they can, given their budget. If the GM needs to determine troop quality randomly, use the table in the sidebar on p. 101.





Paying and Maintaining Troops

It costs about \$200 per month to feed and maintain an infantryman; \$800 for a cavalryman and his horse; \$3,000 for an elephant and crew. This *must* be paid, or a unit will revolt, dissolve or desert.

Troops also expect monthly pay; unpaid troops can be dangerous to their leaders or employers. Morale drops by 1 after the first missed payday, 2 after each succeeding missed payday. Make a Morale roll on each missed payday, *after* reducing morale. A failed roll gives bad results, as per the GM's whim. Every *second* payday made increases morale by 1, but only to the extent of eliminating the negative modifiers for previously missed paydays.

Generally speaking, human troops expect to be paid about 10% of the cost-to-raise, each month, regardless of their experience. A 50% bonus will increase morale by 1 for the next month; a 100% or more bonus will increase morale by 2 for the next month. Income from looting counts as pay.

Troop Strength of both forces have been calculated, but before they are revealed or any die rolls are made. The magical effects are applied to all die rolls.

Catastrophes

The casting side can attempt to force a Catastrophe (see p. 105) on its opposition by increasing its opponent's Catastrophe roll. For each 2 magic points expended, the opposition suffer a +1 modifier on its Catastrophe roll.

Affecting Morale

Magic can be used to improve the morale of friendly units, or to reduce the morale of enemy units. In either case, one point of magic provides a +1 (or -1) morale modifier for 100 TS of troops. Thus, for example, a unit of 20 Average Heavy Infantry (Total TS 100; Morale roll of 9+) can have its morale modified by +2, giving them the morale of Seasoned troops (9+), or -2, lowering their morale to that of Green troops (11+), for an expenditure of 2 magic points.

Scouting

Magic can be used to observe enemy forces, and to thereby reduce the effectiveness of an enemy's strategy. If the force with the mage is being run by the *player*, successful use of scouting magic will give him some advance warning of the preparations used by the enemy, and allow him to revise his battle plan (GM's discretion as to how much).

If the force is being run by an NPC, abstract this information to a +1 Strategy modifier, costing 3 Magical Strength points. More energy can be expended if desired (particularly if the enemy has magical defenses), but no more than a +1 modifier can be gained in any case.

Diviners

A careful commander might consult diviners before a battle. The effectiveness of divination in general is known only to the GM . . . and even in a campaign where magic is real, an individual diviner may be a fake. A general may have many diviners, but he must pick just one to believe. A genuine diviner who makes his skill roll gives +1 to his lord's Strategy roll, or +2 on a critical success. If the diviner is a fake, substitute his own Strategy roll for the commander's. The details of these modifiers, of course, must remain secret from the players.

Confounding the Enemy

Magic can also be used to disrupt the enemy's battle plan. If the force leader knows the enemy battle plan (through diviners, scouting magic, or more mundane means), or if he just wants to guess, he can use magic to create conditions adverse to the enemy's plan. Such efforts include flooding a river to be forded, bringing up a dense fog, or even causing an earthquake in a narrow defile.

To do this, the player of the force should describe the magical effect, and how it would be produced (what spell would be used, etc.). The GM should analyze the effectiveness of the strategy, and assign an appropriate Magical Strength cost and Strategy roll modifier.

Striking Against the Foe

Rather than providing more unique capabilities, magic can simply be hurled against the foe. Magic is a powerful weapon, and has made the difference between defeat and victory in more than one battle of the saga. Each Magical Strength point is equivalent to 100 TS points, and should be added to the total TS for the force.

Defending Against Hostile Magic

Magic points can be allocated to defend against hostile magic.

These points are not allocated to other specific effects; rather, they are used to block other effects after the magical allocations are revealed.

Each point of magic allocated to defense blocks one point of the opponent's offensive magic. Magic must be blocked in units. It is not possible, for example, to block only 1 enemy magic point allocated to Catastrophe modifiers; these must be blocked in units of 2.

Should more magic be allocated to defense than the other side allocated to offensive magic, all of the opponent's magic is blocked, but the remainder of the defensive magic is wasted.

Catastrophe

When the battle begins, the GM rolls three dice on the following table, once for each side, to see if something goes disastrously wrong.

The force leader (but no other PC) can use Luck, if he has that advantage, to re-roll a catastrophe.

3 to 9: No catastrophe.

10: Enemy reveals a terrifying atrocity. -1 to morale of all units.

11: Enemy receives last-minute reinforcements. Increase his Troop Strength by 10%. (The GM may be creative about the nature of the reinforcements.)

12: Enemy manages some sort of surprise. -1 to Strategy roll.

13: Force leader is wounded early in battle (2d damage). -1 to Strategy roll.

14: Turncoats or wizards reveal part of the battle plan. -2 to Strategy roll.

15: Dissension among top leaders weakens morale. -2 to Strategy roll. -1 to morale of all units.

16: An important unit leader (roll randomly among leaders commanding at least 20% of that side's Troop Strength) is killed early in battle. (If a PC, he is wounded to unconsciousness, and makes no further Survival or Glory rolls.) -2 to Strategy roll. -2 to morale of his unit.

17, 18: Force leader is killed early in battle (if a PC, wounded and unconscious). Base Strategy roll cut in half (round up). -2 to morale of each unit.

Consequences to Player Characters

Often, the braver a warrior, the less likely he is to avoid harm! Each PC in a battle must roll against "Battle" skill. This is not a skill which can be studied in itself. It is the average of your Tactics skill (defaulting to IQ-6) and your skill with the weapon you are using. The Tactics skill covers your prudence and caution; the weapon skill covers your ability to get the foemen before they get you! Note Battle Skill on the PC's record sheet *in pencil*, since it will change if you go into battle with a different weapon.

Each PC will roll twice against Battle Skill: first for survival, and then for glory. The two rolls are separate. Roll for glory even if the character dies — a glorious death can inspire the troops.

A PC can choose to take more or less risk, announcing his choice before his Survival roll. He may choose any number from -6 to +6 as a modifier. However, the *opposite* modifier applies to his Glory roll. No guts, no glory!

Survival Roll

When any result calls for injury, take the injury directly off HT — subtract Toughness, but not armor. Determine hit location(s) randomly. If a PC unit or

Formations and Ranks

The organization of Hyborian armies is simple. The largest permanent units are the bodyguard formations of rulers, such as Conan's Black Dragons. These might be of any size, depending on the power and wealth of the monarch. They are permanently organized and can be called regiments. They have a commander (Rank 6), one or more deputy commanders (Rank 5, about one for every 500 soldiers), and a junior officer (Rank 4) for approximately every 100 soldiers. There is one petty officer (Rank 1, 2 or 3) for every 10 soldiers. The guard is normally attendant on the person of the monarch. In battle they constitute the reserve under his personal command; out of battle they guard him and provide agents for delicate and dangerous services. Officers and soldiers are usually Seasoned to Elite troops of proven loyalty.

The rest of a Hyborian army consists of feudal levies. These march to battle under their local leader. Once with the field army (which is simply all the troops under a single command for a battle or campaign) they are formed into ad hoc units with similar equipment and the senior man in each such unit is designated its commander. Such units usually are no more than 100 strong; that is about the largest force that one man can control by voice and hand signals. These units are usually called companies and their commander is called a captain. Such appointments are only for the campaign; they do not require the Military Rank advantage. The captain appoints a petty officer for every ten soldiers; these also do not require Military Rank.

The higher appointments of a Hyborian army are also ad hoc. The force is broken into three components: Van, Main and Rear (which are their positions in the order of march). Each component is under a commander selected by the king. The commander is usually a senior noble or veteran mercenary; again the appointment is only for the campaign. Each commander selects a number of aides; these are anything from messengers to senior advisers.

Continued on next page . . .



The Conan Campaign



Formations and Ranks (Continued)

The armies of the Eastern states such as Turan, Vendhya, Iranistan and Khitai are more formally organized. They have permanent regiments of about 1,000 soldiers commanded by Rank 6 officers. These are divided into companies of about 100 commanded by Rank 4 officers. Each company has one or two junior officers of Rank 3 and four to six NCOs of Rank 1 and 2. Larger formations are brigades of two to five regiments and divisions of two to five brigades. They are usually formed for a particular campaign or for a particular duty (such as border guard) and disbanded when that duty is over. The field army is composed of several divisions. If the monarch commands in person, he is accompanied by a Guards Division of selected troops.

Mercenary forces can be of any size and organization. Anyone who can attract a following can set himself up as a sell-sword. They usually ape the composition of the armies around them; commonly any leader who can supply up to 100 men is called captain; any who can supply several companies calls himself general.

Barbarians fight by tribe, clan and band rather than in any organized formation. The only title of command is chief, and may represent anything from half a dozen rogues to thousands of warriors.

force leader takes enough injury to fall unconscious, his force's final Strategy roll is affected as per Catastrophe (see p. 105).

Make Battle Skill roll by 5 or more: Unhurt.

Make roll by 1 to 4: Take 1d of damage.

Make roll exactly: Take 2d of damage.

Miss roll by 1, 2: Take (1d+1) damage.

Miss roll by 3, 4: Take 2 wounds, each 1d of damage.

Miss roll by 5, 6: Take 2 wounds, each 2d of damage.

Miss roll by 7+ (or roll 17 or 18): Take 3 wounds, each 2d of damage.

Glory Roll

The numbers in brackets indicate the modifier to the force's final Strategy roll if the PC is a unit leader. Add an extra +1 for good results, or -1 for bad results (a missed roll), if the PC is the leader of the whole force.

Critical success: Covered with glory! Check reaction of superior officer at +2; if roll is 16+, character is offered a promotion of one Rank (p. B22). If reaction is 19+, offered transfer to the Royal Guard. [+2]

Make roll by 7 to 9: Fought with great courage and heroism. Check reaction of superior officer as above, but at no bonus. [+1]

Make roll by 4 to 6: Fought heroically. Check reaction of superior officer as above, but at -2. [+1]

Make roll by 3 or less: Fought competently.

Miss roll by 1 to 3: Fought adequately.

Miss roll by 4 to 6: Fought poorly. Superior officer notices your ineptness or caution; make a reaction roll to see how he will treat you after the battle. [-1]

Miss roll by 7+ (or roll 17 or 18): Fought abysmally. Results as above. In addition, if you survive the battle, someone your equal in rank will publicly name you coward and try to provoke a duel. [-3]

Strategy Modifiers

The GM now accounts for the circumstances of the battle, noting various modifiers, positive and negative, to the Strategy skill of each side's leader. All these modifiers are cumulative. Asterisks indicate a "siege" situation, which means a different table is used to determine the final outcome (see p. 108-109).

Relative Troop Strength

Compare the troop strengths of the opposing forces. Divide the *greater* TS by the *lesser* one. This will give the "odds ratio" for the combat — for example, a TS of 100 vs. a TS of 50 is a ratio of exactly 2, or, in wargame parlance, "2 to 1." The greater the odds ratio, the greater the bonus to the Strategy skill of the stronger force's leader, as follows.

Ratio of 1.2 or less: no Strategy skill bonus

1.2+ to 1.4: +1 Strategy skill bonus

1.4+ to 1.7: +2 Strategy skill bonus

1.7+ to 2: +3 Strategy skill bonus

2+ to 3: +4 Strategy skill bonus

3+ to 5: +5 Strategy skill bonus

5+ to 7: +6 Strategy skill bonus

7+ to 10: +7 Strategy skill bonus

Over 10 — that is, better than ten to one: +8 Strategy skill bonus!



Elevation and Defensive Position

If one side is clearly the defender, it gets Strategy modifiers based on its position. When appropriate, the modifiers below are cumulative.

Attacker attacks downhill: -3 or worse!

Attacker approaches under cover: -1

Attacker must come up a gradual incline: +1

Attacker must come up a steep incline: +2

Attacker must come up steep incline on bad ground: +3

*Attacker must force a narrow passage; defile, pass, ford or bridge: +2 to +8, depending on how narrow it is

*Defender is protected by a breastwork or unforded river: +3

*Defender occupies a manor, stronghold or unwall city: +4

*Defender occupies a walled city: +6

*Defender occupies a castle: +8



Special Troop Superiority

These are Strategy bonuses for superiority in terms of certain types of fighter. A 3 to 1 superiority, for instance, means your *fighters* of that type, regardless of quality, outnumber the foemen or engines of that type by 3 to 1. There are three types of superiority: siege engine (only in siege situations); cavalry (only in non-siege situations); and missile weapon (see *Raising Troops* sidebar, p. 103). Each type of superiority counts separately: if you have a force of mounted archers and the foe has no cavalry or missiles, you have 5 to 1 superiority in both missile weapons and cavalry.

2 to 1: +1

3 to 1: +2

5 to 1 or better: +3

Special Circumstances

Add Strategy bonuses, or subtract penalties, for any of the following situations that apply. Note that *all* these circumstances are determined by the GM or the group's roleplaying; for instance, a unit is unsupplied if the GM says it is!

Loot

Many military units — not just mercenaries — depend largely on loot to make life worthwhile. The loot available in even a burned-out and picked-over city can be immense and is up to the GM to settle.

But the loot from a battlefield is also very valuable. The force that holds the field after a fray will be able to recover the arms and armor of all its own casualties, and most, if not all, of the other side's dead. If the foe routed, both its dead and wounded — *all* its casualties — will be left for looting.

Very roughly speaking, the average value of the gear stripped from a killed or captured trooper would equal $\frac{1}{5}$ of the cost to "raise" that trooper (see sidebar p. 103). It would sell for less — possibly only 20% of that cost, in cash — but to an army, most or all of the salvage will be useful. Halve these numbers again for cavalry; live horses are expensive, dead ones are rations at best.

Use of Pikemen

Pikemen can neutralize a cavalry charge. When figuring cavalry superiority, count pikemen as cavalry for the side with *less* cavalry. Thus, pikemen cannot give you cavalry superiority, but they can neutralize the other force's superiority.

Morale

Each unit starts with a *base morale* determined by its troop quality. Campaign events can affect morale before the battle. Catastrophes, or loss of leaders during the battle, affect morale *for that battle only*.

Example: Arius of Koth has a crack unit — base morale 15. Loot was good last month, so they entered the battle with a +1 morale, for a 16. In the first hour of battle, Arius was slightly wounded (-1 morale). So effective morale is back to 15.

Morale is used to determine whether a defeated unit withdraws in good order, or routs. During the campaign, the GM may also require a Morale roll whenever a unit is asked to do something dangerous or unreasonable (e.g., fight at unreasonable odds, skip a payday, wear pink uniforms).



Morale Modifiers

In a war against an hereditary foe, morale is always at +1.

Any Aquilonian, Barathan, kozak or Himelian unit led by Conan gets a +1. Other leaders of similar stature would give the same bonus.

Atrocities always require a Morale roll. On a failed roll, morale drops by 1. On a successful roll, morale rises by 1 instead, in anger.

Units defending home ground always have +2 morale.

Morale before a battle is at +1 if the unit has defeated the same foe this year, or -2 if the unit has been defeated by the same foe this year.

Bonus payments can increase morale. See sidebar, p. 104.

Rout and Disaster

A force routs, fleeing in panic, on a very bad combat result and/or a failed Morale roll. If a force routs, its casualties are increased. Whether the unit will ever re-form, as a unit, is up to the GM. If the battle was in friendly territory, and/or the unit was largely cavalry, and/or there were lots of places to hide, and/or the leader is charismatic, the survivors may be able to re-assemble.

PCs whose units are routed (or totally crushed) must make their second Survival roll at -2. After that, their adventuring will be directed, at least for a time, toward getting home alive and re-joining their force!

Taken totally by surprise: -5

Partial surprise — less than an hour's warning: -2

Force-marched into battle: -3

Unsupplied: -3

Supplied by forage only: -1

On home grounds: +2 (not cumulative with bonus for manor, city, or other fortification)

The GM may give additional bonuses or penalties from -5 to +5 for other factors as he sees fit — e.g., a heavy fog when trying to launch a closely coordinated attack would be worth -3.

Battle Plans

Finally, the GM should require the *players* to give him a battle plan (or plans, if there are PCs on both sides). If, in his opinion, these plans are especially good or bad, he may apply from +3 to -3 on the final Strategy roll.

Resolving the Contest of Strategy

Having noted all these modifiers, a Quick Contest of Strategy is rolled, to determine how well the opposing leaders handle their troops. Each leader rolls against his modified Strategy skill. (For battles involving a total of less than 200 men, Tactics skill may be used instead.)

The winner of the Quick Contest of Strategy is the winner of the battle. The *difference* in the amounts by which the leaders make (or miss) their rolls will determine how decisive the outcome is.

Examples: One leader makes his roll by 4, the other by 2. The difference is 2; the battle was fairly inconclusive. If one leader makes his roll by 4 and the other *misses* by 4, the difference is 8 — a much more one-sided fight.

Refer to the appropriate table below to find the outcome of the battle. Use Tables B or C if any of the Defensive Position Strategy modifiers (those marked with an asterisk (*) on p. 107) are being used. Otherwise, use Table A.

A. Open-Field Battle Outcomes

0 to 3: Inconclusive battle. Each side holds position, or may choose to withdraw in good order.

4 to 7: Marginal victory. Each unit of the loser withdraws in good order if it can make a Morale roll (see sidebar, p. 107); otherwise it routs.

8 to 12: Definite victory. Each unit of the loser withdraws in good order if it can make a Morale roll at -2; otherwise it routs.

13 to 16: Great victory. Each unit of the loser withdraws in good order if it can make a Morale roll at -4; otherwise it routs.

17 or more: Overwhelming victory. The loser routs.

B. Siege Outcomes — Defender Wins

1 to 3: Inconclusive battle. The attacker is thrown back, but holds his former position. He may attack again on the next day, at -2 morale.

4 to 7: Marginal victory. The attacker holds position if more than half its troops can make a Morale roll (see sidebar, p. 107); otherwise the whole force withdraws in good order.

8 to 12: Definite victory. The attacker holds position if more than half its troops can make a Morale roll at -2; otherwise the whole force withdraws in good order.

13 to 16: Great victory. Each individual attacking unit withdraws in good order if it can make a Morale roll; otherwise that unit routs.

17 or more: Overwhelming victory. Each attacking unit withdraws in good order if it can make a Morale roll at -2; otherwise that unit routs.

C. Siege Outcomes—Attacker Wins

0 to 3: Inconclusive battle. Though the attacker technically won, the defender holds position and will suffer no morale penalty if another battle ensues.

4 to 7: Marginal victory. Both sides hold position. The defender will be at -2 morale if the attacker returns to the fray.

8 to 12: Definite victory. The defender holds position if more than half its troops can make a Morale roll; otherwise the whole force withdraws**.

13 to 16: Great victory. The attacker captures the position. Each individual unit of the defender withdraws** in good order if it can make a Morale roll; otherwise that unit routs or, if there is no escape, surrenders.

17 or more: Overwhelming victory. The attacker captures the position. Each individual unit of the defender withdraws** in good order if it can make a Morale roll at -2; otherwise that unit routs or, if there is no escape, surrenders.

****If defenders get a "withdraw" result and have nowhere to go, make a second Morale roll for each such unit at +2 over the previous roll. A success means that unit holds position and another battle is likely. (These defenders probably have their backs to a wall or have retreated to an inner strongpoint.) A failure means that unit surrenders.**

Second Survival Roll

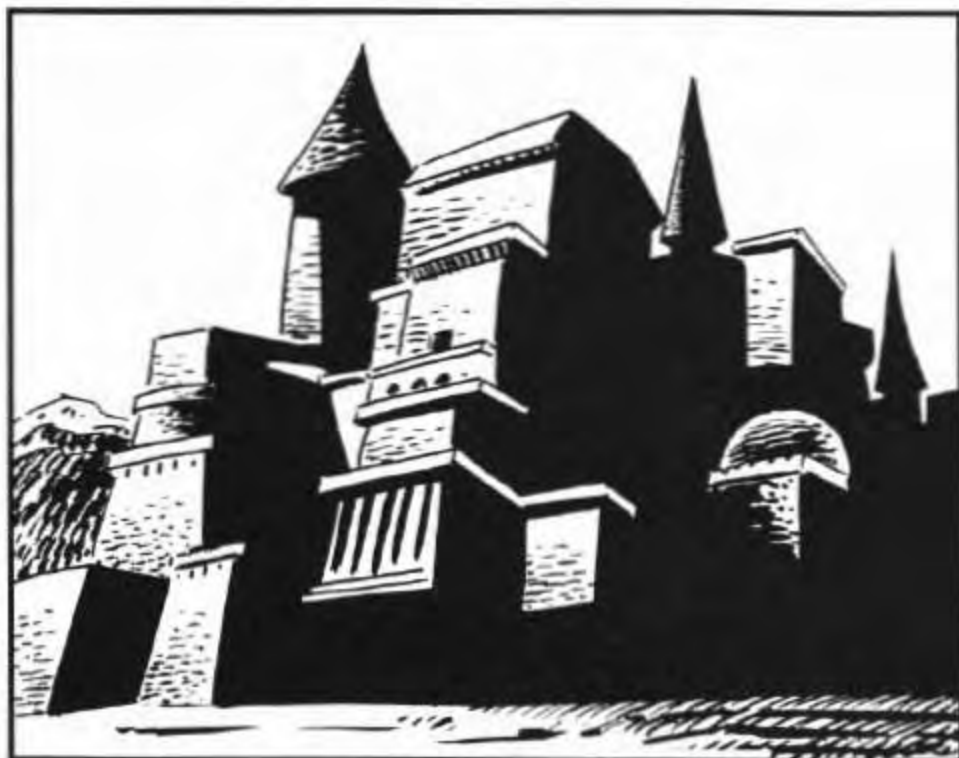
Any PCs on the *losing* side of a battle must make a second Survival roll (p. 105), using the same glory/survival modifier chosen for the first roll. Adjust this roll down by -1 for every 3 full points of difference in the outcome of the battle. If defending, adjust *up* by any bonus for position (modifiers with an *) the defending side received.

Casualties

Lastly, casualties are determined for each side. This does *not* affect the PCs; their fates are determined by their Survival rolls. Even if a unit is wholly wiped out, a PC who made his Survival roll got away somehow.

Find the Quick Contest of Strategy difference on the Casualty Table (p. 110) Opposite that number (a positive number for the victor, a negative number for the loser) is the percentage of troops that side lost in the engagement. For example, if the difference is 3, the loser consults "-3" and loses (4d + 20)% of troops as casualties, while the victor consults "3" and loses (4d)% of troops.

If the defender was protected by his position (modifiers with an * under *Elevation and Defensive Position*), add that modifier to his Contest difference (but not his opponent's) before assessing casualties. For instance, if the defender lost the roll by 3, but had a +3 Strategy modifier due to position, he would take casualties on the "0" line.



Roleplaying Battle Scenes

The system presented here will resolve large combats. It is up to the GM to make these interesting for the players — and vice versa. The GM should always sketch a map of the battlefield (or perhaps of several optional battlefields) to help the PCs visualize the strategy, especially if they are unit or force leaders.

When the GM plays the part of the adversary in battle, he should occasionally spring a tactical surprise on the players. Describe it realistically. If they handle it well, they get a Strategy roll bonus; if they react poorly, they suffer a penalty.

Players whose characters are in leadership positions may attempt to give orders to their troops once the battle has started and any enemy surprises have appeared. PCs who are mere troopers can control only their own fates — and then, only to a limited extent — by deciding how much bravery (or cowardice) they will show. But they should describe their actions anyway: not just "I'm going for a -3 on Survival to get a +3 on Glory" but "I'm shouting insults and charging the enemy standard-bearer."

Likewise, morale effects — during the campaign, at the beginning of battle, and when the troops begin to rout — are an opportunity for the GM to be dramatic.

Remember: this is a world for heroes. Players should be heroic. GMs should remember that *they* are bards; tell the tale well, and reward heroism.

APPENDICES

Bibliography

The following list describes the 73 stories of the Conan saga to date. The stories are listed in chronological order: the order is based on that in "A Conan Chronology" by Robert Jordan (see "M" below). However, several modifications have been made to this order on the basis of the author's own opinions. If you disagree with this order, please feel free to change it (or any of the dates, for that matter) for your campaign.

Each story is listed with its author (or authors, in alphabetical order), its approximate Hyborian date (see the sidebar on p. 8), a story summary, and its location in its most recent paperback printing (which is presumed to be the one available to most people).

Each story is identified by a three-letter code, usually the initials of the title.

Italicized titles are novels and are in their own books. Titles in quotation marks are short stories or novelettes, which can be found in the anthologies listed below in chronological order.

I. *Conan*, from Ace, covers Conan's early life, from his escape from Hyperborean slavery, through his term as a thief, up to his stint as a warrior of the empire of Turan. It also contains the first half of the Howard essay "The Hyborian Age." (CON)

II. *Conan of Cimmeria*, from Ace, continues his adventures as a warrior of Turan, this time journeying as far east as Khitai, then follows him back to the north, down the western coastline to the Black Kingdoms and Kush, where he makes a name for himself as Amra the Lion. (COC)

III. *Conan the Freebooter*, from Ace, describes Conan's adventures as a warrior of Shem, Khoraja, Koth and Khauran, and covers his time as a *kozaki* outlaw and a pirate of the Red Brotherhood. (CTF)

IV. *Conan the Wanderer*, from Ace, describes Conan's time with the Zuagir tribes and as a *kozaki*, both harassing Turanian caravans, and also covers a brief trip to the southern city of Zamboula. (CTW)

V. *Conan the Adventurer*, from Ace, covers Conan's first journey to Vendhya, his unsuccessful stints as a Hyborian mercenary, and his time with the Barathan pirates. (CTA)

VI. *Conan the Warrior*, from Ace, covers more of Conan's adventures in the Black Kingdoms, and the brave defense of the Aquilonian province of Conajohara which eventually brings him Aquilonia's throne. (CWA)

VII. *Conan the Usurper*, from Ace, covers Conan's flight from Aquilonia, the period of his rebellion against King Numedides, and the first few years of his reign as King Conan of Aquilonia. (CTU)

VIII. *Conan the Avenger*, from Ace, contains the full length novel "The Return of Conan," which describes King Conan's battle against the Khitan sorcerer Yah Chieng, and the second half of the Howard essay, "The Hyborian Age." (CAV)

IX. *Conan of Aquilonia*, from Ace, contains the four connected stories which describe the fall of Thoth-Amon. (CAQ)

X. *Conan the Swordsman*, from Bantam, contains stories from several periods in Conan's life. All of the stories in this book are by de Camp, Lin Carter and Björn Nyberg. This book also contains the de Camp article, "Hyborian Names." (CTS)

To save space, some author's names have been abbreviated:

REH — Robert E. Howard
LSdC — L. Sprague de Camp
LC — Lin Carter
RJ — Robert Jordan

Also, here are the addresses of the publishers mentioned below:

Ace — Ace Science Fiction
51 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10010

Bantam — Bantam Books, Inc.
666 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10103

Bluejay — Bluejay Books
130 W. 42nd St.
New York, NY 10036

Chaosium — Chaosium, Inc.
P.O. Box 6302
Albany, CA 94706-0302

Mirage — No address available.

Reality Simulations, Inc.
P.O. Box 22400
Tempe, AZ 85285

Tor — Tom Doherty Associates
8-10 W. 36th St.
New York, NY 10018

1. "Legions of the Dead," by LC/LSdC, in *Conan the Swordsman*, pp. 9-32; 1263 A.A. The story of Conan's sojourn with the *Æsir* against the Hyperboreans. (LOD)

2. "The Thing in the Crypt," by LC/LSdC, in *Conan*, pp. 34-50; 1264 A.A. Description of Conan's flight from Hyperborean slavery and his first entrance into civilized lands. (TIC)

3. *Conan the Defiant*, by Steven Perry, from Tor; 1264 A.A. Conan encounters a zombie-woman on the road to Arenjun, and helps her fight the necromancer Neg. (CTD)

4. "The Tower of the Elephant," by REH, in *Conan*, pp. 51-80; 1265 A.A. Tells the story of Conan as a thief in Arenjun in Zamora, and the stealing of the Heart of the Elephant from the wizard Yara. (TOE)

5. *Conan and the Sorcerer*, by Andrew J. Offutt, from Ace; 1265 A.A. Conan's first meeting with the woman-thief Isparana, and his ill-fated expedition to steal the Eye of Erlik



from the wizard Hissar Zul, which (temporarily) costs him his soul. (CAS)

6. *Conan the Mercenary*, by Andrew J. Offutt, from Ace; 1265 A.A. Takes up where *Conan and the Sorcerer* leaves off, with Conan questing for royal assistance in regaining his soul, and becoming involved in the political destiny of Khauran. This describes Khauran, where Conan meets Queen Ialamis, mother to Queen Taramis of "A Witch Shall Be Born." (CTM)

7. *Conan: The Sword of Skelos*, by Andrew J. Offutt, from Bantam; 1265 A.A. Completing the trilogy of Offutt stories, Conan again meets Isparana, and delivers the Eye of Erlik to the mad King of Zamboula, Akter Khan. Note that these three tales take place within a three-month period. (CSS)

8. *Conan the Destroyer*, by RJ, from Ace; 1266 A.A. This novelization of the second Conan movie finds Conan in the service of Princess Taramis of Shadizar, in her evil attempts to reanimate Dagoth, the Sleeping God. (CDE)

9. *Conan the Magnificent*, by RJ, from Tor; 1267 A.A. Conan hunts the terrible Beast of Fire with the Lady Jondra of Shadizar, and defeats the Kezankian tribal leader Basrakan Imalla. This describes the warriors of Brythunia and was the basis of the Brythunia description in this book. (CMA)

10. *Conan the Invincible*, by RJ, from Tor; 1267 A.A. Conan travels with the Red Hawk, and fights against the necromancer Amanar, his serpent-slaves, and the demon Eater of Souls. This book contains Conan's first meeting with Karella the Red Hawk and Hordo One-Eye, both of whom appear in other Jordan tales, and describes one of the demons involved in the worship of Set. (CTI)

11. "The Hall of the Dead," by REH and LSdC, in *Conan*, pp. 81-106; 1267 A.A. Conan and Nestor, a Grunderman, explore the ancient city of Larsha. (HOD)

12. *Conan the Fearless*, by Steven Perry, from Tor; 1267 A.A. In the Corinthian city of Mornstadinos, Conan accepts a commission to protect the life of a conjurer and his assistant. From this innocent beginning, Conan finds himself fighting a demon, a shapechanger and a sorcerer to save a single child. (CFE)

13. "The God in the Bowl," by REH, in *Conan*, pp. 107-130; 1267 A.A. Conan is caught in a house of antiquities in Nemedi, and kills a naga from ancient Stygia. (GIB)

14. *Conan the Warlord*, by Leonard Carpenter, from Tor; 1267 A.A. Conan is rescued from prison to act as a double for Favian, son of Baron Einharson. He learns much of noble life in Nemedi, and develops a distaste for that land which will last him the rest of his life. (CWL)

15. "Rogues in the House," by REH, in *Conan*, pp. 131-161; 1267 A.A. Conan is hired to assassinate the Red Priest, and finds himself fighting for his life against a man-ape. (RIH)

16. *Conan the Victorious*, by RJ, from Tor; 1267 A.A. Conan is poisoned, and must travel to Vendhya to get an antidote. But once

he is there, he is embroiled in the plots of the wizard Karim Singh. (CTV)

17. *Conan the Champion*, by John Maddox Roberts, from Tor; 1267-68 A.A. Conan is washed ashore at the northern end of the Vilayet Sea, becomes involved in a battle between warbands of the northern wilderness, and saves a queen from enslavement by the demons of the Shifting Land. (CCH)

18. *Conan the Unconquered*, by RJ, from Tor; 1268 A.A. Conan travels to Aghrapur, where he becomes involved with a woman (whom else?), and tries to save her from the Cult of Doom, a nihilistic sorcerer cult. (CUN)

19. "The Hand of Nergal," by REH and LC, in *Conan*, pp. 162-188; 1268 A.A. Conan begins his service to King Yildiz of Turan as a soldier involved in an ill-fated expedition to put down a rebellion in the Zamoran Marches. He is the sole survivor of the expeditionary force, and becomes embroiled in an ancient feud between two powerful artifacts. (HON)

20. "The City of Skulls," by LC/LSdC, in *Conan*, pp. 189-221; 1268 A.A. While delivering Princess Zosara of Turan to the Great Khan of the Kuigar nomads, Conan and Juma the Kushite are captured by Meruvian soldiers, and are forced to destroy the King of Meru, Jalung Thongpa. (COS)

21. "The People of the Summit," by LSdC and Björn Nyberg, in *Conan the Swordsman*, pp. 33-50; 1269 A.A. Conan, still a soldier in Turan's service, is sent to police the Khozgar tribesmen of the Misty Mountains of Turan. Once there, he discovers a tribe of demon-worshippers in the mountains, and is pursued by their demon-lord. (POS)

22. "The Curse of the Monolith," by LC/LSdC, in *Conan of Cimmeria*, pp. 15-32;



1269 A.A. Conan, now a captain of the Turanian army, is sent to deliver an important message to King Shu of Kusan in Khitai. On his return, he is betrayed by his guide, Duke Feng, who is of an opposing faction in the Kusan government. (COM)

23. *Conan the Valiant*, by Roland Green, from Tor; 1270 A.A. Conan is still a captain in the Turanian army; he gets into trouble with a rival officer, and is sent on a mission by Lord Misrak, spymaster of Turan, to acquire one of the two Jewels of Kurag. (CVL)

24. *Conan and the Spider God*, by LSdC, from Bantam; 1270 A.A. Conan flees Turan, and ends up in the Zamoran city of Yezud, where he is accused of stealing Jamilah, the favorite wife of the King of Turan. His only hope is to rescue Jamilah from the Temple of the Spider God! (CSG)

25. "The Bloodstained God," by REH and LSdC, in *Conan of Cimmeria*, pp. 33-52; 1270 A.A. Conan, along with other adventurers, locates an ancient pre-Cataclysmic temple, and battles the idol which guards it. (TBG)

26. *Conan the Valorous*, by John Maddox Roberts, from Tor; 1271 A.A. Conan returns to Cimmeria, where he defends his homeland from sorcerers who have come to Ben Morgh to perform ancient rituals and awaken a great evil. (CVA)

27. "The Frost Giant's Daughter," by REH, in *Conan of Cimmeria*, pp. 53-63; 1271 A.A. Conan is nearly slain in battle with the Æsir, and sees (and nearly captures) Ymir's daughter, Atali. (FGD)

28. "The Lair of the Ice Worm," by LC/LSdC, in *Conan of Cimmeria*, pp. 64-81; 1271 A.A. As Conan returns to the southern lands, he discovers and battles one of the horrors of the glaciers of the Graskaal Mountains: the Remora, or Ice Worm. (LIW)

29. *Conan the Defender*, by RJ, from Tor; 1271 A.A. Conan again becomes involved in the affairs of royalty, this time in support of King Garian of Nemedi. (CDF)

30. *Conan: The Road of Kings*, by Karl Edward Wagner, from Bantam; 1272 A.A. A much-disputed story about Conan's involvement in a rebellion in Zingara. Although many Conan scholars, including LSdC, question this story's inclusion in the saga, it does provide the best description of Zingara. (CRK)

31. *Conan the Triumphant*, by RJ, from Tor; 1273 A.A. Conan leads a Free Company of mercenaries in defense of one of the many nobles vying for control of Ophir's throne; to save his lord, he must stop the summoning of the demon-god Al'Kirr. (CTT)

32. "Queen of the Black Coast," by REH, in *Conan of Cimmeria*, pp. 82-118; 1274-1275 A.A. After a brief sojourn in Argos, Conan heads south. His ship is captured by Bêlit and her Tigress; Conan joins the pirate band, and stays with them for more than a year. One of the finest and most beautiful stories in the saga. (QBC)

33. *Conan the Rebel*, by Poul Anderson, from Bantam; 1274 A.A. This story, which takes place in the middle of "Queen of the Black Coast," describes Conan and Bêlit's

efforts to rescue Bêlit's brother, Jehanan, from Stygian slavery. This story details Bêlit's history, as well as describing life in Stygia. (CTR)

34. "The Vale of Lost Women," by REH, in *Conan of Cimmeria*, pp. 119-139; 1275 A.A. After Bêlit's death, Conan travels inland, becoming the chief of the Bamulas. He rescues a Hyborian woman from slavery and sacrifice. (VLW)

35. "The Castle of Terror," by LC/LSDC, in *Conan of Cimmeria*, pp. 140-160; 1276 A.A. Fleeing from the Bamulas, Conan comes across an abandoned castle in the deserts of Kush. (COT)

36. "The Snout in the Dark," by REH, LC, and LSDC, in *Conan of Cimmeria*, pp. 161-189; 1276 A.A. Conan reaches the Kushite capital of Meroe, where he becomes involved in jockeying for the throne and the division between the light-skinned Stygian rulers and the dark-skinned populace. (SID)

37. "Hawks Over Shem," by REH and LSDC, in *Conan the Freebooter*, pp. 15-53; 1277 A.A. Conan tracks an old enemy to Asgalun, and is trapped in the chaos surrounding the decaying Pelisht throne. (HOS)

38. "Black Colossus," by REH, in *Conan the Freebooter*, pp. 54-98; 1278 A.A. Conan serves as a general for the first time in his career. He serves Queen-Regent Yasmela of Khoraja, and leads her armies against the Shemitish forces of the ancient sorcerer, Thugra Khotan. (BCO)

39. "Shadows in the Dark," by LC/LSDC, in *Conan the Swordsman*, pp. 51-80; 1278 A.A. Conan travels to Ophir to rescue King Khossus of Khoraja, brother to Yasmela, who is being held for ransom. (SHD)

40. *Conan the Renegade*, by Leonard Carpenter, from Tor; 1278-79 A.A. Disgusted at being shut out of court because of his barbarian heritage, Conan leaves Khoraja, and joins a mercenary company in the service of Prince Ivor of Koth. When the mercenary commander is slain by sorcery, Conan takes over the mercenaries and leads them to vengeance against their former employer. (CRE)

41. "Shadows in the Moonlight," by REH, in *Conan the Freebooter*, pp. 99-132; 1279 A.A. Conan's mercenaries travel east, to join the kozaki harassing Turan. There, King Yildiz destroys the troop, forcing Conan to flee to the Isle of Iron Statues. (SIM)

42. "The Road of the Eagles," by REH and LSDC, in *Conan the Freebooter*, pp. 133-171; 1279 A.A. Once off the island, Conan travels along the eastern shore of the Vilayet. There he comes across the palace-in-exile of Prince Teyaspa, brother to Yildiz, and tries to turn Teyaspa into the next King of Turan. (ROE)

43. "A Witch Shall be Born," by REH, in *Conan the Freebooter*, pp. 172-223; 1279 A.A. Returning to the Hyborian lands, Conan takes service with the Queen of Khauran. When her evil sister imprisons her and takes her place on the throne, Conan leads a troop of Zuagir nomads in a rebellion to free the Khaurani people. (WSB)

44. "Black Tears," by LC/LSDC, in *Conan the Wanderer*, pp. 13-47; 1279 A.A. Conan returns to the Turanian steppe to raid the Hyrkanian empire. When his troop is betrayed by one of its own, Conan will stop at nothing to kill the traitor — even to losing the leadership of his Zuagir band. (BTE)

45. "Shadows in Zamboula," by REH, in *Conan the Wanderer*, pp. 48-84; 1279 A.A. Conan travels to Zamboula, where he fights the Yoggite slaves of that decadent city, and acquires the magical jewel known as the Star of Khorala. (SIZ)



46. *Conan the Raider*, by Leonard Carpenter, from Tor; 1280 A.A. Bringing the Star of Khorala to Ophir, Conan is lost in the desert, and is rescued by a band of Shemitish tomb-robbers. With these bandits, he plots the most audacious crime of all: rob the tomb of the king before he is dead! (CRA)

47. "The Star of Khorala," by LSDC and Björn Nyberg, in *Conan the Swordsman*, pp. 81-112; 1280 A.A. Conan delivers the Star of Khorala to the Queen of Ophir, and discovers its true powers. (SOK)

48. "The Devil in Iron," by REH, in *Conan the Wanderer*, pp. 85-123; 1280 A.A. Conan returns to the Vilayet Sea, and is tricked by the Turanians into going alone to the haunted Isle of Xapur. (DII)

49. "The Flame Knife," by REH and LSDC, in *Conan the Wanderer*, pp. 124-222; 1281 A.A. While in service to the King of Iranistan, Conan is forced to flee for his life — right into the hands of the Sons of Yezm. (TFK)

50. "The People of the Black Circle," by REH, in *Conan the Adventurer*, pp. 13-102; 1281 A.A. Returning north, Conan takes leadership of the Afghulis of Ghulistan. In an attempt to save some of his headmen, he kidnaps

the Devi Yasmina of Vendhya; he is then forced to rescue her, as she is in turn stolen by the Black Seers of Yimsha. (PBC)

51. *Conan the Marauder*, by John Maddox Roberts; 1282 A.A. Losing his chieftainship in Ghulistan, Conan travels back towards Turan. On the way, however, he is captured by Hyrkanian warriors who serve the Ushikagan Bartatua, who plans to conquer the world. Conan is quickly promoted from slave to Commander of Five Hundred in service to the greatest warlord in Hyrkania. (CMR)

52. "The Slithering Shadow," by REH, in *Conan the Adventurer*, pp. 103-140; 1282 A.A. Conan returns to the West and joins the rebel Almuric of Koth. When Almuric's army is destroyed on the northern edge of Kush, Conan flees into the desert and finds the lost city of Xuthal. (TSS)

53. "Drums of Tombalku," by REH and LSDC, in *Conan the Adventurer*, pp. 141-190; 1282 A.A. Conan returns to the Hyborian lands, joins another rebel army (this time from Zingara), and again finds himself one of the few survivors. Fleeing south, he reaches the city of Tombalku and, on the strength of his reputation as Amra the Lion, becomes a general there (for a short time). (DOT)

54. "The Gem in the Tower," by LC/LSDC, in *Conan the Swordsman*, pp. 113-140; 1283 A.A. Fleeing the Black Kingdoms, Conan joins the Barathan pirates. With the Zingaran captain Gonzago, Conan visits the mysterious Isle of Siptah off the coast of Stygia. (GIT)

55. "The Pool of the Black One," by REH, in *Conan the Adventurer*, pp. 191-224; 1283 A.A. Fleeing the Barathan pirates, Conan chances across a Zingaran galley on a voyage of discovery. When the ship reaches its destination, the Isle of the Black One, Conan must save the crew and himself from the sorcerous inhabitants. (PBO)

56. *Conan the Buccaneer*, by LC/LSDC, from Ace; 1283 A.A. Conan, now a Zingaran privateer, rescues Princess Chabela, daughter of King Ferdrugo of Zingara, from the clutches of the pirate Black Zaronno and his secret master, Thoth-Amon of Stygia. (CBU)

57. "Red Nails," by REH, in *Conan the Warrior*, pp. 11-104; 1284 A.A. Leaving service with a mercenary company in southern Stygia, Conan travels into the jungle after the sword-woman Valeria. When he catches up to her, the two find the city of Xuchotl, and the ancient feud which continues there. (RNA)

58. "Jewels of Gwahlur," by REH, in *Conan the Warrior*, pp. 105-156; 1284 A.A. Conan travels to Keshan in an attempt to swindle the priests of Alkmeonon out of the world's greatest gems, the Teeth of Gwahlur. (JOG)

59. "The Ivory Goddess," by LC/LSDC, in *Conan the Swordsman*, pp. 141-164; 1284 A.A. His swindle having failed in Keshan, Conan travels to Punt to try again. (TIG)

60. "Beyond the Black River," by REH, in *Conan the Warrior*, pp. 157-222; 1286 A.A. Conan travels north, joining the Aquilonian border scouts in the Westernmark.

He, along with compatriots, discovers the plot to invade Conajohara, and saves the citizens from the Picts. (BBR)

61. "Moon of Blood," by LC/LSdC, in *Conan the Swordsman*, pp. 165-204; 1286 A.A. With Conajohara lost, Conan has retired to Velitrium, on the Thunder River. He is sent into Pict territory, to find and stop a Pictish invasion of Velitrium. (MOB)

62. "The Treasure of Trancos," by REH, in *Conan the Usurper*, pp. 11-116; 1287 A.A. Conan, the hero of Conajohara, is brought to Tarantia to be honored by King Numedides. Court intrigues, however, quickly bring him to imprisonment in the Iron Tower. Conan flees Aquilonia, travelling through the Pictish Wilderness, only to find a Zingaran exile living on the western coast of Pictland. The site quickly becomes busy with two ship captains, the Zingaran noble, and Conan involved in a four-way battle to acquire the treasure of the famed buccaneer, Trancos. And as if this weren't enough, along comes Thoth-Amon! (TTT)

63. "Wolves Beyond the Border," by REH and LSdC, in *Conan the Usurper*, pp. 117-170; 1288 A.A. Gault Hagar's son discovers an Aquilonian traitor who secretly is an ally of the Picts, and who is attempting to arrange for Schohira what happened to Conajohara. This story is not properly a story about Conan, as he never appears in it. However, it does describe the Westermarck during Conan's rebellion, which is mentioned in passing. (WBB)

64. *Conan the Liberator*, by LC/LSdC, from Bantam; 1287-88 A.A. Conan, along with Count Trocero of Poltina, forms an army to lead against King Numedides, and overthrows the tyrant. (CTL)

65. "The Phoenix on the Sword," by REH, in *Conan the Usurper*, pp. 171-202; 1289 A.A. Conan, now King of Aquilonia, defends himself from the swords of traitors and the sorcery of Thoth-Amon. This was the first Conan story ever published. It is interesting to note how much of the background already existed when this story was created. (PSW)

66. "The Scarlet Citadel," by REH, in *Conan the Usurper*, pp. 203-254; 1290-91 A.A. Conan and his armies are trapped by the kings of Koth and Ophir, and Conan himself is captured. To save his kingdom, he must slay the immortal wizard Tsotha-lanthi. (TSC)

67. *Conan the Conqueror*, by REH, from Bantam; 1293-94 A.A. Conan is again captured in battle, this time by King Tarascus of Nemedia and the Acheronian sorcerer Xaltotun. Valerius the Usurper takes Aquilonia's throne, but only until Conan can retrieve the ancient Heart of Ahriman and destroy Xaltotun. (CCO)

68. "The Return of Conan," by LSdC and Björn Nyberg, in *Conan the Avenger*, pp. 15-173; 1295 A.A. The eastern sorcerer Yah Chien kidnaps Queen Zenobia, wife of Conan, and Conan travels the length of the Hyborian continent to save her. (TRC)

69. "The Witch of the Mists," by

LC/LSdC, in *Conan of Aquilonia*, pp. 1-43; 1306 A.A. Conan, son of Conan, is captured by the Hyperboreans. When Conan goes to rescue him, he discovers the plot was hatched by his old enemy Thoth-Amon. (TWM)

70. "Black Sphinx of Nebthu," by LC/LSdC, in *Conan of Aquilonia*, pp. 45-91; 1306 A.A. Conan travels to Stygia to destroy Thoth-Amon. (BSN)

71. "Red Moon of Zembahwei," by LC/LSdC, in *Conan of Aquilonia*, pp. 93-137; 1307 A.A. Once again, Conan pursues Thoth-Amon, this time to the mysterious land of Zembahwei. There he fights his greatest challenge: Father Set himself! (RMZ)

72. "Shadows in the Skull," by LC/LSdC, in *Conan of Aquilonia*, pp. 138-171; 1307 A.A. Conan pursues Thoth-Amon again, this time to the literal End of the Earth, where mankind's most ancient enemy, the serpent people, still live. (SIS)

73. *Conan of the Isles*, by LC/LSdC, from Bantam; 1310 A.A. In Conan's last tale (to date), he sails into the Western Ocean to stop the invasion of the Red Shadows of Antillia, and overthrows the great demon Xotli. (COI)

Other Sources

In addition to the above stories, the following works might be of interest to those running a Hyborian campaign:

A. "The Hyborian Age," by REH. Part I is in *Conan*, pp. 21-33, and deals with Hyborian history up to the time of Conan; part II is in *Conan the Avenger*, pp. 174-192, and deals with events after Conan's life.

B. "Letter from R. E. Howard to P. Schuyler Miller," by REH. This letter is reproduced in *Conan*, pp. 16-20, and reveals something of how Conan came to be.

C. "Notes on Various Peoples of the Hyborian Age," by REH. This is currently out of print, but can be found in *A Gazetteer of the Hyborian World of Conan* (see M below). This article deals specifically with Aquilonians and Cimmerians.

D. "Hyborian Names," by LSdC. This article, available in *Conan the Swordsman*, pp. 205-274, traces the derivations of the names from about 50 of the Conan stories, focusing on stories by REH, LSdC, LC, and Björn Nyberg. This article has been a guide, however, for those Conan stories produced later (including all of the Tor books), and has codified much of the naming conventions of the Hyborian Age.

E. "Conan the Indestructible," by LSdC. This article has been printed in several of the Tor books, most recently in *Conan the Champion*, pp. 251-280. Its origins rest in the (now out of print) "A Probable Outline of Conan's Career," by P. Schuyler Miller and Dr. John D. Clark, and its expanded version, "An Informal Biography of Conan the Cimmerian," by Miller, Clark, and de Camp (which appeared in H, below). "Conan the Indestructible" attempts to unify all of the Conan stories into one history and explain some of the inconsistencies which have been inadvertently introduced over the saga's 50-year history.

F. *Dark Valley Destiny: The Life of Robert E. Howard*, by LSdC, Catherine Crook de Camp, and Jane Whittington Griffin; from Bluejay. This definitive biography of REH provides great insight into the man behind Conan. To know why Conan is Conan, *Dark Valley Destiny* is required reading.

G. *The Conan Reader*, by LSdC; from Mirage. This book contains a number of interesting essays on Howard, Hyborian life, and



Conan, including the excellent article "Hyborian Technology." All of the articles first appeared in *Amra* (see O below).

H. *The Conan Swordbook*, edited by LSC and George H. Scithers; from Mirage. Another book of articles from *Amra*. Not everything here deals with Conan, but the book does contain personal letters from REH and articles by Poul Anderson, Leigh Brackett, Marion Zimmer Bradley, L. Sprague de Camp, Fritz Leiber, Glenn Lord, P. Schuyler Miller, E. Hoffman Price and others. There is one further treasure: Clark, Miller, and de Camp's "An Informal Biography of Conan the Cimmerian."

I. *The Conan Grimoire*, edited by LSC and George H. Scithers; from Mirage. The third and final *Amra* book contains letters and poetry by REH as well as articles by Poul Anderson, Lin Carter, Avram Davidson, L. Sprague de Camp, Fritz Leiber, John Myers Myers, Björn Nyberg, Jerry Pournelle, E. Hoffman Price, and others.

J. *Conan the Barbarian*, by LSC/LC, from Bantam. This novelization of the first Conan film provides an alternative history for the Cimmerian which is inconsistent with Howard's original tales. Nevertheless, this tale by two of Conan's most prolific contributors contains many points of interest for devout Conan fans.

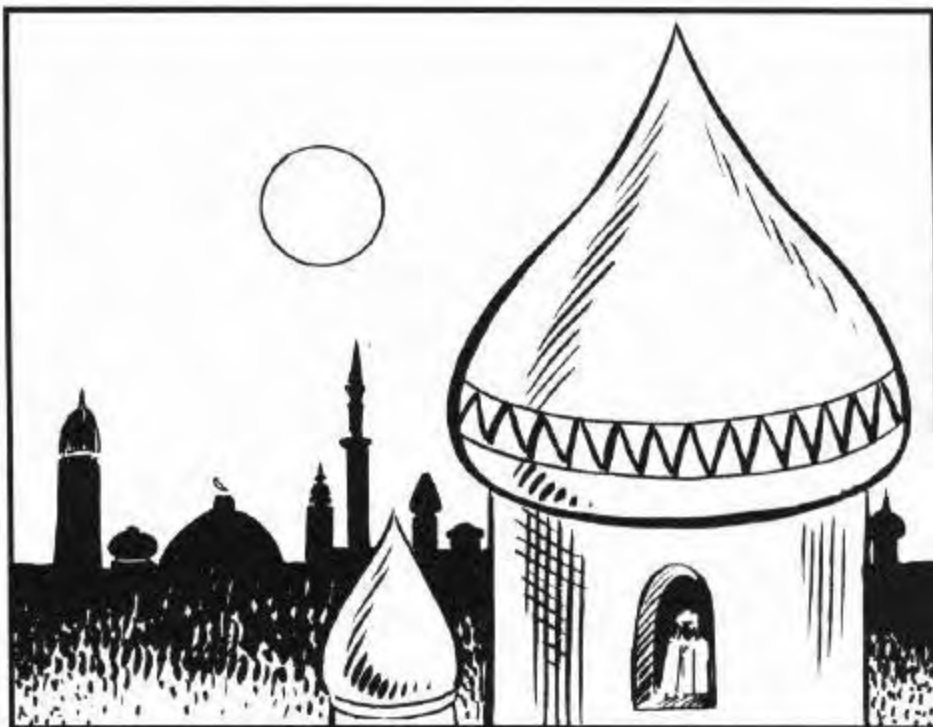
K. *The Spell of Conan*, edited by LSC, from Ace. This work, and its companion volume, *The Blade of Conan* (L), reprint many of the articles from *Amra*. Many of these articles also appeared in (G, H, I), but this paperback edition is much easier to locate.

L. *The Blade of Conan*, edited by LSC, from Ace. This work includes articles by Avram Davidson, LSC, Fritz Lieber, and others, and three Hyborian stories which, although not properly part of the Conan saga, provide a fresh viewpoint of the Hyborian Age.

M. "A Conan Chronology," by RJ. This article lists all of the Conan stories in chronological order in Conan's life, and is the basis for the above list of stories. The chronology of Conan's life has been a subject of great debate, but this article attempts to comprehensively order the stories, giving several options where the chronology is in doubt.

N. *The Last Celt: A Bio-Bibliography of Robert E. Howard*, by Glenn Lord, from Berkley. This comprehensive list of Howard publications covers not only Conan, but King Kull, Solomon Kane, and Howard's Westerns, prize-fighting stories, and poetry. All editions (including foreign language editions) of Howard's work up to the publication date (1977) are covered, including those only marginally based on Howard's own work. *The Last Celt* also contains several sections of autobiographical information by Howard and Howard memorials by H. P. Lovecraft, E. Hoffman Price, Glenn Lord and others.

O. *Amra*, the official organ of the Hyborian Legion, was a fanzine promoting sword and sorcery in general and Conan in



particular. *Amra* is unfortunately no longer published, but back issues can often be found.

P. *A Gazetteer of the Hyborian World of Conan and an Ethnogeographical Dictionary of Principal Peoples of the Era*, compiled by Lee N. Falconer, from Starport. This work describes the places and peoples of the Hyborian Age using only what is stated in the saga, and carefully indicating any extrapolations. There is an associated poster-map beautifully decorated with the heraldic insignia of the nations of the Hyborian world. Each entry in the *Gazetteer* lists the stories where the place was mentioned; due to publication dates, this covers only those stories published in the Ace editions of the Conan books, plus the Marvel Comics (see R, below) up to late 1975. As of this writing, this work is out of print.

Q. *Conan the Bold*, by John Maddox Roberts, from Tor. This story contains many inconsistencies with the published history of Conan, but is otherwise a typical rousing tale, with much information about Cimmerian revenge customs.

R. *Conan of Cimmeria, King Conan, Savage Sword of Conan*, etc.; Marvel/Epic Comics, 1973-current. Marvel Comics and Epic Comics have produced hundreds of four-color and black-and-white comics set in their own version of the Hyborian Age. These stories vary in their fidelity to Howard's vision, with the Roy Thomas stories coming closest to the original, but collectively they can provide valuable images and insights into the world of Conan. Worthy of special note is "The Official Handbook of the Conan Universe," January 1986, written by Alan Zelenetz and edited by Jim Shooter and Larry Hama. This four-color work was illustrated by some of the top artists at Marvel, and contains

some beautiful images as well as a two-page map of the Hyborian Age.

S. *Hyborian Wars*, from Reality Simulations. This strategic play-by-mail game is set in the world of the Hyborian Age. The designers have gone to great lengths to ensure the accuracy of their simulation, and to provide an entertaining game against the backdrop of Hyborian life. Those Conan fans with a strategic bent are encouraged to participate in *Hyborian Wars*.

T. *Conan the Barbarian*, starring Arnold Schwarzenegger, James Earl Jones, Sandahl Bergman and Max Von Sydow; directed by Edward R. Pressman; written by John Milius and Oliver Stone; produced by Dino de Laurentiis. This film tells another version of the origin of Conan, and brings him into contact with the wizard Thulsa Doom (from Howard's King Kull stories).

U. *Conan the Destroyer*, starring Arnold Schwarzenegger, Grace Jones, Wilt Chamberlain, Mako, Tracey Walter, Olivia d'Abo and Sarah Douglas; directed by Richard Fleischer; written by Stanley Mann; produced by Dino de Laurentiis and Edward R. Pressman. This sequel to *Conan the Barbarian* describes Conan's efforts to bring his beloved Valeria back to life and his battles with the Sleeping God Dagoth.

V. *Call of Cthulhu* roleplaying game and supplements, by Chaosium, Inc. This excellent horror roleplaying game of H. P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos is aimed at (relatively) modern settings. However, the horror aspects of the Hyborian Age drew from the writings of Howard's contemporaries in general, and Lovecraft in particular (see sidebar, p. 9). Conversions from *CoC* to *GURPS* are relatively simple. *CoC* is a must for a GM running horror-oriented *GURPS Conan* campaigns.

Conan the Thief

ST 15 (60 points) IQ 13 (30 points) Speed: 7
 DX 14 (45 points) HT 14 (45 points) Move: 8
 Dodge: 7 Parry: 7 (bonus for Running)
 Block: 7

Advantages:

Absolute Direction (5 points)
 Alertness +3 (15 points)
 Danger Sense (15 points)
 High Pain Threshold (10 points)
 Immunity to Disease (10 points)
 Luck (15 points)
 Night Vision (10 points)
 Peripheral Vision (15 points)
 Rapid Healing (5 points)
 Strong Will +5 (20 points)
 Toughness DR1 (10 points)

Disadvantages:

Bad Temper (-10 points)
 Bloodlust (-10 points)
 Greed (-15 points)
 Impulsiveness (-10 points)
 Overconfidence (-10 points)
 Phobia: Magic (manaphobia) — mild (-10 points)
 Sense of Duty: To all women (-10 points)
 Social Stigma: Barbarian (-15 points)
 Stubbornness (-5 points)
 Truthfulness (-5 points)
 Wealth: Poor (-15 points)
 Youth (-4 points)

Skills:

Area Knowledge (Cimmeria)-13 (1 point); Axe/Mace-14 (2 points); Blacksmith/TL2-12 (1 point); Brawling-13 (1/2 point); Broadsword-15 (4 points); Climbing-15 (4 points); Fishing-12 (1/2 point); Knife-14 (1 point); Running-12 (1 point); Shield-15 (2 points); Spear-13 (1 point); Stealth-14 (2 points); Streetwise-12 (1 point); Survival (Mountain)-12 (1 point); Swimming-14 (1 point); Tactics-12 (2 points); Throwing-14 (4 points); Tracking-12 (1 point)

Languages:

Cimmerian-13 (0 points); Hyperborean-11 (1/2 point); Nordheimr-11 (1/2 point); Zamoran-11 (1/2 point)

Quirks:

Says what he thinks (-1 point)
 Dislikes being called a liar (-1 point)
 Sensitive about his age (-1 point)
 Always speaks with a Cimmerian accent (-1 point)
 Contemptuous of civilization (-1 point)

Conan was born on a battlefield in Cimmeria. This isolated northern land is a legend to most of the peoples of the Hyborian age. Of civilized lands, only the Aquilonians have any regular contact with Cimmerians, and that is almost exclusively hostile. Conan's father, a blacksmith, was an exile from his own tribe. Even though he was a valuable asset to his adopted tribesmen, he remained an outsider.

As the son of a stranger Conan grew up fast, tough and lonely. At 15 his strength, skill at arms and moody temper



already made him a respected warrior. In that year the savage tribes of Cimmeria united to destroy the Gundermen intruders at Venarium. Conan was in the forefront of the battle, and Venarium was levelled.

Perhaps it was the sight of southern luxury, or perhaps the big youth was just outgrowing his home. After Venarium, he could not settle down to the life of hunting and herding appropriate to a young Cimmerian. He went adventuring north with the raiding band of Njal of Asgard. He gained more battle skills in raids on the Hyperboreans, and freed Njal's daughter from the Witchmen of Louhi. Conan himself was unlucky and ended the adventure in Hyperborean chains.

He escaped and led the Hyperboreans an epic chase across the northern wastes. The best way out was south across the mountains into the civilized lands. (Though Nemedians might hesitate to call Brythunia civilized.) Once clear of Hyperborea he seems to have never considered an immediate return to the north. The time as a slave had left him with a lifelong prejudice against the servants of Louhi and increased his restlessness and curiosity about the civilized lands.

Conan made his way even farther south, to Arenjun, the city of thieves, notorious even among the sinful cities of Zamora. He had little to offer but a strong sword arm and a willingness to take risks. This led him to the Maul, Arenjun's criminal sanctuary, and the trade of thief. In a tavern he heard of Yara the priest, his impregnable tower and the mysterious treasure called the Elephant's Heart. With a brief pause to kill a sneering Kothian, Conan set off to perpetrate a masterpiece of crime. Whatever he lacked, it was neither ambition nor self-confidence.

This is Conan in his late teens, as he embarks on one of his earliest great exploits. He is six feet tall and weighs 180 pounds. His pale skin and the combination of blue eyes and black hair mark him for a Cimmerian to any knowing eye. He is a skilled sword and shield fighter and has learned some tactics, as far as the slapdash northern style of war allows. He is illiterate and knows little of the complex patterns of civilized life. His often-expressed contempt for the softness of civilized men is at least partly to camouflage his uncertainty. He is very conscious of his youth, and tries to hide it. He is potentially a hero, but as yet neither mentally nor physically mature. He must add both muscle and wisdom before he is Amra the Lion or King Conan.

Conan, Captain of Turan

ST 16 (80 points) IQ 13 (30 points) Speed: 7.25
 DX 15 (60 points) HT 14 (45 points) Move: 8
 (bonus for Running)
 Dodge: 8 Parry: 9 Block: 8
 (active defenses +1 for Combat Reflexes)

Advantages:

Absolute Direction (5 points)
 Alertness +3 (15 points)
 Charisma +1 (5 points)
 Combat Reflexes (15 points)
 Danger Sense (15 points)
 High Pain Threshold (10 points)
 Immunity to Disease (10 points)
 Literacy (10 points)
 Luck (15 points)
 Night Vision (10 points)
 Peripheral Vision (15 points)
 Rapid Healing (5 points)
 Strong Will +5 (20 points)
 Toughness DR1 (10 points)

Disadvantages:

Bad Temper (-10 points)
 Duty: To Turanian Army, almost all the time (-10 points)
 Impulsiveness (-10 points)
 Overconfidence (-10 points)
 Phobia: Magic (magophobia) — mild (-10 points)
 Sense of Duty: To all women (-10 points)
 Sense of Duty: To comrades (-10 points)
 Social Stigma: Barbarian (-15 points)
 Stubbornness (-5 points)
 Truthfulness (-5 points)

Skills:

Area Knowledge (Cimmeria)-13 (1 point), (the East)-12 (1/2 point), (Turan)-13 (1 point), (Zamora)-12 (1/2 point);
 Axe/Mace-15 (2 points); Blacksmith/TL3-13 (2 points); Bow-15 (4 points); Brawling-15 (1 point); Broadsword-16 (4 points);
 Carousing-13 (1 point); Climbing-16 (4 points); Crossbow-14 (1/2 point); Fast-Draw (Arrow)-14 (1/2 point), (Sword)-15 (1 point);
 First Aid/TL3-12 (1/2 point); Fishing-12 (1/2 point); Gambling-11 (1/2 point);
 Jumping-13 (1/2 point); Knife-15 (1 point); Leadership-13 (2 points); Riding-15 (2 points); Running-12 (1 point);
 Shield-16 (2 points); Spear-16 (4 points); Stealth-15 (2 points); Streetwise-13 (2 points);
 Survival (Mountain)-12 (1 point), (Plains)-12 (1 point); Swimming-15 (1 point); Tactics-14 (6 points);
 Throwing-15 (4 points); Tracking-12 (1 point); Two-Handed Sword-15 (2 points)

Languages:

Cimmerian-13 (0 points); Hyrkanian-11 (1/2 point); Hyperborean-11 (1/2 point);
 Khitan-11 (1/2 point); Nordheimr-11 (1/2 point); Shemitish-11 (1/2 point);
 Turanian-11 (1/2 point); Zamoran-11 (1/2 point)

Quirks:

Says what he thinks (-1 point)
 Dislikes being called a liar (-1 point)



Flirts with women he thinks are available (-1 point)
 Likes to travel (-1 point)
 Always speaks with a Cimmerian accent (-1 point)

Conan soon became an expert at thievery, but the life of an outlaw was too confining to suit his ambitions. He moved closer to the mainstream of Hyborian life, as a hired adventurer and recoverer of lost articles. The problem with both these jobs, as Conan came to see them, was that valuable objects so often seemed to be associated with sorcerers.

After a few years Conan was persuaded to try the life of a soldier in the expanding armies of King Yildiz of Turan. He had a strong sword arm and a flair for minor tactics on the scale of bandit raids; he soon learned that was not enough for success or even survival at civilized warfare. He was an indifferent rider and had almost no knowledge of missile weapons.

His lack of skill condemned him to service in the low-paid and low-status auxiliaries. He swallowed enough of his pride to seek instruction in riding; in the use of the complex, slow shooting but accurate crossbow; and in the handling of the supreme Hyrkanian weapon, the recurved, composite bow. Many hours of tedious practice made him a competent rider and an accomplished archer.

The powerful and ambitious young soldier gained the favorable attention of his superiors. He was used both in normal campaigns and as military escort on diplomatic missions. On these jaunts he became familiar with the Himelian Mountains, the Zuagir desert, the Hyrkanian steppe, the Vilayet Sea and the long caravan road to Khitai. These would all be scenes of his future exploits. It was in these years that Conan met Juma the Kushite, the greatest friend of his youth and one of the few warriors who might match the Cimmerian in a melee. What seemed to be a promising career in Turanian service was abruptly curtailed when Conan became involved with the wrong woman, the mistress of his commanding officer.

This is Conan at the beginning of *Conan and the Spider God*. He is 22 and has his full growth, 6'3" and 200 pounds. His pale skin is so bronzed by the sun that he can pass for a native of the southern lands. He is more sophisticated about civilized life, but still from the narrow perspectives of outlaw and soldier. He has enjoyed command and will never again be satisfied as lone outlaw or common soldier.

Amra the Lion

ST 17 (100 points) IQ 13 (30 points) Speed: 7.5
 DX 15 (60 points) HT 15 (60 points) Move: 9
 (bonus for Running)
 Dodge: 8 Parry: 10 Block: 9
 (active defenses +1 for Combat Reflexes)

Advantages:

Absolute Direction (5 points)
 Alertness +3 (15 points)
 Charisma +2 (10 points)
 Combat Reflexes (15 points)
 Danger Sense (15 points)
 High Pain Threshold (10 points)
 Immunity to Disease (10 points)
 Literacy (10 points)
 Luck (15 points)
 Night Vision (10 points)
 Peripheral Vision (15 points)
 Rapid Healing (5 points)
 Strong Will +5 (20 points)
 Toughness DR1 (10 points)

Disadvantages:

Bad Temper (-10 points)
 Enemy: Large group, ship-captains of Hyborian coastal nations, appears quite rarely (-15 points)
 Fanaticism: Love for Bêlit (-15 points)
 Impulsiveness (-10 points)
 Phobia: Magic (manaphobia) — mild (-10 points)
 Reputation: Pirate, -4, large class of people, all people from the coast of the Western Ocean, recognized sometimes (-5 points)
 Sense of Duty: To Bêlit (-5 points)
 Sense of Duty: To all women (-10 points)
 Sense of Duty: To comrades (-10 points)
 Social Stigma: Barbarian (-15 points)
 Stubbornness (-5 points)
 Truthfulness (-5 points)
 Wealth: Struggling (-10 points)

Skills:

Area Knowledge (Black Coast)-13 (1 point), (Black Kingdoms)-12 (½ point), (Cimmeria)-13 (1 point), (the East)-12 (½ point), (Turan)-13 (1 point), (Zamora)-13 (1 point);
 Axe/Mace-15 (2 points); Blacksmith/TL3-13 (2 points); Boating-14 (1 point); Bow-17 (16 points); Brawling-16 (2 points); Broadsword-18 (16 points); Carousing-15 (2 points); Climbing-16 (4 points); Crossbow-16 (2 points); Fast-Draw (Arrow)-16 (2 points), (Sword)-17 (4 points); First Aid/TL3-14 (2 points); Fishing-12 (½ point); Gambling-14 (4 points); Jumping-16 (2 points); Knife-18 (8 points); Leadership-17 (10 points); Riding-16 (4 points); Running-18 (24 points); Seamanship/TL3-15 (4 points); Shield-16 (2 points); Spear-17 (8 points); Stealth-18 (16 points); Streetwise-14 (4 points); Survival (Jungle)-14 (4 points), (Mountain)-16 (8 points), (Plains)-16 (8 points); Swimming-15 (1 point); Tactics-15 (8 points); Throwing-16 (8 points); Tracking-16 (8 points); Two-Handed Sword-17 (8 points)

Languages:

Argoscean-11 (½ point); Cimmerian-13 (0 points); Hyper-



borean-11 (½ point); Hyrkanian-11 (½ point); Khitan-11 (½ point); Kushite-11 (½ point); Nordheimr-11 (½ point); Shemitish-11 (½ point); Turanian-11 (½ point); Zamoran-11 (½ point); Zingaran-11 (½ point)

Quirks:

Says what he thinks (-1 point)
 Dislikes being called a liar (-1 point)
 Enjoys carousing (-1 point)
 Enjoys battle (-1 point)
 Always speaks with a Cimmerian accent (-1 point)

After leaving Turanian service, Conan tried several trades. He returned to Cimmeria for a brief visit, and once more went raiding with the Æsir. He survived a bloody battle only to fall afoul of Atali, the daughter of Ymir.

Tired of both northern primitivism and northern magic, Conan returned to the Hyborian lands and raised a mercenary company. He had some success as a captain in Nemedra and Corinthia. Then he made the mistake of wandering into Argos during a time of poor employment (what civilians call peace). His notions of honor clashed with Argosian law. Conan made it to the deck of the freighter Argus a few strides ahead of the Argosian authorities and left abruptly by sea.

His ship was captured by Bêlit, the pirate queen, and the two fell instantly in love. For three years, Conan was content to let his ambitions rest, happy to be lieutenant to his commander and lover. They plundered the Black Coast until Bêlit was killed in a raid on a lost city of evil. Grieving, Conan turned his back on the sea and set out by land into the Black Kingdoms.

This is Conan at 27. Physically he is little changed. He is even stronger and more enduring. His already formidable war skills have been honed and polished in the hardest of schools. Three years at sea have given him an adequate knowledge of ships and small boats. He has expanded his geographical acquaintance to include most of the Thurian continent and much of the adjacent ocean. As second to one of most successful pirates of the age he has had a first-class practical education in buccaneering and combat leadership.

Conan the Kozak

ST 18 (125 points) IQ 13 (30 points) Speed: 8
 DX 16 (80 points) HT 16 (80 points) Move: 10
 (bonus for Running)
 Dodge: 9 Parry: 11 Block: 10
 (active defenses +1 for Combat Reflexes)

Advantages:

Absolute Direction (5 points)
 Alertness +3 (15 points)
 Charisma +2 (10 points)
 Combat Reflexes (15 points)
 Danger Sense (15 points)
 High Pain Threshold (10 points)
 Immunity to Disease (10 points)
 Literacy (10 points)
 Luck (15 points)
 Night Vision (10 points)
 Peripheral Vision (15 points)
 Rapid Healing (5 points)
 Strong Will +5 (20 points)
 Toughness DR1 (10 points)

Disadvantages:

Enemy: Large group, ship captains of Hyborian coastal nations, appear quite rarely (-15 points)
 Enemy: National government, Empire of Turan, appears quite often (-80 points)
 Phobia: Magic (magophobia) — mild (-10 points)
 Reputation: Pirate, -4, all people from the coast of the Western Ocean, recognized occasionally (-3 points)
 Reputation: Kozak, -4, all Turanians, recognized sometimes (-5 points)
 Sense of Duty: To all women (-10 points)
 Sense of Duty: To comrades (-10 points)
 Stubbornness (-5 points)
 Truthfulness (-5 points)

Skills:

Area Knowledge (Black Coast)-13 (1 point), (Black Kingdoms)-12 (1/2 point), (Cimmeria)-13 (1 point), (the East)-12 (1/2 point), (Turan)-13 (1 point), (Zamora)-13 (1 point);
 Axe/Mace-17 (4 points); Blacksmith/TL3-15 (6 points); Boat-15 (1 point); Bow-19 (24 points); Brawling-18 (4 points); Broadsword-21 (32 points); Carousing-17 (4 points); Climbing-17 (4 points); Crossbow-17 (2 points); Fast-Draw (Arrow)-18 (4 points), (Sword)-19 (8 points); First Aid/TL3-16 (6 points); Fishing-12 (1/2 point); Gambling-15 (6 points); Jumping-17 (2 points); Knife-21 (24 points); Leadership-19 (14 points); Riding-18 (8 points); Running-19 (24 points); Seaman-ship/TL3-15 (4 points); Shield-19 (8 points); Spear-19 (16 points); Stealth-19 (16 points); Streetwise-15 (6 points); Survival (Desert)-14 (4 points); (Jungle)-14 (4 points), (Mountain)-16 (8 points), (Plains)-16 (8 points); Swimming-16 (1 point); Tactics-18 (14 points); Throwing-18 (16 points); Tracking-16 (8 points); Two-Handed Sword-18 (8 points)

Languages:

Argossean-11 (1/2 point); Cimmerian-13 (0 points); Hyperborean-11 (1/2 point); Hyrkanian-11 (1/2 point); Khitan-11 (1/2 point); Kushite-11 (1/2 point); Nordheimr-11 (1/2 point); Shemitish-11 (1/2 point); Turanian-11 (1/2 point); Zamoran-11 (1/2 point); Zingaran-11 (1/2 point)



Quirks:

Says what he thinks (-1 point)
 Dislikes being called a liar (-1 point)
 Always speaks with a Cimmerian accent (-1 point)
 Uncomfortable around wizards (-1 point)
 Enjoys carousing (-1 point)

Conan first attempted empire-building among the Black Kingdoms. A combination of nature and native intrigue defeated him. He moved to Khoraja and seemed to have found a place of power as general and lover of the Queen-Regent Yasmela, but again had to move on.

Conan tried mercenary soldiering again, in a Kothian rebellion. Then, for the first time he joined the *kozaki*. The kozaks were formidable fighters with a rigid discipline in battle. It was obvious that if they could be combined with the Vilayet corsairs called the Red Brotherhood, they could be a major force in the power struggles of Turan and Hyrkania. Unfortunately, the Turanians realized this too and massacred the kozaks and the corsairs.

Conan moved on to the the Kothian border state of Khauran where he became Captain of the Guard. He was on the losing end of a coup and escaped to the desert.

Conan set off on a career as a desert chieftain, but his forces once again were too much too be tolerated by Turan. After desert adventures that once more involved too much magic, Conan appeared alone at the desert outpost of Zamboula. Here he disposed of a fortune in one gigantic drunken spree. Perhaps the failure of one more attempt at rulership had been too much for even his well-armed ego. After some private adventuring, Conan heard that the kozaki and the Red Brotherhood were back in business and returned to the Vilayet.

This time he built the alliance of land and sea raiders into a really formidable power. For a while he negotiated with the government of Turan as if he were an independent monarch. King Yezdigerd mustered the full force of Turan against the outlaw confederacy.

This is Conan on the eve of his confrontation with the armies of Yezdigerd. He is in his early thirties, and physically more formidable than ever. The thoughtlessness and easy anger of his youth have yielded to craft and caution (at least most of the time). His ambition now is to be a power in the land; he will not be content merely to be another captain of hired soldiers.

Conan, King of Aquilonia

ST 19 (150 points) IQ 13 (30 points) Speed: 8
 DX 16 (80 points) HT 16 (80 points) Move: 10
 (bonus for Running)
 Dodge: 9 Parry: 12 Block: 11
 (active defenses +1 for Combat Reflexes)

Advantages:

Absolute Direction (5 points)
 Alertness +3 (15 points)
 Charisma +2 (10 points)
 Combat Reflexes (15 points)
 Danger Sense (15 points)
 High Pain Threshold (10 points)
 Immunity to Disease (10 points)
 Literacy (10 points)
 Luck (15 points)
 Night Vision (10 points)
 Peripheral Vision (15 points)
 Rapid Healing (5 points)
 Status 8 (King of a major country) (40 points)
 Strong Will +5 (20 points)
 Toughness DR1 (10 points)

Disadvantages:

Duty: To Aquilonia, almost all the time (-15 points)
 Enemy: Large group, ship captains of Hyborian coastal nations, appear quite rarely (-15 points)
 Enemy: National government, Empire of Turan, appears quite rarely (-20 points)
 Phobia: Magic (manaphobia) — mild (-10 points)
 Reputation: Pirate, -4, all people from the coast of the Western Ocean, recognized occasionally (-3 points)
 Reputation: Kozak, -4, all Turanians, recognized occasionally (-3 points)
 Sense of Duty: To all women (-10 points)
 Sense of Duty: To comrades (-10 points)
 Sense of Duty: To Aquilonia (-10 points)
 Stubbornness (-5 points)
 Truthfulness (-5 points)

Skills:

Area Knowledge (Aquilonia)-12 (1/2 point), (Black Coast)-13 (1 point), (Black Kingdoms)-12 (1/2 point), (Cimmeria)-13 (1 point), (Conajohara)-15 (4 points), (the East)-12 (1/2 point), (the Pictish Wilderness)-12 (1/2 point), (Turan)-13 (1 point), (Zamora)-13 (1 point); Axe/Mace-18 (8 points); Blacksmith/TL3-15 (6 points); Boating-15 (1 point); Bow-21 (40 points); Brawling-20 (16 points); Broadsword-23 (56 points); Carousing-17 (4 points); Climbing-17 (4 points); Crossbow-17 (2 points); Fast-Draw (Arrow)-19 (8 points), (Sword)-20 (16 points); First Aid/TL3-16 (6 points); Fishing-12 (1/2 point); Gambling-17 (10 points); Jumping-18 (4 points); Knife-21 (24 points); Leadership-20 (16 points); Navigation-13 (4 points); Occultism-12 (1 point); Riding-18 (8 points); Running-19 (24 points); Seamanship/TL3-15 (4 points); Shield-20 (16 points); Spear-20 (24 points); Stealth-19 (16 points); Streetwise-15 (6 points); Survival (Desert)-14 (4 points), (Jungle)-14 (4 points), (Mountain)-16 (8 points), (Plains)-16 (8 points), (Woodlands)-16 (8 points); Swimming-16 (1 point); Tactics-18 (14 points);



Throwing-18 (16 points); Tracking-16 (8 points); Two-Handed Sword-20 (24 points)

Languages:

Aquilonian-12 (1 point); Argoscean-11 (1/2 point); Cimmerian-13 (0 points); Hyperborean-11 (1/2 point); Hyrkanian-11 (1/2 point); Khitan-11 (1/2 point); Kushite-11 (1/2 point); Nordheimr-11 (1/2 point); Shemitish-11 (1/2 point); Turanian-11 (1/2 point); Zamoran-11 (1/2 point); Zingaran-11 (1/2 point)

Quirks:

Says what he thinks (-1 point)
 Dislikes being called a liar (-1 point)
 Always speaks with a Cimmerian accent (-1 point)
 Uncomfortable around wizards (-1 point)
 Enjoys carousing (-1 point)

After Yezdigerd massacred the kozaki, Conan spent ten years adventuring. He tried to set himself up in Iranistan, in the Himelias and in Tombalku. He spent a considerable time in sea-faring both with the Barathan pirates and as a Zingaran privateer. None of his ventures was successful.

Eventually he drifted back north. Here he heard that Aquilonian expansion into Pictland was heating that frontier to an interesting temperature. Conan climbed fast, from scout to captain to general. He defeated the Picts in a great battle at Velitrium and was called to Tarantia in scenes of frenzied rejoicing. The praise was too much for the taste of Numedides, the cruel and jealous sovereign of Aquilonia. Conan was stripped of his rank and imprisoned on a charge of treason. (Numedides may have had some reports of the number of times Conan had wound up supplanting his commander.) Conan was freed by friends. After some startling adventures in the Pictish Wilderness, he led an army of liberation into Aquilonia and strangled Numedides on the very steps of his throne.

This is Conan in his early 40's, just after his triumph over Numedides. He is physically stronger and tougher than ever, and a nearly unequalled master of weapons. He has added strategic skill to his knowledge of tactics, and has more than a little practice at statesmanship. Now that he has conquered it will be seen if he can rule.

The Women in Conan's Life

Bêlit

Bêlit was Conan's greatest love, and the one who holds his heart for most of his life. The story of their last days together ("The Queen of the Black Coast") is one of the great tragedies of the Conan saga.

26 years old, black hair, dark eyes, fair, 5' 9", 130 lbs.

ST 12, DX 16, IQ 12, HT 12.

Basic Speed 7; Move 7.

Dodge 8; Parry 9; Block 7.

Advantages: Ally (N'Gora; appears on a 15 or less); Ally Group (100 Suba Warriors; appears on a 15 or less); Appearance (Very Beautiful) +2/+6; Charisma +3; Combat Reflexes.

Disadvantages: Bloodlust; Enemy (Navies of Hyborian coastal nations, on a 6 or less); Fanaticism (Love for Conan); Greed; Intolerance (toward Stygians, Argosceans and all slavers); Overconfidence; Reputation (Pirate, -4, all people from the coast of the Western Ocean, recognized on a 10 or less); Sense of Duty (To Conan); Vow (Revenge against Stygians, Argosceans and all slavers).

Quirks: Likes rubies; Sensuous; Vain about her beauty; Proud of her ancestry; Impatient.

Skills: Acrobatics-16; Area Knowledge (Black Coast)-13, (Hyborian Coast)-13, (Shem)-12; Bow-18; Broadsword-17; Dancing-16; Fast-Draw (Arrow)-18, (Sword)-18; Jeweler/TL3-11; Jumping-17; Knife-18; Leadership-12; Merchant-13; Navigation/TL3-12; Seamanship/TL3-14; Survival (Jungle)-11, (Island/Beach)-13, (Sea)-14; Swimming-16; Tactics-16.

Languages: Argoscean-11; Kushite-11; Shemitish-12; Stygian-11; Suba-12.



Valeria



Valeria of the Red Brotherhood

Valeria is a warrior woman, one of that rare breed who fight beside (and against) men, and expect to be treated as equals. Although this viewpoint is treated with some derision by most Hyborians, there are enough skilled warrior women out there to keep harassment to a minimum.

Valeria herself appears in the story "Red Nails," where she and Conan travel into the interior of the Black Kingdoms together (more or less). She is no "shrinking violet," although in true pulp tradition Conan rescues her from the villain of the piece. This is Valeria as she appears in "Red Nails."

26 years old, blond hair, blue eyes, fair, 5' 10", 135 lbs.

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

Basic Speed 6.75; Move 8.

Dodge 7; Parry 9; Block 6.

Advantages: Absolute Direction; Appearance (Beautiful) +2/+4; Combat Reflexes; Common Sense; Intuition; Reputation (Pirate +2; with pirates; recognized on a 13 or less).

Disadvantages: Reputation (Pirate, -2, with coastal settlers, recognized on a 7 or less); Wealth (Struggling).

Quirks: Dislikes an unfair fight; Easily frustrated; Likes fighting for the underdog; Proud of her fighting ability; Wants to be treated like a man.

Skills: Area Knowledge (Aquilonia)-12, (Hyborian Coast)-11; Broadsword-16; Climbing-15; Fast-Draw (Sword)-16; Jumping-15; Leadership-11; Navigation/TL3-11; Running-14; Seamanship/TL3-11; Survival (Island/Beach)-12; Swimming-14; Tactics-11.

Languages: Aquilonian-12; Argoscean-10; Shemitish-10.

Isparana

Isparana is an agent for the Khan of Zamboula. Her encounters with Conan are in the novels *Conan and the Sorcerer*, *Conan the Mercenary* and *Conan: The Sword of Skelos*.

27 years old, black hair, dark eyes, bronzed, 5' 7", 105 lbs.

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

Basic Speed 5.75; Move 7.

Dodge 5; Parry 8; Block 5.

Advantages: Appearance (Beautiful) +2/+4; Luck.

Isparana



Disadvantages: Bad Temper; Duty (To Khan of Zamboula, on a 15 or less).

Quirks: Enjoys swimming; Dislikes dull knives; Likes the dark; Likes younger men; Prefers curved swords.

Skills: Area Knowledge (Zamboula)-11; Broadsword-16; Climbing-15; Detect Lies-10; Escape-14; Fast-Talk-13; Hold-out-13; Jumping-14; Knife-17; Lockpicking-13; Pickpocket-14; Riding (Camel)-14, (Horse)-14; Running-12; Shadowing-14; Stealth-14; Survival (Desert)-11; Tracking-11.

Languages: Turanian-11; Zingaran-11.

Karela the Red Hawk

Karela is a bandit leader who first meets Conan in the desert, where she betrays him to her hand. Conan and Karela share a love-hate relationship through several books. This is the Red Hawk as she is when Conan meets her, in *Conan the Invincible*.

25 years old, red hair, green eyes, tanned, 5' 7", 110 lbs.

Karela



ST 13, DX 15, IQ 11, HT 11.

Basic Speed 6.5; Move 8.

Dodge 7; Parry 10; Block 6.

Advantages: Alertness +2; Ally (Hordo, appears on 15 or less); Ally Group (40 bandits, appears on a 15 or less); Appearance (Beautiful)+2/+4; Charisma +2; Combat Reflexes; Extraordinary Luck; Strong Will +5.

Disadvantages: Bad Temper; Bloodlust; Enemy (Zamorani Military; appears on a 15 or less); Greedy; Overconfident; Reputation (Bandit, -4, Turanians, recognized on a 10 or less).

Quirks: Proud of her combat ability; Swears by Derketo.

Skills: Acting-12; Area Knowledge (Turanian Desert)-15; Broadsword-19; Climbing-14; Jumping-15; Leadership-14; Riding (Horse)-14; Running-13; Tactics-11.

Languages: Zamoran-11.

Queen Zenobia



Queen Zenobia

Queen Zenobia is Conan's last great love. Zenobia is the only woman Conan ever married, and he spends more time with her than any other in his life.

Conan met Zenobia in the Nemedian palace at Belverus, when he had been kidnapped by King Tarascus. Zenobia, a slave in Tarascus' harem, helped Conan escape to rescue his empire. In return he promised her a kingdom. Here she is on the day she was crowned Queen of Aquilonia.

26 years old, black hair, brown eyes, fair, 5' 2", 97 lbs.

ST 10, DX 11, IQ 12, HT 9.

Basic Speed 5.25; Move 5.

Dodge 5, Parry 5, Block 3.

Advantages: Appearance (Very Beautiful)+2/+6; Common Sense; Voice.

Disadvantages: Fanaticism (Love for Conan); Low Pain Threshold; Truthfulness.

Quirks: Always wears a low-cut bodice; Likes big knives; Likes tall men; Romantic; Trusts strangers.

Skills: Area Knowledge (Nemedian)-12; Bow-12; Diplomacy-12; Knife-12; Lute-11; Riding-10; Savoir-Faire-14; Sex Appeal-18; Singing-12.

Languages: Nemedian-12; Aquilonian-12.

Friends and Enemies

Taurus of Nemedra

Taurus of Nemedra was a Zamoran thief who joined Conan in "The Tower of the Elephant." He was revered as a prince of thieves in Shadizar, and had a reputation for attempting only the most difficult thefts. Taurus is noteworthy in that he is one of the few characters to have ever teamed with Conan in a Howard story; most of the original stories portray Conan either as a loner, or as the leader of a band.

35 years old, dark hair, brown eyes, swarthy, 6', 280 lbs.

ST 12, DX 15, IQ 12, HT 12.

Basic Speed 6.75; Move 8.

Dodge 7; Parry 9; Block 9.

Advantages: Absolute Direction; Alertness +5; Ambidexterity; Combat Reflexes; Double-Jointed; Language Talent +3; Literacy; Night Vision; Reputation (Prince of thieves, +2, Zamoran thieves, recognized on a 7 or less); Peripheral Vision.

Disadvantages: Enemy (Shadizar police, appears on a 9 or less); Overconfident; Overweight; Reputation (Thief, -3, Zamorans, recognized on a 10 or less).

Quirks: Likes to boast about his accomplishments; Prefers to work alone.

Skills: Area Knowledge (Shadizar)-14; Blackjack-15; Blowpipe-15; Buckler-16; Climbing-18; Disguise-14; Escape-18; Fast-Talk-14; History-12; Holdout-14; Jumping-16; Knife-18; Knife Throwing-18; Lockpicking-14; Occultism-12; Pickpocket-15; Poisons-13; Running-10; Scrounging-12; Shortsword-16; Streetwise-12; Traps-15.

Languages: Aquilonian-14; Brythunian-13; Corinthian-13; Nemedian-14; Stygian-14; Zamoran-15.

Equipment: Leather jacket, knives, shortsword, climbing rope and grapnel



Taurus



Juma

Juma the Kushite

Juma the Kushite was one of the two warriors who could be reasonably compared to Conan (Sigurd of Vanheim was the other). Juma was captured by slavers as a boy, and worked as a field-slave in Shem for many years. When he grew, his masters sold him to the Argosian arena as an apprentice gladiator.

For his victory in the games held to celebrate the victory of King Milo of Argos over King Ferdrugo of Zingara, Juma was freed. He drifted east, eventually joining the soldiers of King Yildiz of Turan.

Conan met Juma when the two traveled across Hyrkania to deliver one of Yildiz's daughters to the Great Khan of the Kuigar nomads (in "The City of Skulls"). They then separated, not meeting again until *Conan the Buccaneer*.

23 years old, black hair, brown eyes, ebony skin, 6'3", 220 lbs.

ST 16, DX 14, IQ 12, HT 14.

Basic Speed 7; Move 8.

Dodge 8; Parry 8; Block 9.

Advantages: Combat Reflexes; High Pain Threshold; Language Talent +2; Rapid Healing; Strong Will +3; Toughness (DR 1).

Disadvantages: Duty (To Turanian military, on a 15 or less); Primitive (-2 TLs); Sense of Duty (To comrades); Social Stigma (Barbarian); Wealth (Poor).

Quirks: Dislikes slavers and slavery; Laughs at "weird" civilized people; Likes civilized warfare; Persistent optimist; Wants to be a king someday.

Skills: Area Knowledge (Shem)-12; (Argos)-11; (Turan)-11; Axe/Mace-15; Brawling-15; Broadsword-15; Carousing-13; Climbing-15; Fast-Draw (Sword)-14; Jumping-15; Riding (Horse)-14; Running-12; Shield-16; Spear-15; Staff-15; Two-Handed Sword-15.

Languages: Argosian-11; Kothian-11; Kushite-12; Shemitish-12; Turanian-12.

Equipment: Chainmail hauberk w/sleeves (PD 3/DR 4; PD 1/DR 2 vs. impaling); Pot helm (PD 3/DR 4); Scimitar (1d+2 cut/2d+4 imp); Medium shield (PD 3); Turanian uniform.

Sigurd of Vanaheim

Sigurd of Vanaheim was a northern barbarian, much like Conan himself. He left the northern wastes, and spent most of his adult life as a Barathan pirate. Sigurd could always be found with a wench on one arm and a flagon of ale in hand.

Sigurd first met Conan on the Nameless Isle in *Conan the Buccaneer*, where he and his shipmates had been shipwrecked. He traveled with Conan for a time, but the two parted ways when Conan left the Western Ocean. They met again in *Conan of the Isles*, and Sigurd went with Conan on that last fateful voyage across the Western Ocean.

This description fits Sigurd just before he was shipwrecked on the Nameless Isle.

33 years old, red hair, blue eyes, fair, 6' 2", 175 lbs.

ST 16, DX 14, IQ 13, HT 14.

Basic Speed 7; Move 8.

Dodge 8; Parry 9; Block 10.

Advantages: Absolute Direction; Alertness +2; Combat Reflexes; Luck; Rapid Healing.

Disadvantages: Overconfidence; Wealth (Struggling).

Quirks: Eats pork seethed in stale beer; Empties ale mugs with one swallow; Perfumes his beard on social occasions; Rolls dice left-handed; Swears oaths describing obscure deities' body parts, e.g. "By the horns of Shaitan and the belly of Moloch!"

Skills: Area Knowledge (Vanaheim)-13, (Barathan Isles)-13; Axe/Mace-17; Brawling-16; Broadsword-17; Carousing-16; Climbing-15; Fast-Draw (Sword)-15; Jumping-15; Navigation-17; Running-13; Seamanship-17; Shield-18.

Languages: Aquilonian-12; Argosian-13; Vanir-13; Zin-garan-12.

Equipment: Axe, chainmail hauberk.



Sigurd

Hordo

Hordo is less Conan's companion than he is Karela's (see p. 122). Hordo is Karela's sidekick, protector, and lieutenant. He is fiercely protective of Karela; there is little in his entire life more important. The origin of the bond between the two characters is not discussed in the stories. This Hordo is also as he was first seen, in *Conan the Invincible*.

Appendices

Hordo



42 years old, black hair and beard, grey eye, rough brown skin, large scar on face, 6' 1", 165 lbs.

ST 14, DX 12, IQ 10, HT 13.

Basic Speed 6.25; Move 6.

Dodge 7; Parry 8; Block 8.

Advantages: Ally (Karela, appears on a 15 or less); Combat Reflexes; High Pain Threshold; Intuition; Toughness (DR 1).

Disadvantages: Appearance (Ugly)-2; Bully; Enemy (Zamoran Military, appears on a 9 or less); Fanaticism (Love for Karela); One Eye; Sense of Duty (To friends and companions); Stubborn.

Quirks: Dislikes roan horses; Dismounts on the off side; Fond of roast camel; Likes to steal; Prefers sour wine.

Skills: Area Knowledge (Turanian Desert)-10; Broadsword-14; Carousing-13; Climbing-12; Jumping-12; Riding (Horse)-12; Shield-14; Strategy-10; Tactics-10.

Languages: Turanian-10; Zamoran-10.

Equipment: Worn tulwar, ring mail, large shield.

Count Trocero of Poitain

Count Trocero of Poitain was Conan's chief supporter in the rebellion against King Numedides. Without Trocero's support, Conan's armies would have never been able to reach Tarantia, and Conan's bid for rebellion would have failed.

The Trocero described here is the nobleman who brought Conan back from the Pictish Wilderness to Argos at the end of "The Treasure of Trancos."

52 years old, black and grey hair, grey eyes, tanned, 5' 10", 155 lbs.

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

Basic Speed 6.5; Move 6.

Dodge 7; Parry 8; Block 9.

Advantages: Charisma +2; Combat Reflexes; Common Sense; Intuition; Literacy; Status 5; Strong Will +3; Wealth (Very Wealthy).

Disadvantages: Age; Code of Honor (Chivalric); Dependents (Wife and infant son, appear on 6 or less); Sense of Duty (To Poitainians); Duty (To Poitain, on 9 or less); Honesty; Truthfulness.

Quirks: Carves leopards (very badly) with his dagger on any

Count Trocero



piece of wood he finds; Dances the saraband when he has been drinking; Lectures about heraldry; Likes roasted swan; Mimics Conan's accent.

Skills: Administration-14; Area Knowledge (Poitain)-18; Axe/Mace-15; Bow-15; Broadsword-15; Detect Lies-15; Diplomacy-18; Falconry-14; Fast-Draw (Arrow)-16, (Sword)-16; Heraldry-16; Lance-15; Leadership-18; Literature-13; Poetry-13; Politics-15; Riding (Horse)-16; Savoir-Faire-16; Shield-16; Strategy-18; Tactics-17.

Languages: Aquilonian-14; Argoscean-14; Nemedian-14.
Equipment: Full plate, broadsword, charger.

Thoth-Amon

Thoth-Amon of Stygia is Conan's foremost sorcerous opponent. Most other wizards Conan encounters during his career quickly fall beneath his blade — not Thoth-Amon. In at least one

Thoth-Amon



story — "The Treasure of Trancos" — Thoth-Amon works indirectly, and Conan never even gets a glimpse of him.

105 years old, black hair, dark eyes, dusky skin, 6', 140 lbs.

ST 11, DX 14, IQ 17, HT 14.

Basic Speed 7; Move 7.

Dodge 7.

Advantages: Appearance (Attractive)+1; Charisma +2; Clerical Investment; Eidetic Memory (Second level); Language Talent +3; Literacy; Longevity; Magery 3; Status 6; Strong Will +5.

Disadvantages: Cowardice; Fanaticism (Set worship); Megalomania.

Quirks: Affects an archaic accent and diction; Dislikes the ocean; Distrustful of voluptuaries; Likes snakes; Likes to work indirectly.

Skills: Alchemy-25; Anthropology-21; Area Knowledge (Stygia)-31; Detect Lies-22; Diplomacy-22; History-24; Hypnotism-30; Occultism-31; Poisons-26; Strategy-30.

Languages: Thoth-Amon speaks all languages (modern or ancient) at 20.

Spells: Thoth-Amon is the premier wizard of Conan's time. Much of his power is bound into his Ring, which provides him with the energy and force of will to dominate even the most powerful demons. Assume Thoth-Amon has any spell available to Hyborian sorcerers at a *minimum* skill level of 20 (this is only a 1-point investment for most spells!). Also, Thoth-Amon has made pacts with many demons and can call them up to serve him virtually at will.

If Thoth-Amon is involved in mass combat (see p. 103), he is worth 2d Magical Strength points even if he happens to be without any artifacts or special items.



Typical Suba Warrior

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

Basic Speed 5.75; Move 5.

Dodge 5; Parry 6; Block 6.

Advantages: Patron (Bêlit, appears on a 12 or less).

Disadvantages: Duty (To Bêlit, on a 12 or less); Enemy (Hyborian navies, appears on a 6 or less); Primitive (-1 TL); Wealth (Poor).

Skills: Seamanship/TL3-10; Shield-12; Spear-13.

Languages: Suba-9; Kushite-9.

Equipment: Large shield, spear.

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