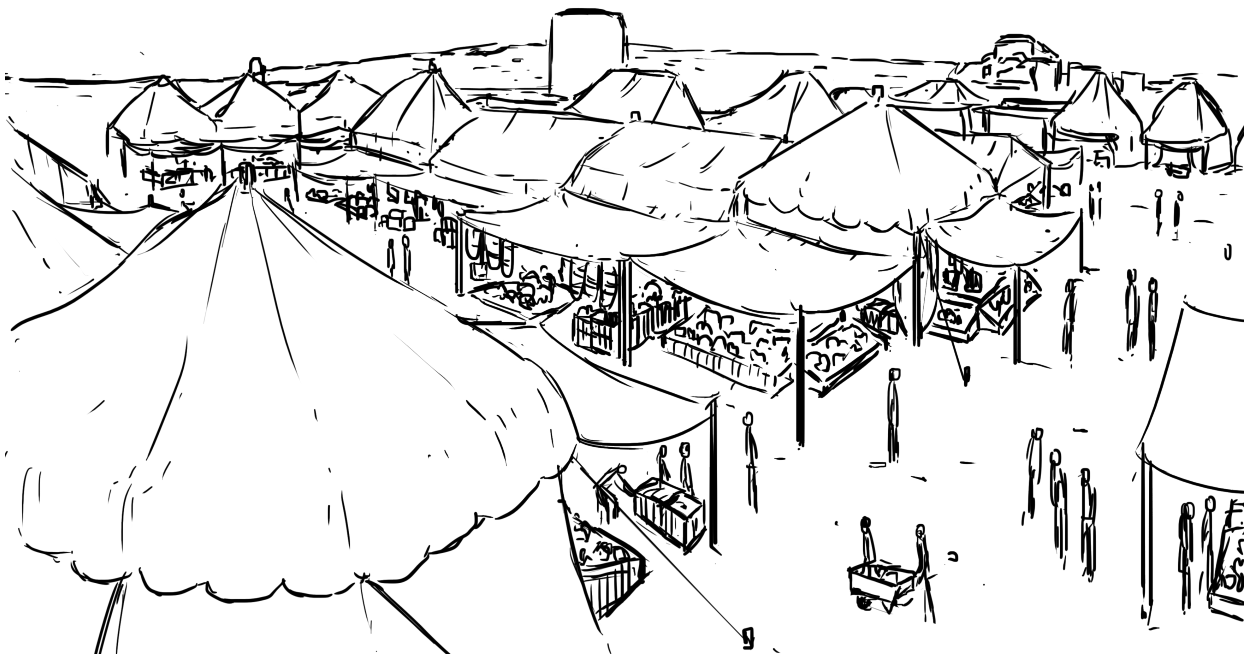


CARAVANS & TRADE



Follow Me, And Die!

Larry Hamilton

SNI-003

Caravans & Trade

Food for Thought and Several Random Tables

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CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| Considerations for Trade..... | 1 |
| <i>Table</i> Considerations For Trade..... | 2 |
| Trade Goods..... | 3 |
| Tables for Types of Goods In a Caravan..... | 5 |
| General Categories of Goods..... | 6 |
| Trade Routes..... | 7 |
| Resources & Their Source..... | 8 |
| Markets & Black Markets..... | 10 |
| Caravansary & Along the Trail..... | 11 |
| Loot Carriers Tables..... | 12 |
| Types of Jewelry..... | 16 |
| Caravans & Pack Animals..... | 17 |
| War Animals & Animal Temperament..... | 18 |
| Convoys..... | 19 |
| Slavery..... | 20 |
| Types of Currency..... | 22 |
| Exchange Rates..... | 22 |
| Gold vs. Silver..... | 23 |
| Favors..... | 23 |
| Magic Trade..... | 23 |

CONSIDERATIONS FOR TRADE

There are several things to keep in mind regarding trade, all of which affect the price.

Difficulty, knowledge, and skill required to obtain the raw material. A common flower like a dandelion used to make dandelion wine is not as expensive as a wine made from the giant dandelions of a far off and near mythical place. Knowing how to find ore to mine, and how to mine it in the most efficient and productive way possible combines knowledge, skill, and chance.

Availability of supply. Various factors from how common something is, to seasonal variability, climate, temperature, altitude, and rainfall are just a few. The supply varies: Common, Uncommon, Rare, Very Rare, or Unique.

Distance to the source of the raw materials.

Local, regional, continental, planet, plane, dimension, time.

Difficulty of the terrain or travel over that distance. If there are mountains like the Himalayas between the source and the market, costs will be affected much more than one that has an easily traversed mountain pass.

Perishability of the item or substance. Most food will be local. A rare animal beloved for its flesh will have to be transported living to be butchered on site, greatly increasing the cost of the meal. Items that spoil or lose their efficacy quickly will be very expensive if not impossible to transport long distances.

Special considerations for transport. Nitroglycerin is much more difficult to transport than its crystallized counterpart, dynamite. Special handling and safety protocols must be followed. Errors in judgment and natural hazards will greatly impact transporting dangerous or hazardous substances.

Skill level required to get the final product.

Skilled workers may be required at every step from finding, collecting, processing, and developing the final product. The more specialized the labor for each step, the more costly a product.

Number of steps, and workers required in the production process. The more it takes for each step, the more costly it may be. If work is cheap but the distance is great, the costs may be about the same as a local product with high labor costs.

Number of people on payroll for transport. If a large number of porters, animal handlers, drivers, and guards are required, the cost will go up.

Special skills required in transport. If driving livestock the drovers must know that animal. Cattle and sheep have different temperaments. Wild animals require even more skill. Specialty products that require specific handling also matter. **See above Special considerations for transport.**

Available transportation methods. If the only transportation is to be carried by someone, unless they are carrying a sack full of precious gems or spices, one person can't carry much value per pound. Pack animals, carts, wagons, boats, barges, ships, etc. all have their benefits and drawbacks. The more time a product has to change transport methods, the more expensive it will be at the final destination.

Available transportation routes. For a low magic pre mechanized world, water, both rivers and oceans are the easiest ways to move the most tonnage. If there is no well-worn track through a jungle and one must re-create it with every crossing, it will be expensive. If a bridge is out, or bandits are on the prowl, costly delays or circuitous new routes, or costly extra guards will affect the cost.

Taxes, tariffs, and fees involved with transport. For every national or territorial boundary that one crosses, the governments will want their share. Either taxed in coin or in kind. Less honorable guards, soldiers, and tax collectors will require a "handling and processing fee" AKA bribe.

Political instability and wars between source and market. If a civil war or orc invasion happens along the route, there will again be delays and the increased risk of spoilage or being late to the annual great market and losing out to a seasonal event, or competitors who got through before the trouble erupted.

Safety and security of raw materials, intermediate materials, and finished goods between collection, working, and delivery.

Investigating interruptions at any point in the supply chain is a good hook for an adventure. A very rare item in a far off place is also a common adventure idea. A wizard who needs a feather from a rare or mythical bird from a lost jungle in the mountains of the frozen north might rather part with gold to let a party of adventurers take the risk to life and limb.

General Considerations For Trade Goods

| Result d6 | Availability | Terrain | Rainfall | Zone | Distance | Perishability | Routes |
|-----------|--------------|-----------|---------------|--------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1 | Plentiful | Plain | Dry | Arctic | Local | Inert/None | Land♠ |
| 2 | Common | Forest | Average | Sub-Arctic | Regional | Raw form only | River |
| 3 | Uncommon | Hills | Wet | Temperate | Continental | Intermediate form only | Sea† |
| 4 | Rare | Mountains | Seasonal | Tropical | Planetary | Environmental* | Land♠ & River |
| 5 | Very Rare | Desert | Below Average | Transition between zones | Planar/Dimensional | Fragile (glass, etc.) | River & Sea† |
| 6 | Unique | Marsh | Above Average | Any | Time | Volatile (flammable, explosive, etc.) | Land♠, River, & Sea† |

*Environmental: Sensitive to changes in temperature, elevation, moisture, movement, magic (presence or lack thereof), etc.

♠Land Route: d6 for number of major rivers to cross, d4 for number of mountain ranges.

†Transportation by Sea will have at least two ports, one for loading and one for unloading. A shallow port may require cargo to be shuttled by boat, or have long causeways to the docks. A shallow port like this will be limited by weather and waves more than sheltered harbors.

TRADE GOODS

WATER: In general, this would be a local resource, but in a desert scenario, water could be worth its weight in gold. Merchants will carry enough water to get to the next known source of water.

SALT: Can be mined from a salt flats, a salt mine, or recovered by evaporation from the ocean. It is a key preservative in pre-industrial societies. Salt does not go bad.

SPICES: More exotic spices from more distant lands cost more per pound or ounce than local spices. Most spices have a long shelf life if kept dry.

PRODUCE: Fruits and vegetables. Only fresh would be available locally within about 100 miles. Beyond that only dried or pickled fruits and vegetables. Dates, raisins, and figs are common dried fruit that are formed into blocks for easy transport

MEAT: Fresh meat, including fish would usually only be transported about 100 miles or so. Beyond that, dried, salted, pickled or otherwise preserved meats could easily be transported over longer distances. “On the hoof” is the best way to transport fresh meat the farthest.

NOTE: Preservation methods for transport are the same methods used to help people make it through the winter or between growing seasons.

Honey: It does not spoil and it has anti-bacterial properties. If it crystallizes, heating returns it to liquid. Honey from ancient tombs has been liquefied and was still good.

Gaming Hooks: Supply will be limited by the availability of various bees, bumblebees, wasps, etc. and flowering plants. A hive of giant bees could be used by some society of humans that had special tools or magic to allow it. Perhaps some giants are beekeepers and there is trade with other races.

Raw Materials: In general, raw materials are first shipped to where they are made into an intermediate or final product. An example of an intermediate product is ore processed into ingots, wool spun into yarn, or logs processed into lumber. Sometimes two or more raw materials are combined to form an intermediate material, such as charcoal or coal and iron ore to make iron ingots. Some craftsmen/tradesmen, such as blacksmiths might process their own ore for further use, or be specialized in processing ore for others.

Intermediate Products: Materials in a state that further products can be made. Iron ingots are made into weapons and armor, thread from wool is spun into cloth, etc. Some intermediate products, may be made into further intermediate products. Rough cut lumber may be formed into various sizes and quality of boards for specific uses. Spun cloth may be died before making clothes or other items.

Textiles: Raw materials include wool or bundles of harvested plants. Clothing, rugs, tapestries, table cloths, napkins, towels, rope, armor, paper, etc.

NOTE: Related to textiles will be the raw materials.

Plant based: Cotton, linen, flax, jute, hemp, bamboo, straw, grass, rush, sisal

Animal based: Wool, silk (cocoons of silkworms)

Plant textiles: Grass, rush, hemp, and sisal are all used in making rope. Coir (coconut fiber) is used in making twine, and also in floor mats, doormats, brushes, mattresses, floor tiles, and sacking.

Textiles involve some form of spinning into thread and weaving and/or braiding.

Straw and bamboo are both used to make hats. Straw, a dried form of grass, is also used for stuffing, as is kapok.

Fibers from pulpwood trees, cotton, rice, hemp, and nettle are used in making paper.

Cotton, flax, jute, hemp, modal and even bamboo fiber are all used in clothing. Piña (pineapple fiber) and ramie are also fibers used in clothing, generally with a blend of other fibers such as cotton.

Nettles have also been used to make a fiber and fabric very similar to hemp or flax. The use of milkweed stalk fiber has also been reported.

Acetate is used to increase the shininess of certain fabrics such as silks, velvets, and taffetas.

Seaweed is used to make a water-soluble fiber known as alginate is produced and is used as a holding fibre; when the cloth is finished, the alginate is dissolved, leaving an open area.

Lyocell is a man-made fabric derived from wood pulp. It is often described as a man-made silk equivalent; it is a tough fabric that is often blended with other fabrics – cotton, for example.

Fibers from the stalks of plants, such as hemp, flax, and nettles, are also known as ‘bast’ fibers.

Wooden goods: Raw timber, i.e. logs, and lumber are the simplest. Finished products include tables, chairs, plates, mugs, shields, hafts for spears and javelins, staves for bows, barrels, arrows, lumber (planks, beams, etc.), carvings. Types of wood, from the common to the rare and exotic. Wooden trinkets, like lacquered necklaces, tableware, handles, spinning wheels, looms, etc.

Metal goods: Unprocessed ore and ingots are the base goods. Finished goods include arms and armor, copper goods, tin goods, bronze goods, tableware (of various quality from copper, tin, bronze, pewter, silver, gold, perhaps electrum or platinum), coinage (ancient coinage bound to a collector(s), or coinage for a payroll for troops, workers (miners, lumbermen, builders, etc.), tribute, etc.), Jewelry of all sorts. idols, icons, craft goods, collectibles, etc.

NOTE: Coins can be counterfeited using base metals. Wizards can use magic and the surprise comes when the spell expires....

Antiques: From all the dungeons and ancient battlefields and ruins, there can be all kinds of antiquities. These would be many of the same things that are recognizable for what they are, or items that no one living knows what it is. Go to a flea market or estate sale at an old farm and look at the strange gizmos. It is amazing what kinds of hand tools our forebears used and to look at them, it is not always obvious what they are. Get an old timer to explain it.

NOTE: Forgery will be an issue. Adventure hook, trader is swindled, or trader is the swindler of his clients, etc.

Art: This can be antiques or current carvings, statues, monuments, paintings, tapestries, rugs, etc.

Stone: Statuary, construction blocks. Usually construction blocks are not hauled very far. Some prince or wealthy patron wanting a rare marble might ship it overland in a long line of wagons running miles. Slate for chalkboards, roofing tiles, etc. Chalk for writing or building, etc. Ancient buildings and monuments were “mined” for their stone to make new buildings. Such miners could go missing when they open up an ancient tomb.

Gems, jewelry, precious stones: These can all be transported by a single poorly dressed man as he moves between venues. A fortune for trade could be had. How does he pull the switcheroo to his respectable clothing to make a legitimate trade? Counterfeits and forgeries would also be a possibility.

Slaves: If you have slaves among the humans, elves, dwarves, etc. There can be long caravans of them. Humanoids, such as orcs, like slaves to do the jobs they hate. Humans could make slaves of war captives of other humans, or orcs, etc.

Exotica: Rare items, ingredients, metals, wood, animals, etc.

Circus/Sideshow/Carnival: Group of performers traveling town to town on their own or as part of a larger caravan.

Anything you use on a daily basis had to come from somewhere. In the ancient and medieval world people made due with what was available locally, within about 20 miles. Trade developed as a means of acquiring something that is needed, useful, or desired from AWAY, i.e. non-local. Most food was local. Most building materials were local. Only large or special construction projects were not local.

Any list of professions will suggest products. If you create a town or city, the occupations of the inhabitants will indicate what they have to trade and suggest items they import.

Only very small towns or cities can be self sufficient. After a certain size, neighboring towns, villages, farms and herds are needed to support it. Rome imported grain from Egypt, for example.

In the ancient world of pre-history, there is a lot of evidence of the tin trade over many thousands of miles. As the easily accessible tin petered out, bronze became scarce. Some theorize that the iron age was helped along by necessity. That is, the scarcity of tin to mix with copper to make bronze was the necessity to figure out how to efficiently heat iron ore enough to separate it from the rest of the material so that it could be worked.

Type of Materials/Goods in a Caravan or on a Ship: d4

| | |
|---|------------------------|
| 1 | Raw Materials |
| 2 | Intermediate Materials |
| 3 | Finished Goods |
| 4 | Food |

Livestock – Sheep, goats, pigs, cattle, fowl (chickens, ducks, geese, etc.) Driven by drovers/herders.

Fresh Food – Fruits, Vegetables, Meat, Fish, Eggs of fowl, honey. Carried in crates, baskets, or jars.

Dried Food – Fruits, Vegetables, Meat (jerky), Fish. Can be wrapped in paper or cloth or stored as is in kegs, barrels, or crates.

Grain – Oats, Wheat, Rye, Rice. Transported in sacks or barrels. Can be used for seed or eating.

Processed Food – Flour of various grains, bread, crackers, pickles, pickled meat or fish

Logs

Stone/Rock

Ore: d6

| | |
|---|--------|
| 1 | Tin |
| 2 | Copper |
| 3 | Iron |
| 4 | Lead |
| 5 | Silver |
| 6 | Gold |

Fibers:

- Wool/Silk
- Plant fibers for spinning/weaving (Hemp, sissal, etc.)

Animal By Products d4

| | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Ivory |
| 2 | Bone |
| 3 | Hides (From butchered or trapped animals.) |
| 4 | Horn |

Intermediate Goods: d4

| | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Rough cut lumber |
| 2 | Ingots of various ores |
| 3 | Spun fibers - undied and died |
| 4 | Woven cloth – died or undied and uncut |

Finished Goods: d10

| | |
|----|---|
| 1 | Wood – Furniture, Weapons, Tools, Shields, Musical Instruments, cups, mugs, plates, etc. |
| 2 | Fibers – Rope, Yarn, String, Thread, Bolts of cloth, clothes, rugs, tapestries, curtains, etc. |
| 3 | Metal – Needles, hooks, nails, weapons, armor, utensils, tools, hinges, locks, chains, coins, ingots, cups, mugs, plates, eating utensils, etc. |
| 4 | Ivory – Carved items. As inlay in other items. |
| 5 | Bone – Needles, corsets, inlay in wooden items. |
| 6 | Horn – Bows, drinking horns, musical, hunting, war horns. |
| 7 | Leather - Armor, shoes, clothing, saddles, tack & harness, sheathes. |
| 8 | Glass – Windows, containers, lab equipment. |
| 9 | Ceramic/Clay – glasses, mugs, plates, jars, etc. |
| 10 | Roll Twice, ignoring this result. |

Containers: d12

| | |
|----|--|
| 1 | Keg – Dry or liquid storage. |
| 2 | Barrel – Dry or liquid storage. |
| 3 | Sack – 50 pounds |
| 4 | Basket – Bushel |
| 5 | Crate – 20 – 50 pounds |
| 6 | Jars |
| 7 | Bottles |
| 8 | Amphorae – Large jars for olive oil or wine. |
| 9 | Chests |
| 10 | Coffers |
| 11 | Bags |
| 12 | Roll Twice, ignoring this result. |

FOOD:

- Seeds & grains grow more or eat
- Nuts raw or roasted
- Fruit - fresh, dried, juice, wine, perry, preserves
- Processed Foods - Mead, beer, flour, bread, butter, wine, jam, preserves, pies, cakes
- Spices
- Vegetables - fresh or dried
- Milk - fresh, butter, yogurt, cheese, fermented
- Meat/Fish/Poultry - Fresh, dried, salted, potted, sausage

ANIMALS:

- Livestock - Food or work
- Skins - Fur, hides, leather
- Meat
- Glue
- Hair/Wool - thread, yarn, felt, cloth, clothes
- Parchment & Vellum
- Eggs - for food and shells
- Feathers - bedding, quills for pens
- Fat - lard & soap

METALS:

- Ores
- Ingots
- Finished Goods - weapons & tools

ROCK/STONE:

- Quarries & Mines
- Rough - gravel or fill
- Gems & Jewels
- Ore

PLANTS:

- Leaves - wrapping, shelter, tinder
- Hay & Straw - Animal fodder, bedding, binder for mud bricks.
- Logs - Lumber, wooden goods, furniture, shields, staves, bows, arrows, tools, barrels, pegs
- Cloth - from linen, cotton, etc.
- String, twine, rope, nets - from hemp, jute, etc.
- Paper
- Ink - Iron Gall Ink (tree gall)
- Pigments for paints & dyes & makeup
- Peat for fire, insulation, fodder
- Oil for cooking, lighting, religious practices.
- Charcoal
- Cork
- Spices
- Sap - Syrup & glue
- Fungus - Mushrooms
- Beer - Water, yeast, grain, (hops)
- Fermented - sauerkraut, kimchi, etc.

CLAY, DIRT, & SAND:

- Building Materials - bricks, adobe, roof tiles
- Pottery - simple, porcelain, china (increasing temperature)
- Glass

INFORMATION

- News & Rumors carried from town to town.

TRADE ROUTES:

- Roads & Trails - walking, riding, carts & wagons, pack animals
- Rivers & Lakes - Rafts, Boats, and small ships
- Seas & Oceans - Ships of various sizes

The need for more raw materials combined with curiosity is the engine of exploration.

River Crossings: d4

| | |
|---|---------|
| 1 | Fords |
| 2 | Ferries |
| 3 | Bridges |
| 4 | Boats |

Mountain Passes once found are important to control. They are the easiest way through a mountainous region.

- A pass that only supports foot traffic will have a lower volume of trade than one wide enough to support wagons. Information and rumors may be the most valuable trade here.
- Passes that allow pack animals are more important to control.
- The most valuable passes to control are those that support carts & wagons. They are also the ones most susceptible to invasion.
- Passes open year round are most valuable and easiest to maintain a force to guard and patrol it.
- Flight or the ability to make tunnels reduce the importance of passes.

Food, Water, & Shelter:

Access to food, water, and shelter affect travel and the distance any trade good can be transported. If food and water must be carried, the amount of merchandise is reduced. If food can be hunted or obtained cheaply, less must be carried.

New Routes are found by: d6

| | |
|---|-------------|
| 1 | Trappers |
| 2 | Prospectors |
| 3 | Explorers |
| 4 | Adventurers |
| 5 | Militaries |
| 6 | Refugees |

RESOURCES AND THEIR SOURCE

Large cities need things like water and food, which mean ancient wells, cisterns, canals, irrigation, aqueducts, etc. and ancient fields and farms. Farms for simplicity sake would include cropland, grazing land for herds, fishing banks along the coast or a lake or river.

Huge stone structures require quarries for the source material. Abandoned quarries and active quarries would be places an adventure might turn. Granite, marble, limestone, sandstone, etc.

Large building project of wood, whether a temple, fort, fleet of ships, or housing for the masses will require access to a large amount of forest. Were ancient forests depleted, are they restored to their former bounds after a thousand years? Stone building projects usually rely on wood for bracing and scaffolding. Without fast growing wood or woody plants, like bamboo, a large city would quickly deforest a huge area. How do sylvan creatures, elves, and druids react to this?

Metals require mines for coinage, armor, weapons, tools, etc. Copper, silver, tin, gold, platinum, iron, mithril, adamantite, etc. FYI – Copper and tin make bronze, copper and zinc make brass. The working of metals will require either large forests to supply wood for making charcoal, or coal mines for coal.

The above mentioned herds for food would also supply the leather for armor, belts, pouches, saddles, etc. Exotic herds could be culled for exotic leather items.

Other types of materials used in civilization are bricks, from simple dried mud bricks of earth, straw, and water, to fired bricks of clay. Again back to using wood for charcoal or mining coal to handle a large number of brick buildings and walls.

Glass is not a necessity, but does require sand and other ingredients, plus wood for charcoal or coal from coal mines to fire it.

Add to that the bakers in a huge city and all their ovens for bread.

One does not need to stat out or write up every little detail of an ancient city. However, keep these things in mind when there is a city or town adventure in a living town or the remains of such things in an ancient ruin of a town or city. For example, the fountains of Rome were the pressure release for the aqueduct system and were the source of fresh water for those who could not afford to have water piped

to their homes. Will there be ancient fountains that are silted in, but contain coins from wishes? Or fountains filled with rainwater, but stagnant and smelly, but also have coins, or a monster and coins?

Roads are needed to connect cities and towns, to tie an ancient empire together. Roads, walls, and buildings can all be constructed using mud to rock, for sandstone; or wall of stone, for granite. Yes, they can be dispelled, but in older editions you have to be a high enough level to do it. If an ancient empire was magic rich and had lots of high-level friendly wizards making buildings, it would explain a lack of or fewer quarries than is otherwise needed. Was a temple devoted to creating food for the masses, and the cities thus needed fewer farms and herds? I can see a very lawful civilization doing such things. Would there be ancient magical fountains that never ran out of water? Magic bread ovens that never ran out of bread, or at least heat to cook it?

What problems and challenges of modern civilization would a high magic society be able to solve using magic as their technology?

Sanitation: Sewers send it all to a pit of a permanent disintegration to avoid stink and disease. Or if they didn't have that level of magic available, would use various creatures to eliminate their waste.. Woe to those lost in the sewers.

Construction/Infrastructure: Magic to assist with building roads, walls, forts, castles, canals, etc.

Ships and wooden construction: Cooperation and trade with sylvan creatures, elves, or druids would provide all the needed wood while preserving the bounds of the forests.

Food and Water: Can be created magically, as suggested above.

Communication: Crystal balls, palantirs, mirrors, or other devices could facilitate communication between an emperor/king and his governors, nobles, and generals.

Travel: Magically created roads for the less well to do and caravans. Teleportation rooms (chambers or stations) for travel between cities, or across cities, or to neighboring kingdoms.

Trade: By the use of superior and coordinated magic in the running of an empire, it could simplify trade due to superior communication and travel capabilities.

Health: Sanitation as described above. Health care by clerics of temples.

Education: There would be great centers of learning, colleges and universities for the study of magic for the benefit of all. Great temples and seminaries for the study of divine magic.

Light: Donations to temples or commerce with wizards would mean everyone has a bulls eye lantern with continual light. Streetlights would have continual light. There would be less need for candles and lamp oil, other than for the poor or ritual use.

A strongly lawful society leaning to good with a high level of magic would have a tendency to have these things. War would be far off and the orcs and goblins would be far away, just a story to most people. But if something happened like a strange disease that spread rapidly via the teleport system faster than it could be cured, chaos would ensue. The chaos caused could bring down the whole system. Wizards who survive try to keep things going and end up fighting for turf, thus accelerating the collapse. Troops are needed to keep order, generals who are lawful, but not good would be tempted to pay orcs and goblins to help fill their depleted ranks. Soon wizards are mistrusted and on the run. Civilization as we know it is gone, cities are abandoned as the masses flee disease and civil war. All the neat things that the ancients knew are mostly lost to the knowledge of all but a few after a thousand years. This is the scenario of my campaign. The players don't know or need to know any of this, just that centuries ago, there was a lot of magic and many wonderful things that a brave and successful adventurer can find now.

In a way, my campaign is a "post apocalyptic" world, but there is no radiation and mutants. Although there might be strange creatures brought about by ancient wizards and their experiments. There are powerful ancient artifacts and devices that require study to use without destroying one's self.

Who wants what is in the city? Who are the enemies of the city? Who or what is the reason the city has walls and gates? As with anything, there are two types of threats to a city, known and unknown.

Obviously, it is much easier to plan for known threats. Unknown threats can only be guarded against based on how similar they are to known threats. For example, in a world without known magic, how would one guard against it? In a fantasy setting with magic, one can only guard against the types of magic one knows about. Invisibility,

illusions, and disguises are all general categories, but some specific magic items, or unique spells would present a threat to undermine all defenses.

For physical threats that are unknown, it can be a new tribe or group of humans or a resurgence of humanoids whose population has recovered after their last beat down.

Vigilance against a threat is hard to maintain all the time without discipline and a very regimented dedication. It always happens that in time, people tend to forget the bad times, and don't see the connections in events that lead to some "sudden" occurrence that in hindsight was building towards its outcome.

MARKETS

Markets tend to be places where merchants sell their goods. Rarely do they acquire goods for re-sale from a vendor at a market. They will seek to identify the source of the trade goods, and establish a contact to get the supply at the best possible price.

Types of Markets d6

| | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Road Side Stand - Wagon modified to be a mobile stall, like a food truck or fruit stand. |
| 2 | Tent or other portable structure. Often in a central city market or bazaar. This is more common in warmer climates with harsh sun. |
| 3 | Market Square. Usually the center of town with permanent businesses around it, temples, and the government building. |
| 4 | Market Hall. An indoor market area, usually very open area under a large roof. |
| 5 | Permanent fixed stalls owned or rented by the merchant. |
| 6 | Separate building for each business. |

Frequency of Markets d6

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Daily |
| 2 | Weekly |
| 3 | Monthly |
| 4 | Quarterly/Seasonal |
| 5 | Annual |
| 6 | Festival/Fair for religious or secular holiday or harvest festival. |

Some markets could be impromptu and held whenever the next trade caravan rolls through. Or it could be seasonal or annual, but the exact timing might vary if a mountain pass is not yet open in the Spring.

Who is the Merchant? d4

| | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Underling/Lieutenant |
| 2 | Junior partner |
| 3 | Partner - Silent or otherwise |
| 4 | Sole Owner - Usually a smaller concern or specialty or high end trade. |

Types of Merchant Companies d4

| | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Single owner - might give son-in-law a job. |
| 2 | Family business, such as & Sons, or & Family |
| 3 | Recent merger of a family business with a larger concern. |
| 4 | Joint-Stock Company with investors who pay others to run it. |

Black Market

A black market can have two forms. Trade in prohibited items, or to avoid taxes. Transit will be via water will use small coves in out of the way places with natural or manufacture caves nearby for warehousing. Land transport will find secluded woods or valleys to hide their goods until they can be brought to the population center. By avoiding taxes, merchants can have the same price as everyone else and make a bigger profit, or a slightly lower price to make up for it in volume. As always demand will determine how strong the supply is. Low demand could glut the market.

The cost of items in a black market are influenced by how many patrols, tax collectors, and other officials must be avoided or bribed or cut in on the profits to bring the trade to customers.

Thieves Guilds will tend to be the movers and shakers behind black market trade. Those not part of the thief's guild may find themselves replaced or "recruited" into the guild.

Some governments may officially ban some trade, but to keep the coffers filled will seek a cut of the profits, essentially a "black tax." Less honorable officials and leaders may just consider it their own money and use it for selfish pursuits rather than repairing roads, walls, and bridges.

See my PDF, *Locks, Vaults, and Hiding Places* for ideas of how smugglers might move goods and payment in and out of a city.

The List

Animals that could be used to transport people or goods:

| | |
|----|---|
| 1 | Dogs |
| 2 | Carrier Pigeon |
| 3 | Bovines: Oxen, Water Buffalo, Yaks, Carabao |
| 4 | Goats |
| 5 | Ponies |
| 6 | Horses |
| 7 | Mules |
| 8 | Donkeys |
| 9 | Zebra |
| 10 | Camels: Dromedary & Bactrian |
| 11 | Llamas & Alpacas & Chihuahuas |
| 12 | Reindeer |
| 13 | Ostriches |
| 14 | Elephants |
| 15 | Caribou |
| 16 | Moose |
| 17 | Bird Types |
| 18 | Lizard Types |
| 19 | Flying Types |
| 20 | Magical & Mythical Types |

Uses of Animals: d8

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Bear a Load of goods (Pack animal) |
| 2 | Bear a Rider (Mount) |
| 3 | Pull a plow (Draft) |
| 4 | Pull a conveyance (Draft) |
| 5 | Entertainment – Racing – Ridden or pulling racing carts or chariots. No riders: dog racing. |
| 6 | Sentries |
| 7 | Herding |
| 8 | Messengers |

CARAVANSARY

A caravansary is a safe place for caravans to rest, seek shelter from bad weather or bandits, and feed and water animals. These could be as simple as stock pens for draft animals and mounts. Many were large stone structures with walls, gates, and towers with numerous stalls for animals and open areas for conveyances.

Trade routes like the Silk Road with near constant flow of trade had regular well maintained facilities. News of the road ahead would be shared of each group's most recent encounters. Activities such as gambling amongst the guards and laborers, or deals amongst the merchants, selling worn out animals to buy new ones, re-shoeing hoofed animals, repairing wagons or pack saddles, etc.

ALONG THE TRAIL

During travel there will be mishaps of traveling merchants and caravans. Signs of past and current troubles will be evident. d8

| | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Spokes of broken wagon wheel(s). |
| 2 | Wrecked cart(s) or wagon(s) |
| 3 | Bones of pack animal(s) or draft animal(s). |
| 4 | Graves, cairns, or bones/bodies of travelers. |
| 5 | Signs of punishment of robbers & bandits. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hanging by rope or in a cage• Crucified• Impaled (Entire body or head on a pike) |
| 6 | Treefalls |
| 7 | Rockslides, Landslides, Avalanches |
| 8 | Flooded rivers & streams. |

TIME

The amount of time since a trail incident will modify what is seen or possible to be found.

- Ancient
- Old
- Years
- Months
- Days

LOOT CARRIERS TABLES

Loot can be carried by an individual or group, or be carried by a pack animal, or a conveyance, like a wagon.

Following are tables for how a monster is carrying it's loot. This set of tables will focus on individual monsters & NPC's and how they carry their stuff.

Let's call anything that is used to carry something, mean that the contents are loot, at least valuable to the one carrying it, or valuable to the one they got it from.

The classic, you've killed the goblins and loot their bodies, is easy to gloss over what their paltry few coppers and silvers are carried in.

Different groups of humanoids will carry their loot in different containers. Perhaps certain kinds of loot might be carried differently than other loot.

One idea I had was what if goblin tribes had a medicine pouch that they carried around their necks, and it included things like the tooth or other body part of those they have killed? Such a pouch might also contain the most valuable thing that they own that an adventurer might consider treasure, like a small gem, gold coin, or other small but valuable trinket. Different tribes could carry different body parts. Different humanoids might have similar pouches, but their size, material, and craftsmanship could vary.

Sizes: d8

| | |
|---|-------------|
| 1 | Really Tiny |
| 2 | Tiny |
| 3 | Small |
| 4 | Medium |
| 5 | Large |
| 6 | Extra large |
| 7 | Enormous |
| 8 | Gigantic |

Loot Carriers Type: d12

| | |
|----|---|
| 1 | Pouch/purse/medicine bag or Belt Pouch |
| 2 | Sacks or Baskets |
| 3 | Coffer (small), Chest (large) |
| 4 | Cask (small), Barrel (large) |
| 5 | Urn or Vase |
| 6 | Vial, Bottle, or Jar |
| 7 | Scroll case or Tube |
| 8 | Amphorae |
| 9 | Wheelbarrow or Pushcart |
| 10 | Blanket/Sheet/Quilt/Curtain/Pillowcase |
| 11 | Skull or Femur |
| 12 | Backpack or Saddlebags (over one or both shoulders) |

Material: d12

| | |
|----|---------------------|
| 1 | Leather |
| 2 | Wood |
| 3 | Hide |
| 4 | Skin |
| 5 | Hair |
| 6 | Felt (pressed hair) |
| 7 | Flax |
| 8 | Burlap |
| 9 | Cotton |
| 10 | Silk |
| 11 | Bone |
| 12 | Gems |

Quality: d6

| | |
|---|------------|
| 1 | Crude |
| 2 | Poor |
| 3 | Functional |
| 4 | Sturdy |
| 5 | Overbuilt |
| 6 | Excellent |

Condition: d6

| | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Rotted/Falling Apart |
| 2 | Holes/Tears/Threadbare/Runs – One more bit of damage or piece of loot, and it will start to fail without immediate repair. |
| 3 | Used but Functional |
| 4 | Used really good condition |
| 5 | Nearly new |
| 6 | New & unused |

Decoration: d6

| | |
|---|-----------------|
| 1 | None |
| 2 | Missing/Damaged |
| 3 | Simple |
| 4 | Standard |
| 5 | Fancy/Ornate |
| 6 | Ostentatious |

Construction: d10

| | |
|------|--|
| 1-2 | Make-shift – (Like a classic trope of a burglar grabbing a sheet or tablecloth to make a bag.) |
| 3-4 | Self-made (Whether out of necessity, a point of pride, or a right of passage.) |
| 5-6 | Special Made (All Medicine Pouches are made by the tribal shaman, or a special craftsman, or with a special process.) |
| 7-8 | Standard (Made by standard craftsman or process.) |
| 9-10 | Custom (Made by a craftsman either to special order, or by the best known craftsman, or with special materials, like dragon hide.) |

Properties: d%

| | |
|-------|-------------|
| 1-80% | Non-Magical |
| 81-00 | Magical |

If

Magical What Qualities?:

Does it glow?

Does it give off heat, cold, mist, smoke, or something else?

Does it present these, or other characteristics, when in the presence of a certain type of creature or substance. Is glowing its only effect? I

Extra space – Like a bag of holding, but specifics could differ.

Bonus – Adds +1 to +5 for saves (can vary to have different saves for different things.)

Detection – Standard detections, evil/good/alignment, invisibility, magic, truth/lies, etc.

Protection – Evil/Good, undead (all or specific types), demons, devils, other planar, etc.

Control – Humans, demi-humans, humanoids, dragons, giants, elementals, etc.

Communication – For example, speak a specific language, tongues, comprehend languages, telepathy, ESP, speak with animals, etc.

Cursed – Looks like any other item, but with an opposite or corrupting affect. For example, a protection spell is evident, but it actually attracts undead. Perhaps only zombies, and gives clerics in the area a -1 on their roll to turn/control, or -2 if the cleric attempting the turn is the one in possession of the object.

Duplication – Items left in the container for 24 hours are duplicated. This only works for the specific type of item a device was designed to duplicate. For example, a scroll case might only duplicate maps, or only messages. It cannot duplicate magical scrolls. A cursed or evil item might “bite” the user for 1-2 hp for blood to power it. A purse might duplicate coins, but they would be illusory, or fool’s gold as the spell and only last for the minimum caster level. A special wand case might re-charge the wand at 1-3 charges per day of the minimum caster level in the wand. An uncharged wand would either not be charged, or roll to see if its magic is drained away, or it turns to dust, or explodes.

Abundance – Food, water, or whatever the container is designed for never seems to run out.

Containment – Genie or other powerful creature. Could work like a magic lamp and give control and wishes, or could only appear to be so and rubbing it frees the creature for good, or for a brief period to wreak havoc. Perhaps it will try to capture the bearer to trade places.

Travel – Dimension door/teleport/fly/jump/spider climb

Team Carry:

Monsters/Bearers/Porters can carry stuff in bags, packs, or baskets on an individual basis, but larger items require two or more to carry. Such as elephant tusks, a caged live animal, a dead trophy animal, large chest, etc. Such means of carry can be manhandling, or using a pole, poles, or other device. Long trains of such bearers can make up a caravan for a merchant, adventurer, or tribute taken from the defeated, or tribute offered to avoid the devastation of war.

Team Carry Methods/Devices: d6

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Two or more carrying/manhandling a large item. (Think of moving an upright grand piano up and/or down stairs, without equipment, and you get the idea.) |
| 2 | Two Using a Pole to carry something. |
| 3 | Two using two poles to carry something. This could be a litter or other heavy object. |
| 4 | Four or more carrying something with two large poles. This could be a caged live animal, or a palanquin bearing someone or an idol. |
| 5 | One or more pulling something with a travois. |
| 6 | One pushing a wheelbarrow or pushcart. |

Animal Transport: d4

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Any pack animal |
| 2 | Any riding animal that can carry something in addition to its rider |
| 3 | Any animal, monster, etc. that can carry a container, or pull a conveyance. |
| 4 | NPC/Slave (This would be anyone forced to carry the loot of another. It’s not their loot, and in the case of slaves, for the newly enslaved, it might have once been their loot.) |

***NOTE:** Most pack animals have specialized pack saddles designed to maximize the amount that can be carried and distribute it in a way that allows the animal to carry the largest load the farthest distance without injury. Those that don’t see the pack animal as more than a means of transport, i.e. don’t see the animal as loot, may not treat it well.

Conveyances: Any device used for transport.

Land Based: d6

| | |
|---|---------|
| 1 | Carts |
| 2 | Wagons |
| 3 | Sleds |
| 4 | Sledges |
| 5 | Travois |
| 6 | Coach |

Water Based: d6

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Raft |
| 2 | Canoe |
| 3 | Boat |
| 4 | Ship |
| 5 | Canal boat (either pulled by a mule team and driver, or poled by the crew.) |
| 6 | Barge |

Air Travel: (This will be limited by the weight limit. Only used for the most critical, priceless, or time sensitive transport.)

- Magic Devices/Spells
- Flying Creatures

Magical Travel: (Travel that is not obvious to non-wizards. Even more weight restricted than flying. Usually by device or spell.)

Teleportation, etc.

Who might be carrying loot? d6

| | |
|---|--------------|
| 1 | Individual |
| 2 | Small Group |
| 3 | Medium Group |
| 4 | Large Group |
| 5 | Huge Group |
| 6 | Horde |

Type of Group/Reasons for Hauling or Moving Loot: d4

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Expedition (Adventurer(s)/ Explorer(s)/ Knowledge Seeker(s)) |
| 2 | Raid (Bandits/Monsters/War) |
| 3 | War (Hauling spoils of war as campaign continues, or after victory and returning home.) |
| 4 | Trade (Caravan/Local, Regional, or Small Merchant) |

TYPES OF JEWELRY

Jewelry Type (d20)

| | |
|----|---|
| 1 | Anklet – Like a bracelet, but on the ankle. |
| 2 | Armlet – Upper arm, can be thicker. |
| 3 | Badge – Pin to identify oneself to others. Like a watchman or a clan badge. |
| 4 | Bracelet – Various widths for the wrist. |
| 5 | Bracer – A decorative item, not the armor or arm protection for archers. |
| 6 | Brooch – Decorative jewelry item designed to attach to garments to hold them together. |
| 7 | Buckle – Holds a belt or other article closed. |
| 8 | Chatelaine – Holds keys and various useful implements like scissors, thimble, watch, household seal, etc. |
| 9 | Circlet – Circle of metal worn on the head. |
| 10 | Collar – Like a necklace, but hangs flat to the body. Can be attached to a garment. |
| 11 | Crown |
| 12 | Earrings |
| 13 | Hairpin |
| 14 | Necklace – see subtables |
| 15 | Pin – Decorative item attached to the clothes. May be functional, holds clothing in place. |
| 16 | Ring – see subtable |
| 17 | Sash – Ribbon around the body, from shoulder to opposite hip, or around the waist. |
| 18 | Tiara |
| 19 | Toe Ring |
| 20 | Torc – Rigid metal neck ring, one or more pieces twisted together. Open at one end. |

Ring Subtable (d8)

| | |
|-----|-----------------------------|
| 1-2 | Signet |
| 3-4 | Thumb Ring (like an archer) |
| 5-6 | Key |
| 7-8 | Poison (hidden compartment) |

Necklace Subtables

Type (d6)

| | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Choker 14-16 inches |
| 2 | Princess 18-20 in |
| 3 | Matinee 22-23 in |
| 4 | Opera 30-35 inches |
| 5 | Rope > 35 inches |
| 6 | Lariat (Very long, looped multiple times.) |

Feature (d6)

| | |
|-----|---|
| 1-3 | None |
| 5-6 | Pendant – Something that hangs down from a necklace. (see subtable) |

Pendant Subtable (d10)

| | |
|------|--|
| 1-2 | Cameo – Positive (relief), raised image, as opposed to a negative image (intaglio). |
| 3-4 | Emblem – Abstract or other image, a moral truth, a king or saint, or a badge or patch, like a coat of arms. |
| 5-6 | Locket |
| 7-8 | Medal or Medallion – Small, flat and round or oval piece of metal that is marked by casting, stamping, engraving, etc. with an insignia, portrait or other artistic rendering. |
| 9-10 | Combination of above. |

Pendant Special Feature (d6)

| | |
|-----|---|
| 1-2 | Amulet/Cartouche – Alleged power to protect owner from danger or harm. Holy symbols, holy water, wolfsbane, belladonna, and garlic can be considered amulets. |
| 3-4 | Talisman – Believed to bring luck or other benefit, though it can offer protection as well. Items such as four leaf clover, or rabbit's foot. |
| 5-6 | Holy/Unholy Symbol |

Combination Pieces

Combination pieces, like connected ring and bracelet or bracelet and armband, or nose ring and ear ring. There's also hair combs, ear wraps (wrap around ear), ear cuffs, and headbands; earring can be sub divided into pierced, clamp, wires, etc.

CARAVANS AND PACK ANIMALS

CARAVAN: A group of travelers, such as merchants or pilgrims, journeying together for safety in passing through deserts, hostile territory, etc.

A caravan could be just a group of merchants, or just a group of pilgrims, or just a group of travelers/settlers/colonists; or a combination. While researching an article on slavery, I learned the term “coffle” – a line of slaves, prisoners, or animals fastened together. A chain gang is a coffle.

Travelers could be like the wagon trains of the old west. Think of reasons people went west: gold, farm land, open land for cattle ranching, lumber and other resources, etc. Or they could be like in ancient and medieval times, religious pilgrims, explorers, an embassy from one great king to another, etc.

Merchant only caravans (but not specifics of goods carried) and pilgrim only caravans are given in most bestiaries.

In the real world caravans would often be a combined group of merchants, pilgrims, and travelers going to a certain common destination.

In less wild areas or with good roads/trails, it makes sense to have merchant only or pilgrim only caravans. But where raiders/bandits are at large, groups will join together to outnumber the bandits and war bands.

Prior to trains and long-haul trucks, trade goods were moved overland via wagons, but only when the road, trail, or terrain allowed it, or via pack animal. Even today, the modern U.S. military used horses and mules in the mountains of Afghanistan.

Pulled Vehicles: Wagon, cart, sledge, carriage, trolley, plow, travois, canal boat, etc.

People were used to haul freight, like a line of bearers or porters through the jungle, or carrying the ruler on a palanquin or litter.

Howdahs were used on the backs of camels and elephants. Some were used for people transport and some elephant howdahs were designed for use in war.

Different pack animals in a variety of world cultures:

Horses, mules, oxen, donkeys, Camels (dromedary or Bactrian), Elephants, Llamas and alpacas, dogs, goats, reindeer, and yaks to the list.

Homing pigeons transport material, usually messages on small pieces of paper, by air.

HARNESS ANIMALS:

An intermediate use is to harness animals, singly or in teams, to pull (or haul) sleds, wheeled vehicles or plow.

Oxen are slow but strong. An acre was originally defined as the area a span of oxen could plow in a day. The Water buffalo and Carabao, domesticated water buffalo, pull wagons and ploughs.

Draft horses are commonly used in harness for heavy work. Several breeds of medium-weight horses are used to pull lighter wheeled carts, carriages and buggies when a certain amount of speed or style is desirable.

Mules are considered to be very tough and strong, with harness capacity dependent on the type of horse mare used to produce the mule foal. *Because they are a hybrid animal and usually are infertile, separate breeding programs are required.*

Ponies and donkeys are often used to pull carts and small wagons, historically, ponies were commonly used in mining to pull ore carts.

Dogs are used for pulling light carts or, particularly, sleds. (e.g. sled dogs such as Huskies) for both recreation and working purposes. [Note: The dog carts mentioned in the Sherlock Holmes stories is a type of horse drawn vehicle. I did find a picture of a dog pulling a milk cart with big milk cans on it from the late 1800's. There are modern makers of carts for dog to pull loads or people.]

Goats also can perform light harness work pulling carts

Reindeer are used in the Arctic and sub-Arctic Nordic countries and Siberia.

Elephants are still used for logging in South-east Asia.

Less often, camels and llamas have been trained to harness.

According to Juan Ignacio Molina the Dutch captain Joris van Spilbergen observed the use of chiliquenes (a llama type) by native Mapuches of Mocha Island as plough animals in 1614.

Assorted wild animals have, on occasion, been tamed and trained to harness, including zebras and even moose.

WAR ANIMALS:

A war elephant was an elephant trained and guided by humans for combat. Their main use was to charge the enemy, trampling them and breaking their ranks and instilling terror. An elephantry is a cavalry unit containing elephant-mounted troops.

It is commonly thought that all war elephants were male because of males' greater aggression, but it is rather because a female elephant in battle will run from a male; therefore only males could be used in war, whereas female elephants were more commonly used for logistics.

Dogs used for guard duty, messengers, and occasionally in battle.

Dogs are used for herding and guarding herd animals, sheep, goats, cattle, etc.

Ostriches are raised for food, leather, and feathers (for decoration or feather dusters. They are also been raced by riding, or pulling carts. This gives them the potential to haul goods, but it may not be practical.

Adventurer/Explorer: Some merchants will be adventurer merchants seeking to expand the trade routes, or find something new to trade. Think Marco Polo.

ANIMAL TEMPERAMENT

Mounts: d6

Unskilled riders, or those unfamiliar with a particular mount may have some behavior to deal with.

| | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Biters |
| 2 | Kicker |
| 3 | Stepper (Step on your feet while saddling or preparing to mount.) |
| 4 | Nudger/Nuzzler |
| 5 | Runners (Will take the bit in their teeth and ignore the reins.) |
| 6 | Tree bumpers (rider's legs rasped by trees, posts, rocks, buildings) |

Animals will exhibit many of the same temperaments and personalities as people: d12

| | |
|----|-----------------------------|
| 1 | Aloof |
| 2 | Demanding |
| 3 | Stupid |
| 4 | Mean |
| 5 | Big Baby |
| 6 | Sweetheart |
| 7 | Defender |
| 8 | Companion |
| 9 | Malevolent |
| 10 | Helpful |
| 11 | Loyal |
| 12 | Hungry/Always Trying To Eat |

Animals from Myth, Legend, and Fiction

Giant birds, lizards, and any other creature could be devised for riding, plowing, pushing, or pulling wagons.

CONVOYS

Related to caravans are convoys. Convoys are used as a way to protect merchant shipping from submarine warfare. They can be used in a modern setting, from the Victorian/Edwardian era to the present, and beyond in science fiction or apocalyptic settings.

Convoys are basically naval caravans, but rather than being in a line and limited to the available space of the road or terrains, convoys can spread out more, yet remain close enough to provide support to the other ships nearby. There are still “choke points”, like the English Channel, or other narrow straits that require the ships to go single file. Such places would be avoided unless it was absolutely necessary.

The idea of convoys and navies is often applied to space travel, and convoys of merchant craft might be a way to deal with cloaked ships.

Unlike planet bound surface navies, the areas where things narrow would tend to be an unavoidable asteroid or debris belt. Approaching a space dock, planetary orbit, or landing planet side would be the choke points that an enemy or pirate ship(s) would exploit. Only the most advanced of planetary defense systems include planetary shields and heavy weapons both in orbit and planet based.

Convoys also apply to motor vehicles, like a convoy of supply trucks with gear, food, fuel, etc. It is also the name of a popular song from the “trucker era” of music from the late 70’s and early 80’s. The song was later made into a movie with Kris Kristofferson and Ali MacGraw.

Convoys of motor vehicles will be limited to roads and passable surfaces if they have wheels or tracks. Hovercraft will have more flexibility of terrain. If the water transport variety, they are limited to relatively flat surfaces on land. Anti-gravity hovercraft will be limited based on the altitude they can maintain. If they are limited to a meter off the surface, they cannot cross the Grand Canyon directly, but must make the descent as any other traveler. However, if they can basically fly, there is no practical limit to the terrain they can cover.

Convoys can be used to transport the same or similar goods, or a variety of goods. Troop convoys can be used to move armies and their supplies and equipment across the sea or the stars.

VIKINGS

The vikings were great explorers, who sought new lands and new goods for trade. Their influence via trade was perhaps greater than that of their raids. However, it is the dreaded viking raid that made the biggest impression on most of Western Europe. Of course, the survivors of many of these raids were the monks who were able to write about their experiences and preserve their side of these encounters. I am not aware of any direct connections to the viking side of these raids. Do the sagas that we have today hold such information?

Population growth lead to seeking new lands and new wealth. When money is based on gold and silver, of which there is a finite supply, one has to find it through either mining it or taking it from someone else. This is a common motivation throughout history. The same motivation will exist in RPG’s, like D&D, whose economies are based on coins of precious metals. Land and certain other items that don’t decay will also hold value.

So as the vikings were motivated by an expanding population and so forth, other groups of men and humanoids will have similar motivations for their raids and efforts at expansion. Other motivations might be doing the bidding of their deity or being manipulated by someone on a quest for power. Such machinations may political or magical manipulation. A shortage of females might prompt gathering brides, or for a female dominated society, it might prompt gathering grooms.

Concentrations of wealth, such as cities will be attractive. Only walls that are well defended will provide the most protection. Even that might not be enough for a determined and motivated force. Caravans or convoys of merchant ships might also be targets.

Bribes, threats, tricks, and other things might be used to get inside the walls of a city to allow a large force of raiders inside to get what they are after.

Some ruler or other type of power broker or power seeker might seek to manipulate a viking like group into going after his enemy or some other target to facilitate his own plans. A powerful wizard seeking a specific item, might use a raid to distract all the guards to defend the walls, to make it easier to pop in and take what she is after. An evil cleric might do something similar to gain an item, desecrate a good temple, or establish a foothold of evil in a city.

SLAVERY IN RPGS

Slavery is often referred to in fantasy role playing games, FRPG's, as evil. However, the scale of good/evil and how each game nation or culture views slavery would vary, as it did from ancient to modern times. Usually, on nine point alignment systems, chaotic good is viewed as opposed to slavery, while lawful good might be accepting of it, provided the methods of slavery and treatment of slaves falls within what is culturally and legally acceptable. This topic is sensitive as there is still slavery in the world today.

It is generally understood that the bad guys, such as orcs, keep slaves. Some human groups might keep slaves.

Does or did slavery exist in your world? Is slavery more akin to some aspects of antiquity, where some or all slaves had certain rights and could somehow expect to return to or gain their freedom? Or is it more like more recent examples of slavery, where slaves are absolute property to the point that their descendants are slaves, and their treatment varies by who their masters and overseers are? Would there be state slaves doing the work projects of the state? Would slaves be limited to conquered peoples, i.e. war prisoners, or criminals? What kinds of crimes would relegate one to slavery? Would all nations keep slaves, or only the most "primitive", "evil", or some such? Would slavery be such that even predominately good nations have slaves?

Debt slavery is a way for one to get out of a hole by giving their labor for a set term in exchange for the master paying off their debts. This is related to voluntary slavery where someone becomes a slave so that someone else has to worry about where their food, clothing, and shelter comes from. This might be common in times of indentured servitude, like was used by many young men from England and the German states to pay for passage to the English colonies in North America. It is estimated that between one third and one half of white males who came to the American colonies between about 1630 and the American Revolution were indentured servants. Indentured servants and their bond holders each had responsibilities to uphold. If an indentured servant ran off, they were found and sent back to finish out their term. Some bonds were re-sold, mid term, and the servant was stuck in perpetual indenturement, thus becoming a slave for life.

Colonial apprenticeship programs where a master craftsman took on someone as an apprentice was much like indentured servitude, and could be

initiated to bring the person to the colonies or for someone already in the colonies to get into a trade. This system could, of course, be abused, and apprentices ran away, much like other indentured servants.

Some of the first Africans brought to the American colonies in 1619 were indentured servants, because they had been baptized and were Christian, English law forbade enslaving Christians. So until 1640, African brought to the British Colonies were indentured servants, and not chattel slaves. Early on, slaves in North America could save up and buy their freedom, but that soon changed.

In antiquity, there was all variation of slavery. Slaves could be very well educated and entrusted with the education of the master's children. Slaves could also be the ones doing dangerous and difficult jobs, such as mining underground.

Often, the largest supplies of slaves in antiquity were prisoners of war, that is, soldiers captured in battle after their defeat by the Roman Legions. At times, the Romans enslaved entire populations. Such slaves were sold to bring money into the state coffers. The needs of the state were maintained by keeping a portion of the slaves for government jobs. Famous examples of Roman slaves are gladiators, who could win their freedom, such as Spartacus, famous for leading a slave revolt.

In feudal Europe, there were varying levels or grades of serfs. In England, for example, there were four types of serfs, the lowest of which were actually slaves. Serfdom faded in Western Europe between the 14th and 16th centuries, and lasted in the Russian Empire until 1866.

The behavior and attitude of slaves is dependent upon their treatment. Underfed, poorly clothed and sheltered slaves who are mistreated become a powder keg and are ripe for revolt against their masters at the provocation that becomes the last straw. Some slave revolts, like that of Spartacus, come very near to reaching their goal of freedom, but usually, they end in a lot of death for the slaves, and severe punishments for those left behind to knock them back into compliance.

If you have slavery in your world, here are some things to consider. **NOTE:** This assumes a human-centric world and a human government, from my interpretation. If you have a game where another race is in charge, the same questions need to be considered.