

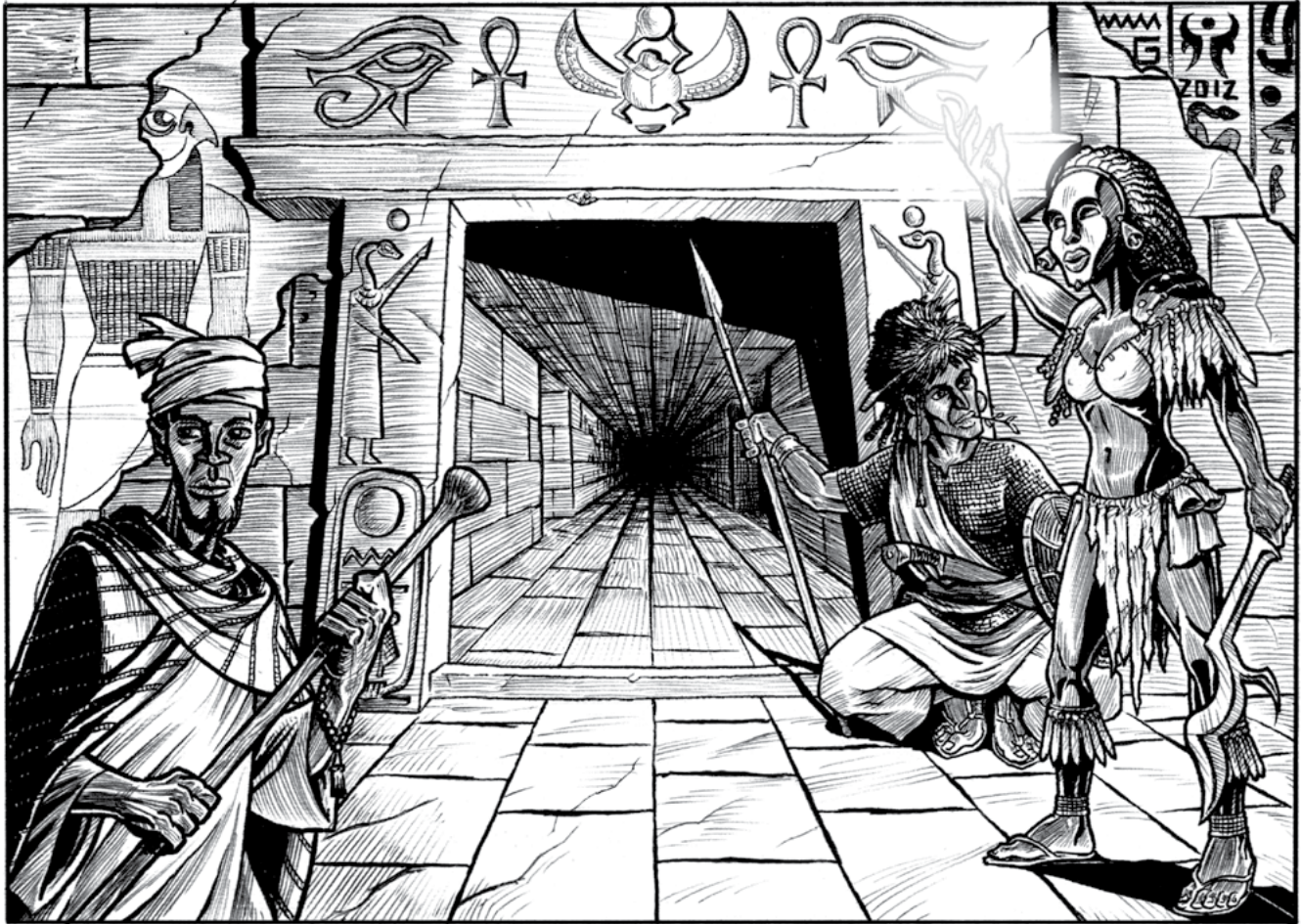


The poster depicts a dramatic scene set in a dark, ancient cave. On the left, a woman with long, flowing white hair and a determined expression is shown in a dynamic pose. She wears a purple and gold patterned tunic and a matching skirt. In her right hand, she holds a long, glowing blue sword that emits a bright light. On the right, a man is seen from the back, looking towards the woman. He has dark hair and is wearing a dark, fur-trimmed tunic. He holds a long spear with a dark, ornate head. The cave walls are covered in ancient carvings and paintings, including a large, stylized face of a person. The lighting is dramatic, with the primary light sources being the glowing sword and a torch visible in the bottom right corner. The overall tone is adventurous and mysterious.

SPEARS OF THE DAWN

FANTASTIC ADVENTURE IN AN UNTAMED LAND

SPEARS OF THE DAWN



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IT IS A TIME OF SUFFERING

The Three Lands groan under the weight of the past. The scourge of the half-living Eternal and their undying malice was driven back into the east in the time of your grandfathers, but in the forty years since that time the Five Kingdoms have only squabbled, fought, and shunned each other. Some men and women dream of a better day, of a land of peace and abundance as in the days of the Old Kings, but there are many who would rather buy an age of bitterness if it brings them present power. People flee the troubled places in search of safer lands, and the lawless wilderness grows wider each year.

The Eternal and their cursed immortality were broken forty years ago, but their remnants still hide in the gloom beneath the earth and brood patiently in their tomb-houses of slave-carved stone. They wait and they hunger for the flesh of living men, emerging to strike at wretched villages and beleaguered towns in search of blood and fresh converts to their hideous existence. Some men and women worship them, either in hopes of being spared their wrath or in the mad lust for the immortality their undying state offers. Even the greatest heroes can be seized with fear when faced with their final journey to the spirit world, and the Eternal are quick to promise every pleasure of life to those who would share in their frozen eternity.

Yet the half-dead are not the only scourge upon the living. The kings of the Five Kingdoms trust each other but little, and constant border quarrels and deniable “incidents” flicker like sparks of war’s red flames along the edges of their lands. The obas of border towns and the chieftains of remote villages no longer heed the messages from the capital and begin to set themselves up as lords in their own right, answering only to steel. Some do so in desperation as they seek to protect people their kings cannot save. Others do so because it is a pleasant thing to make slaves or corpses of all who dare oppose them.

Caught between the living and the half-dead, the people of the Three Lands must also endure the scourges of the wilderness and the terrible spirits and monstrous beasts that lair within the bush. Bat-winged sasabonsams swoop to reap a shrieking harvest from the villages, and cruel elokos demand a red and terrible price from all who dare trespass upon their lands. And beneath it all coil the emerald scales of the umthali, the

snakemen who ruled at the dawn of the world. Their cold-blooded malice seethes towards those who dared usurp their rule and cast down their ancient cities of stone and strange artifice. Some say that there are more to be found than those in their ruined cities, and that they whisper green words into the ears of human lords.

Yet even in this time of darkness, the people of the Three Lands are proud. The sun still gleams on the blades of the Kirsi lancers and the iron-shod hooves of their steeds. The great cities of Nyala still dream of lost empire amid their palaces of sculpted stone. The markets of Sokone are heavy with goods from every corner of the Three Lands. Lokossa’s brooding sorcerer-kings still rule a land of mighty magic, and its grim amazons still stand fast against the bestial Night Men of the uttermost south. And in the east, the proud Meru cherish their Sun Faith and the defiance their ancestors hurled into the teeth of the Eternal King. The Five Kingdoms totter, but they have not fallen.

There are still those who fight for something better. Wandering griots sing of the heroes of the Long War and the grudges they set aside to stand as one, and marabouts of both the Sun Faith and the Spirit Way warn their followers that bloody quarrels can only bring ruin to the living. Masked ngangas appear in distant villages to drive out evil spirits and break the power of dark sorcerers before vanishing once more into the bush. And everywhere, brave warriors place their bodies between their people and the spears of bandits and corrupt officials. Some of these courageous souls band together as Spears of the Dawn, heirs to the last emperor’s charge to seek out and destroy the evil remnants of the Long War. They fight in hidden places and often die unmourned, but their sacrifice is a burning brand against the darkening skies.

Yet still, the hour is growing late, and victory remains uncertain. There are so many who profit by the present decay, so many too bitter or selfish or blind to see the danger before the Five Kingdoms. And there are those who are worse than blind. There are those who are not content to let the Sixth Kingdom die with its secrets, and who delve in dark places for lore that should have gone down to damnation long ago. What shall stand against these beasts both men and spirit save the courage of the Spears of the Dawn?

WHAT IS THIS GAME?

Spears of the Dawn is a game that provides classic old-school fantasy adventure in an African-flavored setting. Just as many early role-playing games created compound worlds of mixed medieval European elements, so *Spears of the Dawn* creates an African pastiche built for accessible fun at the table. This is not a game about historical Africa any more than early fantasy RPGs were games about historical Europe. Instead, like its predecessors, it tries to use elements of history and legend to build a fun and workable setting for flavorful adventure.

Africa is one of the classically undersampled sources of fantasy adventure in our hobby. With the hobby's traditional emphasis on European sources- with the occasional detour into Asia- it too easily overlooks Africa's fantastic variety of cultures, empires, and legends. There is a wealth of potential fun to be had in exploring these possibilities, and *Spears of the Dawn* is meant to provide a small sampling of the opportunities available to a group.

At a deeper level, this game is meant to be an illustration of possibilities for those with similar interests. This game was written in

roughly two months. Its layout was done in ways that could be mimicked with the free Scribus software package, and it was provided to the market through OneBookshelf, a gaming front end that provides storefront space for both PDF and print-on-demand versions of games. The raw mechanics of this game are based on the *Stars Without Number* RPG, but you could just as easily lift basic old-school gaming mechanics through the free Open Game License. There is nothing in this book that could not be equaled or excelled by someone with sufficient interest and dedication.

There are innumerable settings, historical periods, and cultures that have gone largely ignored by our hobby. There is enormous potential out there for those with the interest required to go out, mine these veins of inspiration, and come back with something usable for the rest of us. If you like *Spears of the Dawn*, go out and find your own untapped sources of fun. If you don't like *Spears of the Dawn*, go out and make something *better*. We now have the tools we need for all of us to participate in creating fresh, inventive, usable material for our hobby. If you want more from our pastime, you have what you need to make it.

WHAT DO YOU DO IN THIS GAME?

The player characters are ambitious young adventurers in a declining age. In the wake of a generations-long war, the Three Lands have been exhausted of their courage and depleted in both population and wealth. The unholy Sixth Kingdom's invasion was broken forty years ago and its Eternal King maimed and left for dead in the eastern mountains, but there remain countless pockets of cultists and half-living Eternal throughout the western lands. In many places these cruel immortals ruled for generations, and their tomb-houses have yet to be cleared of their brooding remnants.

Supernatural evils are not the only scourges that plague the Five Kingdoms. In this age of exhaustion and weariness, there are many among the people who find much profit in trouble- ambitious nobles, scheming merchants, ruthless mercenary commanders, and thieving bandit chieftains. A season of war feeds the vultures well, and these men and women gladly pick at their people's wounds. They require no occult prompting to do their evil- the shine of

gold and the pleasures of power are ample reason for their deeds. Someone must stop them if the Five Kingdoms are to be saved from ruin.

Player characters often take the role of the Spears of the Dawn, those men and women specially charged with combating the last remnants of the Sixth Kingdom. Spears may go where others might not be so welcome, and can count upon the support and gratitude of a weary populace. This respect comes at a price; whenever an evil is too great or too unnatural to be answered by the locals, the Spears are expected to lend their aid. The mortality among these heroes is spectacular, but there is always another restless young man or rebellious woman ready to take up the burden.

Characters need not be Spears, of course, if the GM has a different flavor of game in mind. Most campaigns will at least start with that role, however, the better to make an easy introduction to the realms of the Three Lands.

THREE LANDS PRONUNCIATION

Many of the names and titles in this book might look a little difficult to pronounce at first glance. In truth, the pronunciation rules for words of the Three Lands are very simple.

A is pronounced as in "saw"

E is pronounced as in "hey"

I is pronounced as in "machine"

O is pronounced as in "hoe"

U is pronounced as in "true"

The consonants are pronounced as most American English speakers would expect. Where two consonants appear together in a way that seems difficult to vocalize, such as "nganga", the first consonant is often left silent- "GAHN-gah", and sometimes vocalized as in "nn-KEE-see". Guides will indicate the correct form.

WORDS OF THE FIVE KINGDOMS

The following is a quick guide to the pronunciation of the Five Kingdoms and the less-than-obvious character class names.

Kirsi "KEER-see"

Lokossa "low-KOH-sah"

Meru "MAY-roo"

Nyala "nn-YAH-lah"

Sokone "so-KOH-nay"

Nganga "GAHN-gah"

Marabout "MAHR-ah-boo"

Griot "GREE-oh"

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CREATING A

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

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

SPEARS OF THE DAWN

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

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

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

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

CHARACTER

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

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

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

WORKING TOGETHER

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

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

ROLLING ATTRIBUTES

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

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

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

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

CHOOSING ATTRIBUTES

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

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

ATTRIBUTE MODIFIERS

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

THE SIX ATTRIBUTES

STRENGTH

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

INTELLIGENCE

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

WISDOM

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

DEXTERITY

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

CONSTITUTION

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

CHARISMA

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

CHOOSING A CONCEPT

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHOOSING AN ORIGIN

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

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

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

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

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

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

CUSTOM ORIGINS

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

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

Kirsi

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

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

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

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

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

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

KIRSINE BANDIT

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

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

KIRSINE NOBLE

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

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

KIRSINE PEASANT

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

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

KIRSINE SCHOLAR

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

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

KIRSINE SCOUT

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

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



KIRSINE SOHANKIT

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

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

KIRSINE SOLDIER

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

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

KIRSINE SUNRIDER

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

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

KIRSINE SUN TEACHER

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

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

KIRSINE URBANITE

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

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

LOKOSSA

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

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

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

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

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

LOKOSSAN APPRENTICE

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

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

LOKOSSAN HUNTER

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

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

LOKOSSAN LAGREDI

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

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

LOKOSSAN NOBLE

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

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



LOKOSSAN PEASANT

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

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

LOKOSSAN PRIEST

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

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

LOKOSSAN REAPER

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

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

LOKOSSAN SOLDIER

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

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

LOKOSSAN RUNAWAY

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

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

LOKOSSAN URBANITE

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

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

MERU

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

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

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

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

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

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

MERUAN ARTISAN

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

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

MERUAN HEALER

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

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

MERUAN HERDER

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

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

MERUAN OLABON

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

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



MERUAN OUTCAST

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

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

MERUAN SCOUT

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

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

MERUAN SPIRIT PRIEST

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

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

MERUAN SUNSTAFF

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

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

MERUAN SUN TEACHER

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

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

MERUAN TRADER

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

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

Nyala

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

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

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

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

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

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

NYALAN ARTISAN

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

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

NYALAN CLERIC

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

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

NYALAN COURTIER

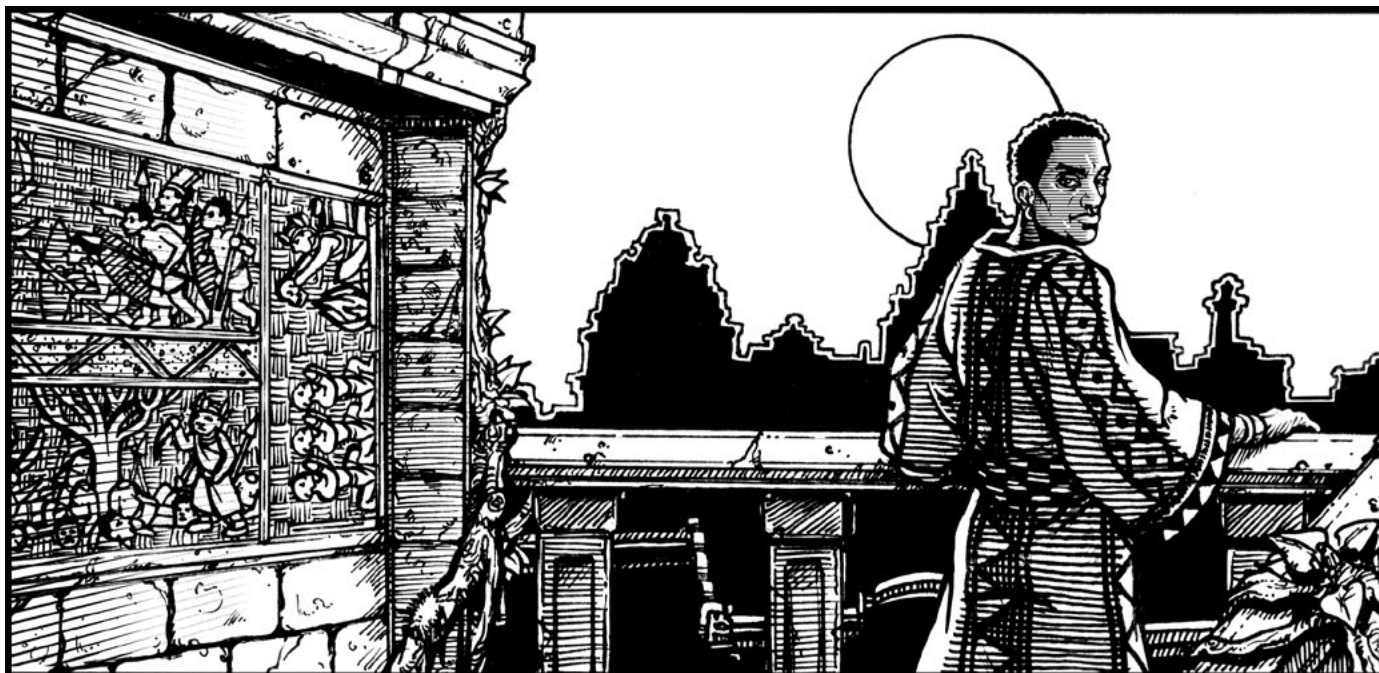
The court of the Mai orbits a weary old man with little personal influence beyond the capital city, but the deals struck there among the great magnates can echo to the very borders of the kingdom. Even common-born men and women can aspire to profit by becoming useful ornaments to court or officials in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

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

NYALAN HISTORIAN

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

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



NYALAN HOLLOW PRINCE

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

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

NYALAN NOBLE

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

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

NYALAN PEASANT

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

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

NYALAN PLOTTER

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

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

NYALAN SAGE

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

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

NYALAN SOLDIER

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

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

SOKONE

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

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

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

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

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

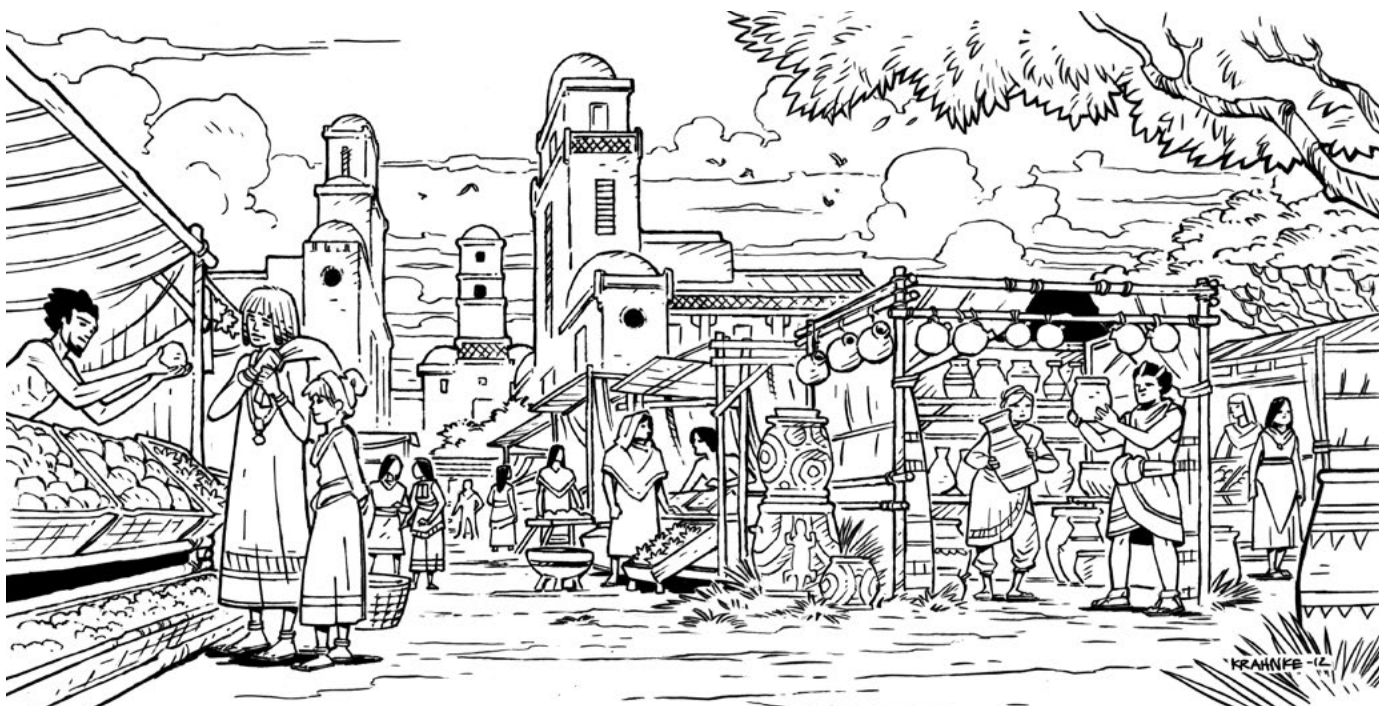
The people of Sokone share traits of all the Five Kingdoms. The jewel-colored eyes of Nyalan noble clans can be seen on men with the ebony skin of Lokossa, and every other mix of nations has its presence in the markets. Clans form about businesses and trades rather than strict matters of lineage, and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

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

SOKONE ARBITER

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

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



SOKONE ARTISAN

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

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

SOKONE ENTERTAINER

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

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

SOKONE PEASANT

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

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

SOKONE PRIEST

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

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

SOKONE RIDER

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

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

SOKONE RIVERFOLK

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

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

SOKONE SOLDIER

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

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

SOKONE THIEF

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

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

SOKONE TRADER

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

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

CHOOSING A CLASS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

CLASS SKILLS AND PRIME ATTRIBUTES

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

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

PRIME ATTRIBUTES

Intelligence and Charisma

GRIOT CLASS SKILLS

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

BONUS SKILLS FOR NEW CHARACTERS

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

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

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

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

GRIOT SONGS

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

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

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

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

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

GRIOT CLASS DETAILS

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

MARABOUT

PRIME ATTRIBUTES

Wisdom and Charisma

MARABOUT CLASS SKILLS

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

BONUS SKILLS FOR NEW CHARACTERS

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

MARABOUT CLASS DETAILS

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

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

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

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

SPHERES OF SPIRITUAL POWER

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHOOSING SPHERES AND PATRONS

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

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

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

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

NGANGA

PRIME ATTRIBUTES

Intelligence and Constitution

NGANGA CLASS SKILLS

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

BONUS SKILLS FOR NEW CHARACTERS

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

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

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

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

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

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



NGANGA CLASS DETAILS

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

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

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

NGANGA SORCERY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WARRIOR

PRIME ATTRIBUTES

Strength and Dexterity

WARRIOR CLASS SKILLS

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

BONUS SKILLS FOR NEW CHARACTERS

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

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

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

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



WARRIOR CLASS DETAILS

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

IDADHUNS

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

BLESSED AND GRACED

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

BORN WITH A BLADE

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

CHARMED STEEL

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

DEEP-ROOTED SOUL

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

DREADFUL SHADOW

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

HONED SKILL

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

HONORED STEPS

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

SAGACIOUS WARRIOR

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

TIRELESS

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

TWO LIVES

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

ROOF OF SPEARS

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

WASHER OF SPEARS

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

SKILLS

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

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

ARTIST

(SPECIALIZATION)

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

ATHLETICS

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

BUSINESS

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

COMBAT

(SPECIALIZATION)

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

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

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

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

Spear: Skill with glaives and spears.

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

CULTURE

(SPECIALIZATION)

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

LANGUAGE

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

LEADERSHIP

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

MEDICINE

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

NAVIGATION

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

OCCULT

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

PERCEPTION

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

PERSUADE

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

PRIESTCRAFT

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

RIDE

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

SCHOLAR

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

SECURITY

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

STEALTH

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

SURVIVAL

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

TACTICS

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



TRADE

(SPECIALIZATION)

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

FINAL TOUCHES

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

CHOOSE LANGUAGES

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

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



ROLL HIT POINTS

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

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

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

BUY GEAR

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

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

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

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

EQUIPMENT

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

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

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

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

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

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

TRADE INGOTS

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

ARMOR

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

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

EQUIPMENT

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

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



SYSTEMS AND RULES

The following systems cover the most common necessities of an adventuring group. They deal with feats of skill, resisting dark forces, red-handed combat, overland expeditions, and the gradual improvement of an aspiring hero's prowess.

Both players and GMs should read through this section at least once. A quick-reference sheet is available at the back of the section and should be all the reference a player will need during actual play.

As with any old-school game, you are encouraged to tweak, replace, remix, and hack the rules to your own satisfaction. Still, you should likely give the original rules at least one session worth of play to make sure that the changes you have in mind are really necessary. The engine used for this game has had a great deal of hard use and has held up well. The odds are that it will hold up well for you, too.

If you do decide to alter the rules, make sure that the players are aware of the changes. Few things irritate players quite as much as discovering that the mechanics they thought they were relying on aren't actually the rules that are in play. Making things clear from the start gives them a chance to deal with the game world as it is rather than as they imagine it to be.

Many of the rules will seem familiar to those conversant with old-school gaming, but such cognoscenti are encouraged to read through this section at least once to pick out differences specific to the engine used by the game. In particular, they will want to read the character advancement section on gaining hit points, the combat section with its "target 20" hit system, and the injury and healing section on dealing with mortal wounds.

USING THESE RULES IN PLAY

The system used in *Spears of the Dawn* is intended to be relatively light compared to many other games. The entire systems section fits on six pages and covers the great majority of things that an adventuring party will be interested in doing. If a GM sets things up properly at the start of a session, they probably won't have any need for this book during actual play.

First, make sure you understand the three most important systems in the game- skill checks, saving throws, and combat. If you understand these three systems, you'll instantly have a grasp on ninety percent of the mechanical content you need to understand for any given session.

Skill checks are used whenever a PC tries to accomplish something that requires exceptional skill or unusual expertise. Skill checks are not intended to be invoked for every little thing a PC tries to do or for tasks that are normal for their background and class. You should use skill checks when a PC tries to accomplish some feat that is difficult, not in their usual line of duties, and that doesn't allow for the leisure of multiple attempts to get it right.

Don't bother with skill checks when the PC can simply keep trying- eventually, they're going to get it right.

Saving throws represent the hardiness, strength of will, and raw native luck of a character in resisting some dangerous effect. Dodging clear of a falling ceiling stone, resisting the allure of a griot's supernatural words, and throwing off the talons of a nganga's curse are all examples of the sort of thing that might call for a saving throw. If a PC is called upon to resist such a misfortune, you might choose an appropriate type of saving throw and call for them to roll for it. On a success, the danger is either evaded or substantially lessened.

Combat is a mainstay of adventure games, and comes into play whenever the PCs decide to solve their problems with the business end of an assegai. Combat in *Spears of the Dawn* is extremely dangerous for novice adventurers, and there is an excellent chance that characters will die if they engage carelessly. Combat hit rolls can be used to resolve questions of accuracy and power, such as when a thief tries to pitch a grapnel over a palace cornice before the enraged guards catch up with him.

Once you have a firm grasp of these basics, you should make sure you understand the other sections on overland movement, injury and healing, diseases and poisons, encumbrance, heavy armor, and character advancement. These elements come up less often, but having the full context in mind will make the system quick-reference sheet more useful.

If your GM notes are sufficiently detailed and you make a point of copying out the details of special powers and spells, you should be able to run a session without needing to make any reference to the book. Make sure that you've photocopied or printed out the various quick references and enemy stat lists provided in the back of the book and have notes on the spells and powers possessed by the PCs. Encourage PCs to total up attack bonuses for their chosen weapons before play begins, so they don't need to recalculate while in play.

Having equipped yourself with the rules, the next step is to let them go. During play, just let the game flow. Don't break the play to look up a reference unless it's very important to the game. In most cases, it's much better to simply make a ruling and look it up later. Some of these ad-hoc decisions will be disadvantageous to the PCs, but an equal number will likely cut them an easier break than they would otherwise get.

Above all, remember that the GM and the player group are the ultimate arbiters of the rules. Any solution that's acceptable to everyone at the table is by definition a good solution. If you run into a peculiar situation that doesn't seem to have any mechanical guidance, just make a spot decision and keep playing. If you need a random outcome for an event, just roll a die and treat high rolls as better than low ones. Everything will work out just fine so long as everyone is on the same page about the rules that they are using.

SKILL CHECKS

When a character attempts to pull off some tricky feat of expertise, the GM may call for a skill check. These checks are not intended for ordinary actions or activities that a given character's concept should be able to perform normally. Instead, they're meant to be rolled when the outcome is uncertain and time-sensitive.

To roll a skill check, the player rolls 2d6 and adds their most relevant attribute modifier and their relevant skill level. If their total equals or exceeds a difficulty number chosen by the GM, the check is a success. Failure means the effort is in vain, or else takes much longer to accomplish than the character finds comfortable.

Characters without even a level 0 rating in a skill suffer a -1 penalty to their roll, and may not even have any chance of successfully using complex or esoteric skills. It's up to the GM to decide whether an untrained character can hope to succeed at a given roll.

Bad or beneficial circumstances can also affect the roll. Attempting to perform a skill under extremely hostile conditions might apply as much as a -3 penalty to the skill check, while a situation where everything lines up perfectly to assist the PC might grant up to +3 on the roll. The GM determines any modifiers to be applied.

Some equipment may also grant bonuses on a skill check. As a general rule, multiple bonuses from the same type of aid do not stack. Using several useful pieces of gear or receiving several beneficial magical blessings gives only the best modifier.

OPPOSED SKILL CHECKS

Sometimes, two or more people try to perform mutually-contradictory actions. A hunter might be trying to prowl close to a lion, while the lion might naturally be trying to notice any hunters. Two characters might be engaged in a footrace that only one can win. In these and other similar cases, the participants make an opposed skill check.

Everyone involved rolls their relevant skill checks, and the highest roll wins. Ties are rerolled if a tie doesn't make sense in context. Characters with special abilities that allow for rerolling failed checks can choose to reroll if their first attempt was not a winning one.

EXTENDED SKILL CHECKS

From time to time, it might be important to figure out how long it takes to accomplish some particularly involved task. If you want a ballpark answer, just set a difficulty and have the character roll a skill check; if they fail, the job takes longer than is convenient, with large failures meaning it takes much longer than they like.

Otherwise, you might just assign a particular amount of time to a given skill check and let them roll once for each such interval they spend working on the problem. Once they accumulate a set number of successful skill checks, the task is complete. This technique can also be used when two characters are competing at some extended task, like a foot race or political counter-scheming.

SKILL CHECK DIFFICULTIES

No Check	The task is something the character might be expected to accomplish regularly with their background, or the character is able to accomplish the task eventually and time is not an issue.
6	Tasks that a trained person can usually accomplish, and even untrained sorts have a chance.
8	Tasks that challenge a trained character, and even an expert runs a small risk of failure.
9	Tasks that normally would require an expert to accomplish consistently.
11	Tasks that only an expert has any real chance of accomplishing.
13	Tasks that push the limit of what the skill can plausibly accomplish in the hands of a master.
15	A GM assigns this difficulty when a master tries something that sounds barely possible in a theoretical sense, it being more entertaining than a flat denial.

CONCEPT SUCCESSSES

PCs are competent, skilled men and women who have shown unusual capability in their roles. Novice adventurers may not be heroes, but they are rarely bunglers. Incompetent fools do not last long even in the rougher bush kraals, let alone deep in the untamed wilderness.

As such, a GM should simply give a PC success at any moderately difficult task related to their concept. If the character is a Kirsine lancer, she shouldn't have to make skill checks to diagnose horse injuries, identify a horse breed, or keep her saddle under difficult conditions. She might well need to make skill checks to accomplish taxing riding feats of difficulty 9+, but those activities which are normal and expected for her concept should be automatically successful under normal conditions.

As a good rule of thumb to determine whether or not a PC should get a concept success, think about whether failure would make the PC look incompetent at their role. If not-infrequent failure at a type of skill check would have gotten them drummed out of their profession, then they can be assumed to automatically succeed at similar tasks.

Don't feel obliged to let a character's concept creep too far. One who bills himself as a "jack of all trades" might well have a wide range of skills, but letting him get a concept success more than once a session is probably more than he needs. The goal is to let PCs be good at what they are about, not to let someone bypass half their challenges with a well-worded character concept.

SAVING THROWS AND NATURAL PERILS

When a character is confronted by some environmental hazard, lethal toxin, tragic accident, sorcerous fireball, Eternal malison, or other common peril of the Three Lands, they are sometimes permitted a saving throw to avoid the worst of the effects. Individual spells and powers will list whether or not a saving throw is allowed, and the GM may optionally grant one when it seems appropriate to the situation.

To make a saving throw, the character rolls 1d20 and compares it to the appropriate saving throw number for their class and level. If the roll is equal or greater than the number, the save is a success and the peril is either avoided or lessened in effect.

FALLING

Characters take 1d6 points of damage for every ten feet that they fall. A successful Luck saving throw halves the damage taken.

SUFFOCATION

A character can go without air for a number of minutes equal to four plus the character's Constitution modifier. This time is halved if the character is performing strenuous activity. A character that runs out of air begins suffocating, and each round they must make a successful Physical Effect saving throw or fall unconscious. An unconscious character will die after five minutes without air.

SAVING THROWS	
PHYSICAL EFFECT	This saving throw applies to resisting diseases, poisons, privation, and other tests of personal hardihood.
MENTAL EFFECT	Mental effect saves are made to resist most magical powers or griot songs that directly influence a character's mind.
EVASION	Evasion saves apply in situations that test an character's ability to dodge or dive out of the way of peril,
MAGIC	Magic saves are made when a character is threatened by a magical effect that does not come under one of the other categories.
LUCK	When a character's wellbeing depends purely on dumb luck rather than any effort they might make, a Luck saving throw is in order.

OVERLAND MOVEMENT

Good roads are hard to find in the Three Lands, with many of the great works of the Old Kings now fallen to ruin in the wake of the Long War and its suffering. Wheeled carts are abandoned in favor of sure-footed pack mules and sullen camels, and it can tax even the strength of hearty adventurers to make their way from one lonely bush kraal to another.

Unencumbered travelers move at a rate of 3 miles per hour. Lightly-encumbered men and women move at 1.5 miles per hour, and those weighted down heavily can barely manage a mile an hour through the bush. Most groups can manage no more than ten

hours of travel a day if they are to give proper time to rest, food preparation, and pitching camp at a suitable place.

Crossing rough terrain will slow most groups as described in the table to the left. A skilled local guide might be able to lessen these penalties through canny knowledge of the terrain.

TERRAIN SPEED MODIFIERS	
GOOD ROAD	+50% speed
PLAINS/DESERT	No Modifier
LIGHT FOREST HILLS	-25% speed
HEAVY FOREST JUNGLE	-50% speed
SWAMPS	-50% speed
MOUNTAINS	-90% speed

RIDING AND PACK ANIMALS

Travelers who make use of riding animals can spare themselves some exhaustion and carry far more cargo, but they rarely move faster than human feet over long distances. Short gallops and charges can easily outpace a human, but animals must not be overtaxed if they are not to inconveniently die on the trail.

Riding is somewhat less exhausting than marching. Armored characters who ride may decrease the hit penalty inflicted by wearing heavy armor by one point. This benefit persists even through short periods of foot combat or activity, provided the rider spends most of his time seated on a mount.

FORCED MARCHES

There are times when speed is of the utmost importance. Small groups of travelers may push to gain up to twenty hours of effective travel in a day. They eat on the march, carry those who give out on the way, and do not make camp so much as they collapse in exhaustion when the day's travel ends.

Such heroic speed has its price. After each day of forced marching, each PC must make a Physical Effect saving throw with a bonus equal to their Athletics skill and their Constitution modifier. On a failure, they cannot force a march again until they have completely rested for one day for each prior day of forced marches.

COMBAT

Life is precarious in the Three Lands, and every person dwelling beyond the shelter of a city's high walls is aware of how swiftly violence can meet them. In the chaos of a life-or-death struggle, it's easy for even an accomplished warrior to be felled by an unlucky spear thrust, and only the most desperate or brutal souls take quick recourse to steel. Still, such violent men and women are often the sort encountered by those who dare the darkness beyond the fire.

INITIATIVE

When combat breaks out every participant rolls 1d8 and adds their Dexterity attribute modifier, if they have one. This is their initiative score, and the sequence of action goes from highest to lowest. In case of ties, the PC wins, and if two PCs tie, the closest player to the GM's right acts first. Initiative is only rolled once, as when everyone has had their turn to act it loops back around to the top. One full turn by all participants is called a *round*, and usually represents five or six seconds of frenzied action.

There are times when PCs or their enemies are surprised and unable to respond effectively. In the case of such ambushes, the defender with the best Wisdom/Perception skill total should roll an opposed check against the average Dexterity/Stealth skill total of the attackers. If the defenders win, they may respond normally. If the attackers succeed, they get a free round of actions before everyone rolls initiative.

There are times when a character may wish to delay his or her action, waiting for a comrade to act or holding ready for some enemy. The character states specifically what they are waiting for, and when the circumstances arrive, they act immediately. If the event never happens, they lose their action for the round in waiting. It's up to the GM to decide what actions can plausibly be held.

COMBAT ACTIONS

Once a character's turn comes up, he or she can perform an action: stab an enemy, cut a rope, dig a potion out of a backpack, tend a downed comrade, or cast a spell. Anything that could plausibly be accomplished in five or six seconds can be done as an action.

Some actions are so easy that they can be accomplished at the same time as an attack or other significant deed. Speaking a few words, drawing a readied piece of equipment, or dropping prone might all qualify as these "free actions".

Some actions may require more than one round to complete. In particular, some spells require a full round to cast, taking up a character's action and continuing on until the start of their next turn, whereupon the spell goes off and the PC may do something else.

In addition to whatever action a character takes on his or her turn, they may also move up to 60 feet, or 120 feet if they do nothing but move. This movement cannot be split up; all of it must be taken either before or after the character's action for the round.

MAKING AN ATTACK

Assuming a character has a weapon to hand and a will to murder, they may make an attack as their action for a round. To do so, they roll 1d20 and add their relevant attribute modifier, combat skill, attack bonus, and the target's armor class. Weapons listing two attributes use the better of the two. If the total is equal or greater than 20, the attack hits, and the target will be hurt or killed. A roll of natural 1 always misses, and a natural 20 on the die always hits.

Some situations may grant bonuses or penalties to the hit roll. As a rule of thumb, some beneficial circumstance might grant a +2 bonus on the roll, like having leisure to aim carefully with a bow, or swinging an axe at a prone opponent. Disadvantages such as trying to swing an axe in a narrow tunnel, firing a bow at a character in knife-fighting range, or throwing a siare at a foe who is half-hidden by the corner of a crumbling building might apply a -2 penalty. Characters who lack even level 0 skill ratings in the type of weapon they wield also suffer a -2 penalty to hit.

If a blow strikes home, the attacker rolls the damage dice for the weapon and adds their relevant attribute modifier. Unarmed attacks do only 1d2 damage. This wound is then subtracted from the target's hit points. If the victim is reduced to zero hit points, they are either struck dead or are mortally wounded. Without the quick help of a skilled healer, they are doomed to die.

A human character can make only one attack per round, even if they hold multiple weapons. Certain wild beasts or hideous abominations can launch multiple attacks in a round, however, and these savage foes can rend their prey to pieces in mere moments.

DISRUPTING SPELLS

While griot songs cannot be disrupted by damage, any nganga or marabout struck for hit point damage loses any spell they are in the process of casting. For spells that require only one action to cast, the attacker must hold their action to strike. More lengthy enchantments can be ruined by injury at any time during casting. If the spell is spoiled, it fizzles and is lost to no effect.

MOVEMENT IN COMBAT

Unencumbered human characters may move up to 60 feet during their turn, or 120 feet if they do nothing but move. Climbing up a steep surface, swimming, or otherwise navigating rough terrain costs double the distance in movement. Lightly encumbered characters move at 75% of their normal speed, while heavily encumbered characters move at only half speed.

It's difficult to get clear of a swirling melee without catching a spear in the back. Any character who tries to move away from a melee engagement must spend their action evading the enemy before they can move for the round. Characters who simply turn and flee or who attempt to do something else with their action grant all foes within melee range a free immediate attack on them as they turn their attention away.



ENCUMBRANCE AND ARMOR

Even mighty-thewed adventurers can only carry so much gear before the weight of their kit becomes prohibitive. Some equipment can be kept close to hand on a hero's belt or arm sheath, but other items must be stowed in a pack that may not be easily accessible in the roil of mortal combat.

A character can have ready a number of items equal to half their Strength score, rounded down. Ready items include those that the character is using or wearing at all times, or that they have conveniently to hand in sheaths or belt pouches. Suits of armor count as readied items, but the normal clothing and jewelry that a character might wear does not. A character can draw or produce a readied item as part of any action they may take.

A character may have a number of stowed items equal to their full Strength score. Stowed items are carried in backpacks, in carefully balanced leg or arm pockets, or otherwise packed away where they will least encumber the character. If a character needs to get out a stowed item in a hurry, it will take one round to dig it out.

Very small items carried in small numbers do not count against encumbrance limits. Other small items can be packed together into bundles of three items to simplify their carriage, though getting at them then takes an additional round of fumbling with the packaging. A quiver of twenty arrows or loose bag of twenty bullets also counts as one item.

Characters can burden themselves with more gear if they're willing to sacrifice some fleetness of foot to do so. Up to two additional items can be carried ready or four additional ones stowed at the cost of becoming Lightly Encumbered, and having their base movement slowed to 45 feet per round. A further two items can be carried ready or four stowed at the cost of becoming Heavily Encumbered, with base movement reduced to 30 feet per round.

On the equipment lists, some items are given an encumbrance value higher than 1. These items count as multiple objects for encumbrance purposes, being heavy, clumsy, or unwieldy to carry.

ARMOR AND EXHAUSTION

Heavy armor is uncommon in the Three Lands, as the heat and humidity make it almost as dangerous to the wearer as an enemy spear. Most such suits are donned only immediately before battle, or are worn by those who will be in a shaded area. PCs who wear these suits at all times will soon find themselves exhausted.

The heat and discomfort of armor inflicts a hit roll penalty equal to twice its encumbrance cost unless the wearer remains in the shade. This penalty is lessened by the character's Athletics skill and Constitution modifier. If the wearer has no Athletics skill at all, the penalty is increased by 1. Cavalrymen who can rely on their mounts to lessen their exertions can lessen this penalty by 1 point.

INJURY AND HEALING

Despite the best efforts of adventurers, no one lives forever. Even the canniest warrior will find herself scored by lion's claws or pierced by an enemy's spear sooner or later. If she's lucky, she might yet live to flaunt the scars.

Most characters reduced to zero hit points are either dead or mortally wounded. Most such victims are doomed, and they are unable to do more than utter a few poignant last words before messily expiring. For PCs and other remarkably hardy souls, there may yet be a chance to save them.

A healer must be adjacent to the downed ally and spend an action binding their wounds and stopping their bleeding. They must succeed on an Int/Medicine skill check at difficulty 8, plus the number of rounds since the character was felled. Only one character can attempt this check per round on a downed ally, but the attempt can be repeated until the victim either stabilizes or dies six rounds after falling to zero hit points. Use of some medical equipment and herbal pharmaceuticals can assist in this process, but a healer can attempt this desperate battlefield medicine even with improvised tools. Those with no Medicine skill at all may make the attempt at a -1 penalty to their skill check.

Those with access to spells of healing, invigorating griot songs, or other supernatural sources of aid can heal much more readily. Provided the character has not already bled out, any magical healing will restore them to full capability. For example, a marabout who casts a *Hands of Succor* spell on a downed warrior ally rolls 5 points of healing for the spell. The warrior immediately regains consciousness with 5 hit points and may spend his next round standing up and returning to the fray.

DISEASES AND POISONS

The Three Lands do not lack for poisonous beasts and dire sicknesses. Some of these perils are natural to the land, while others are the product of dark curses, malicious Eternal sorcery, or the anger of offended spirits. Characters struck by these evils risk an ugly end without the help of wise healers or magical aid.

Diseases or poisons have a Toxicity rating, usually beginning at 7, an Interval at which they harm a character, and a Virulence indicating the number of saving throws necessary to recover from its effects.

When first exposed to a disease or poison, a character must make their choice of either a Physical Effect saving throw or a Luck saving throw. If successful, the character has either resisted the toxin or managed to avoid getting a dangerous dose. If unsuccessful, the character has been infected or poisoned.

After each interval of time has passed the character suffers the effects of the disease and must make a Physical Effect saving throw. Once the victim has succeeded at enough saving throws to equal the toxin's Virulence, he has thrown off the disease or recovered from the poison. A medic can assist a diseased or poisoned character. An Intelligence/Medicine skill check against the malady's Tox-

Patients restored without the benefit of magical healing are fragile and barely conscious. Until they come out of their crippled condition they cannot regain hit points through normal rest and recovery. A newly-stabilized character is helpless for 1d6 x 10 minutes. At the end of this period, they may make a Physical Effect saving throw to regain one hit point and return to normal activity. A failed save leaves them incapacitated for 2d6 days before another attempt at a save can be made, and if this is failed as well, it's 2d6 weeks of bed rest before they can make a third attempt to recover. If this third saving throw is failed, the character will die of his wounds in the next few days unless treated with magical aid.

Healers can aid characters recuperating from grievous wounds. A successful Int/Medicine skill check against difficulty 9 allows the patient to reroll a failed Physical Effect saving throw. Optionally, the character may accept a permanent scar or mutilation to automatically succeed at a saving throw before it is rolled. The player may pick some appropriate maiming if the GM considers it suitable. Most such injuries are cosmetic in nature, but every third such scar permanently reduces an attribute modifier of the character's choice by one point.

NATURAL HEALING

A character able to recuperate in reasonably restful surroundings will slowly regain lost hit points. A well-nourished character who has at least eight hours of rest regains their level in hit points every morning when they wake. If they spend the day doing nothing but resting, they regain additional hit points equal to their level, plus 2 more for every level of Medicine skill possessed by any attending physician they may have.

icity can be made at each interval, and if successful, the character's saving throw will succeed. Some magical charms or potions might also grant automatic success on a check.

EXAMPLE DISEASES AND POISONS

Breakbone Fever: Toxicity 8, Interval 2 days, Virulence 3. No symptoms appear until two saving throws are failed, whereupon the character becomes fevered, rashy, and bleeds slightly from the mouth and nose. If three saving throws are failed, the victim is incapacitated with agonizing bone and muscle pains. Five failed saves results in death from bleeding and fluid buildup.

Sand Rot: Toxicity 10, Interval 1 day, Virulence 2. A sorcerous plague sometimes inflicted by Eternal weapons, sand rot causes the victim to gradually desiccate into granular particles. Each interval costs the victim 1d6 Constitution points, with death occurring below 3 Constitution. Lost points are recovered at the rate of one point per day after the rot is cured.

Viper Toxin: Toxicity 9, Interval 1 round, Virulence 1. Each interval inflicts 1d6 hit points of damage. Victims brought to 0 hit points fall unconscious and will die in an hour unless aided.

CHARACTER ADVANCEMENT

Adventurers who manage to survive the perils of the Three Lands can expect to improve in their skills and abilities. Most wanderers demonstrate a striking capacity for picking up new skills and improving old ones... possibly since the less gifted among them don't survive long enough to demonstrate their lack of aptitude.

Characters are awarded experience points by the GM for pursuing meaningful goals. Groups that seek to accomplish something important to at least one of their members receive a certain amount of experience points each session whether or not their efforts are actually successful. Even failure can be educational, provided the PCs are able to survive their reverses.

Goals should be objectives that are appropriate to the characters' power and influence. Hardened Spears who spend their time summarily executing petty bandits will not receive the same reward as those valiant souls who attempt feats more in line with their personal prowess.

Once a character has earned enough experience points to gain the next character level, they immediately gain the benefits of the new level, including additional hit points and skill points. Actually learning new skills, however, requires some source of training.

GAINING HIT POINTS

When a character goes up in level, they gain an additional hit die of hit points. The player rolls both it and their existing hit dice to determine their new total. Their Constitution modifier is applied once for each level of the character. Thus, a 4th level Warrior with a +1 Constitution modifier who has just attained 5th level rolls 5d8+5 to determine his new hit point total.

If the new total is less than the old, the character retains the old hit point total. A character's hit points never go down when they rise in level.



SKILL LIMITS AND COSTS

SKILL LEVEL	MIN. CHAR. LEVEL	SKILL POINT COST	
		CLASS SKILL	OTHER SKILL
0	1	1	2
1	1	2	3
2	3	3	4
3	6	4	5
4	9	5	6

GAINING SKILL POINTS

When a character rises in level, they gain 4 additional skill points. These points may be saved for later use or spent in learning new skill levels. A skill must be learned from the beginning, so a character who wanted to buy level 2 in a skill belonging to their class would need to spend $1 + 2 + 3 = 6$ skill points, and train each level in order. A class' skills are listed on the page describing that class.

A character's skill level is limited by their character level; a PC's maximum level in a skill is equal to 1, plus their level divided by 3, rounded down. A level 4 character can thus have a skill at a maximum of level 2 ($1 + 4/3$, rounded down).

A character must have a trainer to improve a skill. The trainer must have the desired level of expertise in the skill to be taught. Finding these trainers is relatively simple for common skills, but more esoteric ones might require lengthy searches. Finding a true master of an art may involve extensive adventuring simply to locate a teacher, let alone convince them to instruct a PC. Once found, the necessary secrets of the art may be taught in one week per level of the skill to be gained. Once those crucial points are mastered, the PC can fill in any other necessary practice on their own.

LEGENDARY HEROES

The experience charts for each class only go up to tenth level. Beyond this point, the PCs are something more than mere mortals, and standard level advancement no longer applies to such figures of legend. Few campaigns ever reach such lofty heights of power, but if further advancement does seem relevant to your game you may use the following guidelines.

Each level beyond 10th requires an additional 256,000 experience points. When a new level is gained, the PC gains no new hit points but may reroll his existing pool. New skill points are earned, but no advancement of attack bonus, saving throws, Secrets, spheres, spells per day or other class abilities are received.

Instead, the PC receives a single new ability appropriate to his nature and heroic deeds, chosen by agreement between GM and player. For persistent, always-available abilities, they should be roughly as strong as a warrior's idahun. For abilities that can only be used once per day, they might be as strong as a fifth level spell or ancient song. Such legendary heroes should advance in unique gifts rather than simple brute accumulation of bigger statistics.

CONVERTING FOR OTHER GAMES

Many readers of this game will have an interest in converting its resources for use in other games, or bringing in material from other old-school systems into *Spears of the Dawn*. The following guidelines should allow you to make such conversions with minimal effort.

CONVERTING CHARACTERS

Most other old-school games use statistics largely identical to *Spears of the Dawn*, but lack a skill system. If converting to those games, simply drop the skill system. Characters still choose backgrounds, but they're simply for flavor. If you do this, you should increase every character's attack bonus by an additional +1 at first, fourth, seventh, and tenth levels to reflect their missing combat skill bonus.

If you're converting characters from other systems to *Spears of the Dawn* and don't care to have them buy skills from an appropriate class list, just assume they have an effective skill level in anything appropriate to their background. This effective level is equal to their character level divided by three, rounded up.

Some systems use a "To hit armor class zero" number instead of an attack bonus. To find this number for a character, just subtract their base attack bonus from 20.

Some systems use an ascending armor class instead of one that gets better as it decreases. To convert, subtract their *Spears of the Dawn* armor class from 20.

Other systems extend normal character levels above tenth. *Spears of the Dawn* avoids this, as few campaigns ever reach such exalted levels without starting there, but you can simply extrapolate the existing class tables upward if necessary. If converting from such a system into *Spears of the Dawn*, you should work with the players to pick appropriate powers for each level past tenth and trim away any spells or attack bonuses beyond that level. This game tends to keep hit points and other stats within a narrower range than most.

If you're using characters from *Stars Without Number*, you'll find they fit seamlessly- with one small caveat. Healing in *Stars Without Number* and *Other Dust* is limited by System Strain, while the magical healing available in *Spears of the Dawn* is limited only by available magical resources. Using Old Terran stims on a marabout will add a point of System Strain as normal, while his *Hands of Succor* spell will not tax a recipient's body so greatly.

CONVERTING WEALTH AND ITEMS

Most old-school games operate on a gold standard, with treasures denominated in gp. *Spears of the Dawn* instead works on the silver standard, so you'll wish to change existing treasure values from silver to gold or vice-versa depending on the direction in which you're converting.

Most *Spears of the Dawn* magic items, weapons, armor and other pieces of equipment can be used without changes in a different old-school game.



SPEARS OF THE DAWN QUICK REFERENCE

SKILL CHECKS

When the GM calls for a skill check, roll 2d6 and add your relevant skill level and the modifier of the most appropriate attribute. If you lack even level-0 skill in the activity, take a -1 penalty on the roll. If your total equals or exceeds the check's difficulty, it is a success.

SAVING THROWS

When the GM calls for a particular type of saving throw to resist a peril, roll 1d20 and compare it to the saving throw number for your class and character level. If equal or greater, you make the saving throw and either resist the threat or lessen its effects.

COMBAT

Combats begin with rolling initiative- 1d8 plus your Dexterity modifier. The actor with the highest initiative acts first, followed in order by the others. PCs win ties with NPCs. Initiative is only rolled once; after everyone has acted, it cycles back to the top.

On your turn, you may move up to 60 feet and perform an action. If you do nothing but move, you can move up to 120 feet. You can't split your movement- you must take it all before or all after your action. Possible actions include attacking with a readied weapon, casting a spell, using a special power, digging a stowed item out of your pack, tending a downed comrade, or anything else that could plausibly be accomplished in five or six seconds.

To hit a target, roll 1d20 and add the target's armor class, your attack bonus, your Combat skill in the weapon you're using, and your relevant attribute modifier. If you lack even level-0 skill in the weapon, take a -2 penalty to the roll. If your total is 20 or more, you hit the target. Roll your weapon's damage dice and add your relevant attribute modifier to it to determine how many hit points your target loses from the blow. As your total attack bonus with a given weapon rarely changes, you should write it down.

You cannot freely move away from an enemy engaged in melee with you. If you do not spend your action disengaging, all enemies within melee range get a free attack against you if you move away.

ENCUMBRANCE AND ARMOR

Encumbrance is measured in items. You may carry as many readied items as half your strength, rounded down, and as many stowed items as your full strength score. Readied items may be used instantly as part of an action, while stowed items require a round to dig them out. Some items count as more than one for encumbrance purposes, and some items can be bundled together to count as only a single one for purposes of their burden.

Armor is exhausting in the hot Three Lands, and inflicts a hit roll penalty equal to twice its encumbrance cost unless the wearer remains in the shade or avoids activity. This penalty is lessened by the character's Athletics skill and Constitution modifier. If the wearer has no Athletics skill at all, the penalty is increased by 1.

INJURY AND HEALING

Most targets die at zero hit points. PCs become mortally wounded, and will die in six rounds. If an ally reaches them in the same round they may attempt an Int/Medicine skill check to staunch the bleeding, rolling against difficulty 8. This difficulty increases by 1 each round after the first. Only one character can attempt to give aid each round. Success leaves the PC stable but unconscious.

Magical healing will instantly restore a downed PC if it brings their hit points above zero. PCs do not go into "negative hit points" - a 10 hp blow against a PC with 4 hit points will down them. If a marabout then casts a *Hands of Succor* spell on them and heals 3 hit points, they awaken with 3 hp. In all cases, PCs who are not recuperating from a mortal wound regain their level in hit points each morning when they wake.

SPELLCASTING AND MAGIC

Griots may use any song they have learned provided they have enough Inspiration points remaining. Minor songs cost 1 point, great songs cost 3, and ancient songs cost 5. Beginning a song requires their action for the round, but maintaining one does not. A griot can sing only one song at a time, and can maintain it as long as he remains conscious. Inspiration points refresh each morning.

Marabouts may cast any spell they know provided they have an unused spell slot remaining for the day. They must use a slot of the correct level- they can't cast low-level spells with high-level slots. Most spells require only one action to cast and can only be interrupted if an enemy is holding his action to strike at just the right moment. Any hit point damage inflicted on a marabout while he is casting spoils the spell and wastes the slot. Some spells require more than one action to cast, and may be disrupted during that time.

Ngangas may invoke any nkisi they have prepared as an action. Some nkisi may require more time to cast their effects. As with marabouts, a nganga who is injured while casting loses the spell and its preparation. Nganga injured while performing ritual sorcery also lose the effects of the ritual and waste the ingredients.

MOVEMENT AND TRAVEL

Humans can move up to 120 feet in a single round if they do nothing but move. An unencumbered human may travel overland at a rate of 3 miles an hour. Lightly-encumbered people travel at 1.5 miles an hour, and heavily-encumbered ones stagger at 1 mph.

Terrain less welcoming than a flat savannah may slow these speeds. Most groups cannot travel more than ten hours per day without a forced march.

TERRAIN SPEED MODIFIERS	
GOOD ROAD	+50% speed
PLAINS/DESERT	No Modifier
LIGHT FOREST HILLS	-25% speed
HEAVY FOREST JUNGLE	-50% speed
SWAMPS	-50% speed
MOUNTAINS	-90% speed



MAGIC

Magic is an accepted reality for almost all the peoples of the Three Lands. Even the dumbest peasant understands that there are certain men and women with the power to exceed the common laws of the world, and that these sorcerers and marabouts can work wonders with their arts. Sometimes this knowledge is leavened with fear, and innocent souls are made to suffer because of the witch-terrors of others.

Spears of the Dawn and other adventurers often number magic-wielders among their numbers, both for their great usefulness in performing mighty deeds and for the camaraderie and acceptance they can find among such social outsiders. A nganga who might never be more than courteously dreaded by his neighbors can find friendship and trust in a band of adventurers, and a marabout can relax from constant struggles with temple priests. At the edges of the civilized world there is room for such envoys of the unknown.

Magic in the Three Lands comes in two varieties- the natural miracles of the marabout or experienced griot, and the *ashe*-wielding of the nganga. The two forms of magic are very different in the effects they are able to create.

Miracles are fundamentally the product of natural law. The marabout appeals to the spirits to create the effect they desire because the spirits have authority over the natural laws of the world. When the gods bring forth a sudden spring of freshwater or heal a comrade's bleeding limb, they are not violating any physical laws, they are simply exercising the discretion which is their right. The potent spiritual relationship between the marabout and the gods gives a mortal the ability to ask for such favors.

In the same fashion, a powerful griot's songs can have miraculous effects due to the strength of the social laws and cultural mores he invokes. The power of tradition and custom is not merely an empty convention, it is something tangible and physical, and a griot can wield this power against those who transgress its limits.

Because both marabouts and griots are simply invoking the aid of another or enacting an existing social rule, it is comparatively easy for them to call up their powers. They do not need to prepare them beforehand as a nganga does, or laboriously discipline their minds and bodies to receive their powers. Some marabouts aren't even aware of their special gifts, but instead just spontaneously manifest the gifts of the spirits who favor them. A griot must labor to learn the songs and lore of his role, but once he has mastered the subtleties he may wield his gifts for as long as inspiration lasts.

However, miracles are fundamentally limited in scope. Because they merely implement existing law or work through a reigning spiritual power, they cannot show the flexibility of a nganga's sorcery. All their arts must be approved or allowed by the existing powers, and these powers are likewise limited in what they are allowed to enact. It is for this reason that miracles almost never create a long-lasting effect or permanent physical change- the spirit world would never permit one of its number to simply go around adding to creation at the behest of a marabout. Even healing spells

simply restore a subject to their prior condition rather than adding to what exists. Marabouts and griots also have great difficulty in developing new miracles or songs, for they must somehow find a new loophole in the laws of the spirit world or devise a new use of the intricate laws of tradition. Such miracle-workers are limited to the powers that already exist.

Ngangas wield something very different- *ashe*, the fundamental potency of all which exists. Every act and substance has potency because of *ashe*. A fire's heat, a wise man's cunning, a warrior's determination, a stone's hardness- all of these traits are simply different manifestations of *ashe*. A skilled nganga can gather and channel this power to create marvels in obedience to his will.

Ashe has nothing to do with the gods and the spirits. It is something more essential, more fundamental to the substance of the world. It can be used to affect the divine powers if properly channeled, but it is more oriented toward the physical world and the creation of action or substance. Because it is fundamentally in defiance of natural law, it is mistrusted and disliked by many among the priesthood. "Magic spoils the gods," they say, and many claim that witchcraft ruins the relationship between humans and spirits.

While *ashe* is remarkably versatile in its effects, it is limited by the understanding of the wielder. A nganga cannot create an effect he does not understand. It is for this reason that very subtle and complex works cannot be performed by ngangas. Healing wounds, restoring the dead, conjuring complex objects, or foretelling the future are all examples of tasks too complex for a common sorcerer to accomplish. Cunning ngangas are sometimes able to surpass the limits of their arts by finding a simpler shortcut to the desired end; the experienced nganga may transform himself into a beast, for example, by simply copying the form of an existing type of animal. Such tricks often come with unanticipated limitations.

Sorcery is particularly potent in matters of curses and maledictions. It is always easier to destroy than to create, and a skilled nganga can poison the *ashe* within a victim to rob him of the power to enact his will upon the world. This may take the subtle form of bad luck and sudden illnesses or the dramatic disintegration of the victim's flesh. These curses cling to those bewitched, and it is often necessary to find a nganga to lift the taint upon the victim's *ashe*. Few marabouts have the ability to ease these curses, and so even those villages that fear their arts are often obliged to tolerate a local nganga for the sake of the cures he can dispense.

The power to wield *ashe* is something innate, either born with the nganga or produced by some powerful supernatural contact. A few ngangas go through life completely unaware of their powers, instinctively channeling *ashe* to blight their enemies and strengthen their aims. It is for this reason that some villages are so worried about witches in their midst; they might be harboring a curse-monger among their own people without the malefactor even realizing his crime. Most sorcerers are marked from youth, however, and are taken by a more experienced nganga for an apprentice to aid in their work.

GRIOT SONGS

The powers of a griot are great but sharply focused. Their praise-songs and castigations defend the principles they uphold, rebuking the wicked and glorifying the righteous. Yet as judges of the deeds of men they are every bit as susceptible to inducements and corruption as any other magistrate. A griot may use his powers as he sees fit, and there is no greater law to constrain him.

THE SONGS OF THE WISE

Every griot is expected to be versed in matters of mundane history and custom, but aside from these ordinary lays and chants he or she also knows one or more potent *songs*. These songs are imbued with near-magical powers, allowing the griot to shape the passions of those around him and enlighten himself with truths that others might overlook. At their most powerful, the songs can work physical changes on the world around the griot, even blasting his foes with the tangible force of his judgment. Songs need not take the form of music- they might also be expressed as chants, fiery oratory, or witheringly appropriate proverbs.

Songs come in three degrees: *minor*, *great*, and *ancient* songs. Novice griots can use only minor songs. At fourth level, they are learned enough to master great songs, and at seventh level they have attained such mastery of their arts that they can begin to use the ancient songs of their ancestors.

There is no limit to the number of songs a griot may learn, provided he has a teacher or one of the rare, encyclopedic tomes that lay out the details of a song. A song's fundamentals can be learned in a very short time, but it requires much more to master it. Mastering a minor song requires a week, a great song requires a month, and three months of practice is needed before an ancient song can be perfected. A griot may adventure normally while mastering a song, but he can learn only one song at a time. Other griots are often jealous of their knowledge, and will require favors and inducements to persuade them to teach their arts. Outright payment of gold is unheard-of, however, as bartering such lore for mere money would be a humiliating disgrace to a griot.

Griots may record their songs in written form, but the creation of such texts is long and laborious, and few do so save at the end of their lives. Scribing a minor song takes three months, a great song requires a year, and an ancient song requires five years of effort and a dozen volumes to encompass its truth. Such tomes can only be

SONGS AND INSPIRATION		
SONG LEVEL	INSPIRATION COST	MIN. GRIOT LEVEL
MINOR	1	1st
GREAT	3	4th
ANCIENT	5	7th

inscribed by a griot- a mere scribe trying to copy one would inevitably introduce such errors and typographic blunders as would make the whole series worthless to a student.

INSPIRATION

To know a song is not enough. A griot must have the wit and scintillating genius necessary to fit it to the present situation, finding the right words to suit the immediate need. This grace is measured in Inspiration, and each griot has a pool of Inspiration points that refreshes each morning. Singing a song requires expending these points, and when a griot runs out, his muse has deserted him until he has had time to formulate new words. A minor song requires 1 Inspiration, a great song requires 3, and an ancient song requires 5 Inspiration points to sing.

SINGING THE TRUTH

Beginning a song requires a griot's action for the round, but he can maintain it thereafter unless struck unconscious, stunned, or otherwise prevented from speaking. Damage to a griot will not interrupt his song unless the wound strikes him down. A griot can maintain only one song at a time. Praising-songs can be applied only to allies, and not to the griot himself. One griot may praise another, however, if the circumstance arises.

Songs affect even deaf creatures or those that cannot understand them, but the creature must normally have at least a roughly human intellect to be affected. Any creature within earshot of the griot is a valid target for one of his songs, and his voice can cut through the clamor of a battlefield or a thunderous rainstorm.

Griot songs are not subject to wards against magic or supernatural detection, and their effects cannot be dispelled by magic. Their effects are strictly in accordance with natural law and are treated as perfectly mundane for purposes of magical defenses.

GRIOT SONG LIST		
MINOR	GREAT	ANCIENT
<i>Condemning the Wicked Man</i>	<i>Compelling the Heart of a Friend</i>	<i>Absolving the Unjustly Accused</i>
<i>Praising the Artisan's Hands</i>	<i>Compelling the Stillness of Spears</i>	<i>Condemning One Worthy of Death</i>
<i>Praising the Fearless Defenders</i>	<i>Condemning the Miserable Outlaw</i>	<i>Condemning the Breaker of Laws</i>
<i>Praising the Young Warrior</i>	<i>Encouraging the Darkened Mind</i>	<i>Praising the Unconquered Hero</i>
<i>Remembering the Correct Words</i>	<i>Inspiring the Multitude's Passion</i>	<i>Praising the Wisdom of Kings</i>
<i>Remembering the Customs of the Elders</i>	<i>Praising the Enduring Warrior</i>	<i>Singing the Path to Glory</i>
<i>Remembering the Old Kings</i>	<i>Praising the Wise Leader</i>	
<i>Welcoming the Friendly Stranger</i>	<i>Remembering the Spears of Heroes</i>	

MINOR SONGS

CONDEMNING THE WICKED MAN

TARGET | One enemy

The griot hurls fearsome castigation at a foe, condemning their evil look and wicked deeds. The subject's breath becomes short, his hands weak, and his courage falters in his heart. He suffers 1d6 damage, +1 for every two full levels of the griot. This damage cannot reduce a target's hit points below 1, as it steals their courage and luck rather than their life. This song cannot be used on the same target more than once per day.

PRAISING THE ARTISAN'S HANDS

TARGET | One ally

The griot tells a story of some fitting artist or cunning craftsman, reminding an ally of how a mighty work was done in ancient days. The insight aids the ally in performing some skill, granting a +1 bonus on a skill check. As might be imagined, this aid cannot be conferred on Stealth or other skills requiring discretion in their attempt.

PRAISING THE FEARLESS DEFENDERS

TARGET | All allies except the griot

The griot sings of fearless stands against overwhelming foes, calling out similarities between ancient heroes and present allies. Those who hear his words gain a -1 bonus to their AC and take 1 fewer point of damage from any source of injury. This decrease may result in a blow doing no harm at all.

PRAISING THE YOUNG WARRIOR

TARGET | One ally

The griot calls out encouragement, reminding a combatant of the great deeds of their ancestors and the courage that is expected of them. The subject gains a +2 bonus to hit rolls, a +1 bonus to saving throws, and becomes impervious to non-magical fear.

REMEMBERING THE CORRECT WORDS

TARGET | Self

The griot always knows just what to say- even when he doesn't speak the language. With this song, the griot remembers enough snatches of foreign music and verse to pick out a basic conversation with a human stranger, speaking and understanding the language to a rudimentary level. To reflect this, the griot may speak to the stranger, but can use only proper names and words of one syllable. The benefits of this song last for one hour per level of the griot, and it need not be maintained during that time to aid him.

REMEMBERING THE CUSTOMS OF THE ELDERS

TARGET | Self

The griot is never at a loss in understanding the ways and expectations of a community. By recalling old verses and the customs of similar people, he may gain an understanding of the important laws, customs, and traditions of a community and acquire a



near-mystical insight as to whom he should contact for particular common goods, services, or favors. This song grants the relevant Culture skill at level-0, with the understanding lasting for one hour per level of the griot. The song must be used once for every particular good or service that is sought in a community. It will not reveal purveyors of sternly forbidden things such as assassinations, but it might well direct to illegal but less widely-condemned services.

REMEMBERING THE OLD KINGS

TARGET | Self

The griot knows many truths long since forgotten to others. By reciting old poems, songs, or legends, the griot may sift out a fact useful to himself and his friends. When this song is sung, the griot may answer any one historical question about a person, place, or event that has not been kept secret from the learned.

WELCOMING THE FRIENDLY STRANGER

TARGET | Self

The griot knows words to charm and please those who meet him, and he can turn the tensest encounter into a friendly exchange of words. With this song, the griot gains a +2 bonus on a reaction roll. This song may be performed after the roll has been made, if he does so immediately.

GREAT SONGS

COMPELLING THE HEART OF A FRIEND

TARGET | One subject

The griot knows words to beguile and charm a listener, convincing them of the griot's great friendship for them. If the subject fails a saving throw versus Mental Effect, they will treat the griot as a confidante and perform any act for them that they would reasonably perform for a good friend. The good feeling lasts for one day, and will break if the griot performs some obviously hostile act against them. A successful saving throw merely leaves the subject unimpressed with the griot's appeal.

COMPELLING THE STILLNESS OF SPEARS

TARGET | Chosen listeners

The griot cannot contain violence forever, but he can force a temporary peace upon angry listeners. All those who hear his words must save versus Mental Effect or cease any violence for one round per level of the griot. If a subject is attacked during that time or obvious preparations are made to harm them, the effect is broken for the subject.

CONDEMNING THE MISERABLE OUTLAW

TARGET | One subject

The griot rails violently at some subject within earshot, accusing him of innumerable crimes and perversions. The bystander with the best Mental Effect saving throw must then make a save- if he fails, he and all other onlookers will temporarily view the subject as outside the laws of their community, unworthy of their protection. Anyone may attack or rob the subject of this song, and only his kinsmen or close friends will aid him. The induced outlawry lasts for ten minutes per level of the griot, but crimes committed during that time will not be reported or begrudged by those bystanders who were affected, as they seemed perfectly justified at the time.

ENCOURAGING THE DARKENED MIND

TARGET | One subject

The griot's calm words or stirring song lifts unnatural confusion and enchantment from the mind of a subject. Both the subject and the griot may make saving throws versus Mental Effect. If either succeed, the subject is immediately freed from any mind-affecting effect, including the songs of a griot. If sung for a subject who is not currently influenced, it allows them to automatically succeed on their first Mental Effect saving throw made within the next hour.

INSPIRING THE MULTITUDE'S PASSION

TARGET | Chosen listeners

The griot can whip up fierce passions in those who listen to his songs and words. When this song is sung, all targets who hear must save versus Mental Effect or be filled with a particular strong emotion. The griot can loosely control the focus of this emotion, fixing it on a person or group, but fine nuance is impossible. Common people may resort to beatings or vandalism if infuriated, or flee in headlong terror if affrighted. Hardened warriors may make a Morale check to withstand terrors or maintain order in the face of obvious danger. The emotions last for one minute per level of the griot.

PRAISING THE ENDURING WARRIOR

TARGET | All allies except the griot

The griot sings a song of strength and defiance in the face of hardship, filling his friends with a determined vigor. All allies who listen gain 1d8 hit points, plus one hit point per level of the griot, even if it raises them above their usual maximum. The effect ends ten minutes later or at the end of the battle, whichever comes later, and any hit points in excess of the maximum are lost. This song may help a subject only once per day.

PRAISING THE WISE LEADER

TARGET | Chosen listeners

The griot's words laud a particular person, praising their wisdom, virtue, and prowess. All listeners must save versus Mental Effect or be inclined to view the subject of the song favorably, cooperating with any requests made within the scope of their accepted authority and believing the best of their decisions and judgments. Even a brutal, foolish leader can be made to appear a model of wise statesmanship by a gifted griot, though the charm lasts only one day. People will tend to maintain their good opinion of the leader even after the effect ends, provided no reason for reconsideration is given.

REMEMBERING THE SPEARS OF HEROES

TARGET | One item

The griot knows much about great weapons and war-harness of old. This song teaches the innumerable scraps of legend and tale-telling which allow a griot to recognize famous weapons and armor, or the products of famed artisans. The griot may determine whether or not a weapon, armor, or miscellaneous item is magical and can identify its general use and powers.

ANCIENT SONGS

ABSOVING THE UNJUSTLY ACCUSED

TARGET | One set of judges

The griot stands to defend a person accused of a crime, either proclaiming the person's innocence or weaving such a poetic and elaborate justification that the judges cannot find it in them to condemn the accused. The person in the judging group with the best save versus Mental Effect must roll a saving throw; if he fails, the group is swayed by the griot and will find the accused undeserving of punishment, regardless of the proof. If he succeeds in the save, the judges will make their judgment as they see fit. This song is entirely natural in its effects, and cannot be repelled by wards against magic. It does require that the griot be allowed an opportunity to plead his cause, however, even if the judges have no intention to judge the matter fairly.

CONDEMNING ONE WORTHY OF DEATH

TARGET | One subject

The griot utters such a scorching condemnation of a subject that the victim's very life trembles within his veins. His skin pulls away from his flesh in revulsion at his crimes, and his bones seek to tear free from his hateful body. This castigation inflicts 1d6 points of damage on the subject for every two full levels of the griot, with a Physical Effect save for half damage. A failed save will also stun the target, leaving them unable to act for 1d4 rounds. This song can be used on a particular target no more than once per day.



CONDEMNING THE BREAKER OF LAWS

TARGET | One subject

The griot draws upon his knowledge of the target's crimes to scourge him cruelly. The griot must first accuse the subject of a particular crime under the laws of the community to which the subject belongs. If the griot is mistaken in this and the subject is actually innocent, the griot must save versus Magic or his mouth is stopped for 1d6 minutes, leaving him unable to make a single sound. If the griot speaks true, the subject may make a saving throw versus Mental Effect; on a success, nothing happens, but on a failure, the subject is compelled to loudly announce every detail of his crime and motivation. This condemnation may be used only once on a particular target for a particular crime.

PRaising THE UNCONQUERED HERO

TARGET | One ally

The griot's assurances of victory and shining glory fill the subject of his praise with an unquenchable vigor and unflinching resolve. The target gains 3d6 hit points immediately, even if the total exceeds his normal maximum, and is allowed to roll twice on all attack and damage rolls and take the better dice. The effect ends after ten minutes or the completion of the battle, whichever is longer, and any hit points over the maximum are then lost. An ally may be affected by this song only once per day.

PRaising THE WISDOM OF KINGS

TARGET | One subject

The griot instinctively utters those verses or songs which provide the most useful guidance to the subject in the matter of some significant choice. To benefit from this song, the subject must declare a desired end and then describe some action he intends to take in furtherance of his goal. If the action would actually be unhelpful or counterproductive he gains a vague impression of why the action is unlikely to serve his end. The helpfulness or unhelpfulness of an action is determined at the GM's discretion. This counsel can be given on any particular topic only once per week.

SINGING THE PATH TO GLORY

TARGET | Self

The griot is so exquisitely aware of the consequential figures of the land that he may divine the proper means to reach them through his choice of verse. The griot must seek to find a particular person of importance, whether identified by name or role. The target must save versus Mental Effect; on a success, the griot gains no insight and cannot attempt this song again for a week. If the save fails, for one hour per level the griot gains a perfect knowledge of the direction in which the person or place may be found and a vague sense of distance in hours of travel required to reach them. This spell will not reveal hidden roles; seeking to find "the assassin of the Mai's eldest son" will not work.

MARABOUT MIRACLES

A marabout's gifts come from their special relationship with the spirits. Rather than directly work his will upon the world in the manner of a nganga, the marabout petitions his allies to bring about the desired effect. The marabout's powers are limited by the purviews of his allies, but the spirits can work marvels.

A marabout's available miracles depend on the portfolios of his allied spirits. These portfolios are expressed as *spheres*, each one relating to a particular purview. A novice marabout starts with two spheres, and gains an additional one at third, sixth, and ninth level. As the marabout increases in power, she learns how to befriend additional divine powers. Marabouts of the Spirit Way may choose any spheres, but Sun Faith marabouts must always choose Sun as one of their two initial spheres.

The marabout chooses one of her known spheres as her favored sphere, representing her closest and most important relationship. This favored sphere grants her a special ability, listed under the sphere entries that follow. A Spirit Way marabout may change her favored sphere each time she gains an experience level. Sun Faith marabouts must always maintain Sun as their favored sphere.

PATRON POWERS

Many marabouts are affiliated with specific gods or spirits, maintaining a special relationship with this entity. These relationships do not involve direct communication or divine utterances, but are instead expressed through subtle signs of favor and approval. These bonds persist even if the marabout begins to act contrary to the patron's nature or violates the patron's strictures. Some say it is because the spirit is simply too fond of the marabout, while others say that the Gods Below grant strength to wicked marabouts.

Other Spirit Way marabouts make no specific pacts, instead simply calling upon whatever spirits are convenient to their purposes. While these marabouts rarely rise to positions of importance in a temple, they can often be found as hermits in the bush or wandering holy persons, bringing their wisdom to far lands.

Established priests often mistrust and dislike marabouts, even as they respect their powers. Envy and fear of being displaced by a miracle-worker often makes for difficult relations, though great temples usually have at least one marabout available to work cures and marvels for their richest devotees.

MARABOUT SPELLS PER DAY

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

INVOKING MIRACLES

A marabout's spells are divided into levels. The simplest miracles are level one, while great marvels are level five. The number of miracles a marabout can invoke each day is based on the character's experience level and given in the table above. Thus, a fifth level marabout may use three first level miracles, two second level miracles, and one third level miracle each day. These miracles may be invoked from any sphere known to the marabout. The marabout's powers refresh at dawn each day.

Sun Faith marabouts are gifted with more abundant marvels in exchange for their deeper focus. A Sun Faith marabout may use one more spell each day for each level she can cast- thus, a fifth level Sun Faith marabout may use four first, three second, and two third-level miracles each day.

Casting a miracle requires at least one round's action, and the marabout must be able to speak to ask the spirit's aid. The marabout need not shout, but the request must be made in a clear speaking voice. Some miracles require more than one action to invoke; miracles listed as "1 round" require continuous prayer until the start of the marabout's next action to cast. If the marabout is struck or injured while casting, the spell fizzles uselessly and the spell slot is wasted. A foe may disrupt a single-action spell by holding his action until the marabout begins to cast.

MARABOUT SPELL LIST

SPHERE	FIRST LEVEL	SECOND LEVEL	THIRD LEVEL	FOURTH LEVEL	FIFTH LEVEL
CURING	<i>Hands of Succor</i>	<i>Drive Out Sickness</i>	<i>Draw Out Poison</i>	<i>Vigor of Heroes</i>	<i>Strength After Battle</i>
DEATH	<i>Find Mortality</i>	<i>Question the Dead</i>	<i>Step Over</i>	<i>Calling Back</i>	<i>Servants of Clay</i>
HERDING	<i>Speak to the Herd</i>	<i>Aritani's Staff</i>	<i>Milk and Grass</i>	<i>As The Bull</i>	<i>Call Horned Warriors</i>
PASSION	<i>Kindle the Heart</i>	<i>Bind the Beloved</i>	<i>Bewitching Words</i>	<i>Breaking the Heart</i>	<i>Cutting the Bonds</i>
SPIRITS	<i>Spirit Ward</i>	<i>Other Light</i>	<i>Banish Sorcery</i>	<i>Spirit Servant</i>	<i>Rebuke Spirit</i>
SUN	<i>Shard of the Sun</i>	<i>Noon Blessing</i>	<i>Luminous Blade</i>	<i>Piercing Radiance</i>	<i>Wrath of the Sun</i>
WAR	<i>Warrior's Blessing</i>	<i>Dread of Iron</i>	<i>Thirsting Spear</i>	<i>Charm of Warding</i>	<i>Band of Heroes</i>
WATER	<i>Call Spring</i>	<i>Walk the River</i>	<i>Naming the Rain</i>	<i>Cutting the River Bed</i>	<i>Hundred-League Oko</i>



SPHERES OF POWER

The spheres given below are simply the most common eight known in the Three Lands. Other spheres may be created by the GM as the campaign suggests. A novice marabout may choose two to determine spell access, but he will only gain the special benefit of his favored sphere.

CURING

The sphere of Curing revolves around dispelling illness, mending wounds, and purging poisons. Marabouts who choose it as their favored sphere are remarkably healthy, and are immune to all diseases both mundane and magical in nature. Common entities associated with the sphere of Curing are Oko, Olokun, and the ancestors.

DEATH

Those beloved of death have great command over the transition between life and the spirit world. They can stabilize any mortally-wounded creature with a touch and a round's action, though the victim will eventually die if left untended. If brought to zero hit points by an injury that leaves any chance of survival, they automatically stabilize. Common entities associated with Death are Sagbata and the ancestors, though Oya sometimes lends her good offices as a guide on the journey to the spirit world.

HERDING

Those favored by the spirits of the great herds are powerful; they may increase either their Strength or Constitution modifier by +1, with their hit points increasing by one per level in the latter case. Oko is the god most associated with the herds, though the ancestors are often invoked for their fertility and strength as well.

PASSION

Adepts favored by the spirits of passion are remarkably compelling figures, and gain a +1 bonus to their Charisma modifier. Oshun is by far the most common of the patrons of these arts, though Olokun is wise in the heart and Aganyu knows rage well.

SPIRITS

These marabouts are gifted in dealing with the denizens of the spirit world. They may speak with spirits regardless of their native tongue, gain a +2 bonus on any reaction rolls related to the spirits, and may see invisible spirits. The ancestors are often sought to aid in such matters, along with the wisdom of Olokun.

SUN

Both Sun Teachers and Spirit Way devotees can gain the favor of this solar sphere, gaining the ability to see clearly even in perfect darkness or amid clouds of smoke. Such favored may choose to glow brightly out to a radius of 60'. Aside from the Sun Faith's patron, the gods Aganyu and Oya sometimes grant these gifts.

WAR

Violence and iron are the province of this sphere. Those who favor its arts may choose one specific weapon type, such as the runku or the heavy spear, and gain a +1 bonus to hit rolls with it. The gods Gu, Sagbata and Aganyu all have something to do with war.

WATER

The subtle powers of water bless their favored allies with the ability to breathe water as easily as air and move and see through it unhindered. Olokun is the chief patron of water, though Oya's rains sometimes partake of this power.

MARABOUT SPELLS

ARITANI'S STAFF

LEVEL	2	CAST TIME	1 action
RANGE	Touch	DURATION	10 minutes/level
TARGET	One weapon	SPHERE	Herding

The marabout imbues a staff or other weapon with the power to drive off wild beasts. By presenting the weapon forcefully, the wielder gains a +2 on reaction checks to avoid animal attacks. If the weapon strikes a beast, the animal must make an immediate morale check or flee the combat. This morale check can be forced only once in any given combat for a particular beast, and the weapon has no power over supernatural or magical beasts.

AS THE BULL

LEVEL	4	CAST TIME	1 round
RANGE	Touch	DURATION	One hour/level
TARGET	One subject	SPHERE	Herding

The marabout mantles himself or an ally in the shape of a domestic herd or flock animal, one no smaller than a chicken and no larger than a bull. The subject gains all the statistics of the new form but retains their own hit points and intellect, though no spellcasting is possible and the use of most special abilities is likely to be curtailed. For the duration of the spell, the subject may transform to and from the chosen animal shape as their action for the round. Their equipment transforms with them.

BAND OF HEROES

LEVEL	5	CAST TIME	1 action
RANGE	30'	DURATION	1 round/level
TARGET	Allies in range	SPHERE	War

The marabout bolsters his allies with the might of their greatest warrior. For the duration of the spell, all allies within range gain the best base attack bonus of any of those affected. Once cast, the effect remains for the spell's duration, and those affected need not remain close to the marabout.

BANISH SORCERY

LEVEL	3	CAST TIME	1 action
RANGE	120'	DURATION	1 round/level
TARGET	One subject	SPHERE	Spirits

While the marabout cannot touch *ashe* as a nganga can, he may appeal to the spirits for aid against hostile sorcery. When cast upon a subject, one hostile magical effect is immediately dispelled. If the effect is a Lesser Curse, the marabout must make a saving throw versus Magic to lift it, and Greater Curses cannot be broken by this spell. If cast upon an area it may dispel one magical effect present there, though permanent sorceries cannot be disrupted by this miracle.

BEWITCHING WORDS

LEVEL	3	CAST TIME	1 round
RANGE	60'	DURATION	1 minute/level
TARGET	All in range	SPHERE	Passion

The marabout moves the hearts of listeners with her impassioned words. One strong emotion fills all listeners within range- fear, anger, lust, sorrow, or some other sentiment. Subjects may save versus Mental Effect to resist the bewitchment. The marabout may direct the emotion at a particular subject with a successful Cha/Persuasion skill check at difficulty 8, but on a failure, it is the marabout herself who is the target of the listeners' feelings. The fear induced is sufficient to force a morale check at a -2 penalty for all listeners, and anger is enough to provoke rough-natured souls to attack. Listeners will not perform acts they consider deeply immoral, however.

BIND THE BELOVED

LEVEL	2	CAST TIME	1 round
RANGE	60'	DURATION	1 day/level
TARGET	One subject	SPHERE	Passion

The marabout dazzles a subject with feelings of ardent devotion and admiration. The victim may make a saving throw versus Mental Effect to avoid the beguiling, but if it fails, for the duration



of the spell they will consider the marabout to be a trustworthy friend and counselor, and will do all for them that they would do for such a friend. The spell will be broken by any behavior that would be drastically out of character for a friend.

BREAKING THE HEART

LEVEL	4	CAST TIME	1 action
RANGE	60'	DURATION	1 round/level
TARGET	One subject	SPHERE	Passion

The victim's heart is wracked with unendurable anguish and crushing, formless grief. If they fail a saving throw versus Mental Effect, they are unable to move or perform any actions for the duration of the spell, though they retain their full armor class. The spell functions only on creatures capable of feeling human sorrow.

CALL HORNED WARRIORS

LEVEL	5	CAST TIME	1 round
RANGE	60'	DURATION	1 round/level
TARGET	Special	SPHERE	Herding

A trio of mighty spirit-warriors manifest to aid the marabout. Each one is AC 4, 20 HP, Atk +6/1d8+1 bludgeon or gore, Move 30', Skill +2, Morale 12. These horned warriors will obey the marabout and gladly fight even for suicidal causes, but they will refuse to perform acts they consider disgraceful or demeaning. When slain or at the spell's end, they and their equipment vanish.

CALL SPRING

LEVEL	1	CAST TIME	1 action
RANGE	120'	DURATION	1 minute/level
TARGET	Special	SPHERE	Water

A spring of sweet, fresh water spurts forth from the ground where the marabout bids it appear. The spring can manifest even from solid rock, and gushes forth ten gallons of water for each minute it remains open. The spring will quench modest fires if conjured up beneath them.

CALLING BACK

LEVEL	4	CAST TIME	1 hour
RANGE	Touch	DURATION	Instant
TARGET	One corpse	SPHERE	Death

Most who are embraced by death journey swiftly to the spirit world, and cannot be summoned back. A few with work left to be done may be urged back from the world beyond, however. This spell may revive a dead subject provided all of the body parts are available and the victim has not been dead for more than one day per level of the marabout. Adventurers may almost always be affected by this spell, but few others have enough of a tie to this world to be drawn back- the marabout can tell at a glance whether a corpse can be revived or not. Beings called back by this spell are worn by their travails. They permanently lose one point of Constitution and are incapacitated for a week after revival.

CHARM OF WARDING

LEVEL	4	CAST TIME	1 action
RANGE	30'	DURATION	1 minute/level
TARGET	Allies in range	SPHERE	War

The marabout aids his allies with a blessing of fortune in war. All allies within the spell's range are given a -2 bonus to their armor class. Any blow or injury that would mortally wound them must have its damage dice rerolled, and the lower of the two rolls used. Once blessed, the recipients may move out of the spell's range without losing its benefits.

CUTTING THE BONDS

LEVEL	5	CAST TIME	1 action
RANGE	120'	DURATION	Special
TARGET	One subject	SPHERE	Passion

Passion may be killed as well as kindled. On casting this spell, the target must save versus Mental Effect. On a failure, they suddenly lose all interest in their most important emotional or social relationship, becoming coldly indifferent to the other person. If there are latent tensions in the relationship, they will become outright hostile to the other.

No act or persuasion will revive their feelings until this spell is lifted, which may be done by the caster or by a power that can undo a Greater Curse. If the caster has a particular relationship in mind to poison, they may designate it in place of the otherwise most-important relation.

CUTTING THE RIVER BED

LEVEL	4	CAST TIME	1 action
RANGE	120'	DURATION	1 round/level
TARGET	Special	SPHERE	Water

The marabout carves a riverbed through empty air, conjuring a wall of fast-flowing water somewhere within the area of effect. The wall is ten feet high, three feet thick, and extends for ten feet per level of the caster. The wall may be curved or arranged as the marabout desires. Man-sized creatures are unable to penetrate the wall or launch missiles through its swift-flowing current. The wall must be conjured on a solid, unobstructed surface and at the spell's end it and all of its water will vanish.

DRAW OUT POISON

LEVEL	3	CAST TIME	1 action
RANGE	Touch	DURATION	Instant
TARGET	One subject	SPHERE	Curing

A healing hand mends poisoned flesh. This spell immediately removes all toxins from the subject and undoes the damage or injury inflicted by the last interval of the poison. If the victim was killed by the poison, this spell will revive them if it is cast within six rounds of death.

DREAD OF IRON

LEVEL	2	CAST TIME	1 action
RANGE	120'	DURATION	1d4 rounds+1/level
TARGET	1 subject/level	SPHERE	War

A sudden terror of blades and warfare fills the hearts of the victims of this spell. All of them must make immediate morale checks at -2 or flee; if PCs, they must instead save versus Mental Effect to resist the fear. Even if they succeed, they suffer a -2 penalty to all hit rolls for the duration of the spell. This spell will only function if the victims are being threatened with violence.

DRIVE OUT SICKNESS

LEVEL	2	CAST TIME	1 round
RANGE	Touch	DURATION	Instant
TARGET	One subject	SPHERE	Curing

Plagues and illnesses melt away under the marabout's blessing. This spell banishes all sicknesses from the target and undoes any ill effects from the last interval of the disease.

FIND MORTALITY

LEVEL	1	CAST TIME	1 action
RANGE	120'	DURATION	Instant
TARGET	One subject	SPHERE	Death

The friend of death can find the end in any being. If the subject fails a saving throw versus Magic this charm will reveal their weaknesses and vulnerabilities, indicating the ways in which they can be harmed or killed and warning the marabout of any special immunities they may have. As a consequence, the marabout may use this knowledge or shout it to a friend to allow their next successful hit to do maximum damage, provided it lands within the next minute. Such transient vulnerabilities change often, however, and this spell must be cast again if another such telling blow is to be struck.

HANDS OF SUCCOR

LEVEL	1	CAST TIME	1 action
RANGE	Touch	DURATION	Instant
TARGET	One subject	SPHERE	Curing

Many are the adventurer's occasions for injury and grievous wounds. With a touch, the marabout heals 1d8+1 hit points of damage in the subject. If the victim is currently mortally wounded, they return to health immediately with the number of hit points rolled, up to their normal maximum.

HUNDRED-LEAGUE OKO

LEVEL	5	CAST TIME	10 minutes
RANGE	Special	DURATION	Instant
TARGET	Self or one boat	SPHERE	Water

The rivers are a road to the adepts of water. If cast on himself, this miracle allows the marabout to step into any body of water large enough to hold him and emerge from any point along that or any connecting body of water. A marabout may walk into the western

sea and emerge at the headwaters of the Iteru moments later if he so wishes. The destination must be chosen when the marabout enters the water- he cannot scout the banks of a river before choosing his landing point. There must not be any obstacles between him and his destination that a human body could not pass.

Alternately, he may cast this spell on a boat no longer than fifteen feet in length, transporting it and all aboard it to any connected water location navigable by that craft.

KINDLE THE HEART

LEVEL	1	CAST TIME	1 action
RANGE	120'	DURATION	Special
TARGET	One target	SPHERE	Passion

This subtle sorcery nudges the emotions of a subject, inclining them as the marabout desires. This spell is so discreet that it may be cast as part of normal conversation, granting the marabout a +2 bonus on a single social interaction skill check. There is no saving throw against its effects.

LUMINOUS BLADE

LEVEL	3	CAST TIME	1 action
RANGE	Touch	DURATION	10 minutes/level
TARGET	One weapon	SPHERE	Sun

The brilliance of the sun is brought down to bless a weapon. For the duration of this spell, the weapon glows brightly out to a radius of 30', counts as a magical weapon for purposes of harming supernatural creatures, and does +1d8 fire damage to anything it or its missiles strike. The weapon does full damage to Eternal even if it is a piercing weapon.

MILK AND GRASS

LEVEL	3	CAST TIME	10 minutes
RANGE	Touch	DURATION	Instant
TARGET	Special	SPHERE	Herding

The marabout feeds the herd with this spell, causing a thick crop of lush grass to sprout even from bare stone. The pasturage provides sufficient food and water for ten cattle per caster level. Even humans can be nourished and watered by the grass, with each human counting as one cow. The grass withers into dust at sunset.

NAMING THE RAIN

LEVEL	3	CAST TIME	1 action
RANGE	120'	DURATION	1 round/level
TARGET	30' radius burst	SPHERE	Water

At the point chosen within range, a sudden torrential downpour erupts in a 30' radius cloud. Within this zone a blinding wall of rain obscures all sight beyond five feet, ruins the strings of non-magical bows, halves movement rates, and douses all open flames. The marabout and his allies are undampened by the rains and may see through them normally. At the spell's end, the water created by the storm will vanish.

NOON BLESSING

LEVEL	2	CAST TIME	1 round
RANGE	30'	DURATION	1 hour/level
TARGET	Allies in range	SPHERE	Sun

This long-lasting blessing suffuses the caster's allies with the abiding warmth of the sun. They are immune to sunburn and discomfort from climatic extremes of heat or cold, and may ignore the first six points of damage they receive from heat or cold each round.

OTHER LIGHT

LEVEL	2	CAST TIME	1 round
RANGE	Self	DURATION	1 minute/level
TARGET	30' radius	SPHERE	Spirit

The spirits cast a strange radiance over the area of effect, revealing the presence of magical objects, invisible spirits, and standing enchantments. Identifying the specifics of such spells may require an Int/Occult skill check if they are not already familiar to the marabout, usually starting at difficulty 8 for the least obscure spells.

PIERCING RADIANCE

LEVEL	4	CAST TIME	1 round
RANGE	Self	DURATION	1 minute
TARGET	60' radius burst	SPHERE	Sun

The Sun is a power of truth, and this brilliant light reveals all which is hidden or disguised. Within the spell's area of effect, shapeshifters are shown in their true shape, illusions are unraveled, hidden objects are obvious at a glance, and concealed or invisible entities are revealed. Master thieves may evade this light- anyone with Stealth-3 skill or better is not automatically revealed by the spell.

QUESTION THE DEAD

LEVEL	3	CAST TIME	1 round
RANGE	Self	DURATION	1 minute/level
TARGET	One corpse	SPHERE	Death

Provided a corpse still has a serviceable tongue and jaw, the marabout may use it as a channel to contact the spirit of its deceased owner. One question may be asked per level of the marabout, and any replies will be direct and without elaboration. The spirit is aware of the person contacting them, and if given reason for umbrage may lie or otherwise prove uncooperative. Only the marabout can hear the voice of the spirit, and some duplicitous adepts have been known to misrepresent such sendings.

REBUKE SPIRIT

LEVEL	5	CAST TIME	1 action
RANGE	120'	DURATION	Instant
TARGET	One subject	SPHERE	Spirits

The marabout hurls a mighty abjuration at a troublesome spirit. Any entity of the spirit or undead type is blasted for 1d6 points of damage per marabout level, with a saving throw for half damage. A spirit that fails its saving throw is immediately banished back to



the spirit world, while a restless ghost or undead destroyed by this spell has its soul scattered, and will not reform here again. Any curses or other magical blights produced by a banished or scattered entity are likewise ended by the spell.

SERVANTS OF CLAY

LEVEL	5	CAST TIME	1 action
RANGE	60'	DURATION	Special
TARGET	Special	SPHERE	Death

The friend of death has command over the shells that remain. This spell may be used in one of two ways. In the first, the marabout may touch a serviceable corpse to create a Walking Corpse as per the Bestiary chapter. A body which has received funerary rites is immune to this effect, as its spirit has already passed beyond the reach of the marabout. Conversely, this spell may be used to scourge all undead creatures within 60' of the marabout, inflicting 1d8 points of damage for every two full levels of the caster.

SHARD OF THE SUN

LEVEL	1	CAST TIME	1 action
RANGE	60'	DURATION	Instant
TARGET	One subject	SPHERE	Sun

A brilliant fragment of searing light leaps from the marabout to strike a foe. The bolt does 1d6+1 fire damage to the victim, and will set flammable objects alight.

SPEAK TO THE HERD

LEVEL	1	CAST TIME	1 action
RANGE	Self	DURATION	10 minutes/level
TARGET	Self	SPHERE	Herding

The marabout's affinity for the spirits of the herd allow her to speak with any domesticated animal. These animals will be cooperative and friendly to the marabout, and will perform any services for her that are not dangerous or against their nature. Their intellect is limited, however, and they are unable to comprehend complex requests.

SPIRIT SERVANT

LEVEL	4	CAST TIME	1 round
RANGE	30'	DURATION	1 hour/level
TARGET	Special	SPHERE	Spirit

A call to the spirit world summons over an obedient ally. This spirit servant has AC 4, HD 5, 25 hit points, Move 30', Skill +2, Morale 12, and cannot effectively fight. They may appear in any guise the marabout desires, though they may not perfectly impersonate a specific person. They will perform any action the marabout wishes, including those that would be suicidal.

Encased in tangible flesh, they lack any supernatural powers, but they are skilled in any one profession or role of the marabout's choice. They arrive equipped with whatever normal accoutrements might be expected for their role. When slain or the spell ends, they and their equipment vanish away.

SPIRIT WARD

LEVEL	1	CAST TIME	1 action
RANGE	10' radius	DURATION	10 minutes/level
TARGET	Allies in range	SPHERE	Spirit

The marabout repels the presence of unwanted spirits with this spell. Any spirit with equal or fewer hit dice than the marabout has levels cannot approach closer than ten feet to the marabout or use their powers on any person within that zone. Creatures afflicted by the spirit have all harmful effects or mental control suppressed as long as they remain near the marabout. Spirits with more hit dice than the marabout may make a saving throw versus Magic to ignore the ward. Attacking a spirit or forcing the ward against it will break the spell.

STEP OVER

LEVEL	3	CAST TIME	1 action
RANGE	Self	DURATION	10 minutes/level
TARGET	Self	SPHERE	Death

The world of death is close to the marabout, and with this spell she may briefly step over the line. For the duration of the spell she neither eats, breathes, or sleeps, and is impervious to weariness and armor exhaustion penalties. If reduced to zero hit points she is incapacitated but will not start bleeding to death until the spell ends. She takes only minimum damage from piercing weapons, and may perfectly mimic a corpse.

STRENGTH AFTER BATTLE

LEVEL	5	CAST TIME	1 round
RANGE	Touch	DURATION	Special
TARGET	One subject	SPHERE	Curing

The brutal demands of war are satisfied by this miracle. The subject touched will regain 1d6 hit points per minute until their strength is fully restored. Further injury ends the spell. A person can be affected by this miracle only once per day.

THIRSTING SPEAR

LEVEL	3	CAST TIME	1 action
RANGE	60'	DURATION	1 minute/level
TARGET	One weapon	SPHERE	War

The hunger for blood satisfies both steel and wielder with this miracle. The weapon so blessed will return half of the damage it does, rounded up, to its wielder as healing.

VIGOR OF HEROES

LEVEL	4	CAST TIME	1 action
RANGE	Touch	DURATION	Instant
TARGET	One subject	SPHERE	Curing

Powerful healing magic infuses a subject touched by the marabout, healing 3d8+3 damage.

WALK THE RIVER

LEVEL	2	CAST TIME	1 action
RANGE	10' radius	DURATION	1 hour/level
TARGET	Allies in range	SPHERE	Water

The marabout and up to six of his allies are blessed by the spirits, allowing them to travel through water at their full normal movement rates. They may breathe and act normally and their possessions will not be dampened. Once blessed, these allies need not remain near the marabout.

WARRIOR'S BLESSING

LEVEL	1	CAST TIME	1 action
RANGE	120'	DURATION	1 minute/level
TARGET	One subject	SPHERE	War

The favor of the spirits of war is conferred upon a worthy subject, granting them a +2 bonus to hit and the ability to reroll any one hit or damage roll during the duration of the spell.

WRATH OF THE SUN

LEVEL	5	CAST TIME	1 round
RANGE	120'	DURATION	Instant
TARGET	5' radius burst	SPHERE	Sun

A brilliant pillar of consuming light roars into existence at the point chosen by the marabout, consuming all within five feet of the point of impact. All within this range suffer 1d6 fire damage per level of the marabout, with an Evasion saving throw for half.

BLASPHEMOUS SORCERY

While the people of the Three Lands are accustomed to a profusion of gods and spirits, all decent souls are united in horror of the Gods Below. These monstrous entities are believed to dwell beneath the earth of the spirit world, gnawing the souls of the wicked and punishing all who fall into their clutches. It was the Gods Below who taught the Eternal King the secrets of a twisted immortality, and even now they send dark dreams to their slaves in the living world.

Adepts in the worship of the Gods Below include both marabouts and less gifted priests, both granted the favor of these entities' dark miracles. Ordinary priests are treated as a marabout of an appropriate level, able to cast the spells listed below but no others. Marabouts who succumb to the promises of the Gods Below have access to both their conventional spheres and these blasphemous miracles. Service to these powers is a quick and easy way to greater might, and some ambitious marabouts find it more of a temptation than they can withstand.

Other worshipers are Eternal cultists, inheriting the old faith of Deshur and its foul masters. These cults are naturally prohibited in all civilized lands, but the promises of life everlasting and temporal power tempt in many who might otherwise escape damnation.

Servants of the Gods Below are expected to perform regular rites of propitiation that range from the distasteful to the horrific. Those that fail to satisfy the gods or work to spread their sinister faith are tormented by evil dreams that show them the tortures that await them in the afterlife, while those who perform sufficiently great evils are promised protection from their consequences in the spirit world and are assured of a place of great delight by their masters.

THE \$PHERE OF BLASPHEMY

Those beloved of blasphemy and corruption are extremely difficult to discover. Any spell that risks revealing their forbidden sorcery or uncovering their true allegiance grants them an automatic saving throw versus Magic with a +4 bonus on the roll. If successful, the magic has been perverted and the adept may dictate the result returned by the spell or divination. They are aware of such attempts to suss them out even if the spell would not normally alert the subject. The benefit affects even magic that would only incidentally or accidentally reveal their true masters.

Servants of the Gods Below gain the benefit of this sphere in addition to any favored sphere a marabout may have selected. If the adept is not a marabout, only this sphere's benefit is gained.

WORMS OF THE EARTH

LEVEL	1	CAST TIME	1 action
RANGE	60'	DURATION	Instant
TARGET	One subject	\$PHERE	Blasphemy

The Gods Below send a swarm of their wormlike spirit-servants to erupt upward from the surface beneath the target's feet, swarming over them and burrowing into their flesh for a brief moment before vanishing. The victim takes 1d8 points of damage.

STOPPING THE TONGUE

LEVEL	2	CAST TIME	1 action
RANGE	Touch	DURATION	Indefinite
TARGET	One subject	\$PHERE	Blasphemy

There are times when murder is an unserviceable tool for maintaining discretion. By touching the target and naming a particular topic, the victim becomes utterly incapable of speaking, writing, or otherwise communicating information about the topic to another person. A saving throw versus Mental Effect will resist the spell. An adept knows when the spell has been resisted, and must wait a further day to attempt it again on that subject. The spell can be lifted by any effect that breaks a Lesser Curse.

CHANCER WITHIN THE EARTH

LEVEL	3	CAST TIME	1 round
RANGE	Special	DURATION	1 minute/level
TARGET	Self	\$PHERE	Blasphemy

The adept gains the power to burrow through earth and unworked stone, manipulating up to a 10' cube of material per minute. The adept may finish and shape the excavations in basic ways sufficient to form doorways, pillars, and other structural elements. Many skilled adepts use this spell to fashion secret cult meeting-places.

STUNNING BLASPHEMY

LEVEL	4	CAST TIME	1 action
RANGE	30'	DURATION	1d4 rounds
TARGET	Enemies in range	\$PHERE	Blasphemy

The adept utters words of such shocking foulness that intelligent enemies are left reeling by the horrible images they conjure. All enemies within range must save versus Mental Effect or be incapable of taking actions for 1d4 rounds, though they retain their full armor class. The listeners need not share a language with the adept to be affected by the words, though deafness will protect them from the spell.

SLOW CONSUMPTION OF THE \$PIRIT

LEVEL	5	CAST TIME	1 round
RANGE	60'	DURATION	1 round/level
TARGET	One enemy	\$PHERE	Blasphemy

Writhing spirit-worms squirm and tunnel beneath the victim's skin, distending flesh and form as they consume the subject's soul-substance. The victim takes 1d6 damage per round for the duration of the spell. On a successful saving throw versus Magic, the spell's duration is halved, rounded down. The excruciating pain of the worms makes it impossible to cast spells while under the effect of this affliction, though it may be ended early by the adept or by any effect capable of lifting a Lesser Curse.

Victims slain by this spell have no physical mark upon their bodies, but their souls are raddled and scarred by the wounds of the worms' gnawing hunger.

NGANGA SORCERY

A nganga's ("GAHN-gah") arts are harsh and demanding. Those born with the gift of manipulating *ashe* might go their whole lives ignorant of the strange coincidences and peculiar troubles that afflict their enemies, but any who would wish to truly master the fire in their veins must commit to a grueling study of sorcery. Such a choice often severs them from family and community alike.

Most ngangas learn their arts from a master over the course of an apprenticeship that starts in early youth and extends for as much as a dozen years. Elder ngangas often find it necessary to take such apprentices, for much of a nganga's work involves burdensome preparations and hand labor that is better done by strong young limbs than the withered fingers of the aged. Many ngangas are so feared that they cannot even find wives or husbands, and so they must rely on their pupils to tend to them in their old age.

These village or town ngangas teach the great majority of the Three Lands' sorcerers, and few of them ever attain greatness. They trade their services as cursebreakers and charm-makers to satisfy the needs of their neighbors, and avoid seeking such power as might provoke the fearful common folk into imagining them a threat. The strongest and most capable of the town ngangas might be fourth or fifth level, and that at the end of a long and diligent life.

Bush ngangas are something different. They are the men and women who are not content to be barely-tolerated figures within a humble village, or suspicious scholars hawking their lore in a town market. These dwellers in the deep wilderness seek out the lost lore of ages past and plumb deep mysteries far from the places of men. They dwell in near-solitude, with only a few trusted apprentices or servants, the better to be undisturbed in their strange labors and esoteric disciplines. Some of them are good and noble souls who desire only wisdom and the peace to pursue their understanding. Others have gone into the bush because no sensible community would tolerate their evil desires.

TYPES OF NGANGA MAGIC

The sorcery used by the nganga comes in two forms- *ritual sorcery*, which requires lengthy rites and the correct physical components, and *nkisi*, ("nn-KEE-see"), which imbue a small fetish or token with an effect that can be triggered swiftly at a more opportune time.

To cast a ritual spell the nganga requires a number of small tools and components and an undisturbed place in which to work. These tools take up no meaningful encumbrance cost and are assumed to be always available to a nganga, but one stripped of his belongings must piece them back together over a week's time to create new ones. They are easily fashioned out of natural components, provided the nganga is in a wilderness location and can gather the necessary elements.

Aside from these tools, some rituals also require the use of costly ingredients. Urban nganga are often forced to simply buy these ingredients in the market, but one who dwells in the bush can provide for his own needs.



A nganga can gather 10 si worth of ingredients each day from a wilderness area, assuming he spends the entire day gathering. These ingredients must be gathered for a specific ritual- he can't simply harvest 300 si worth of components over the course of a month and then decide how to use them. It is up to the GM's discretion as to how large a stockpile of ingredients can be laid up for a particular ritual. Once the nganga has both the tools and the ingredients for a ritual, he needs only spend the requisite time to cast it. If injured or violently interrupted during the casting process, the ritual is spoiled and any ingredients are wasted.

Nkisi operate somewhat differently. Nkisi produce sudden, immediate effects and are intended for use when the nganga does not have time to conjure an elaborate ritual. Instead, the sorcerer conducts preparatory rites to imbue a small token or icon with magical power, and can later trigger this power to cast the spell. Nkisi require no special components, and almost any hand-held object can serve as a focusing fetish for them. Unwitting ngangas turn their own knives and hand tools into nkisi, discharging their unconscious sorceries through them at friends and enemies.

A nganga can only have so many nkisi prepared at any one time, however. If he has more than the listed maximums provided by the following table, then each time he triggers a nkisi he must roll an Int/Occult skill check at a difficulty of 6, +2 for each excess nkisi he has prepared. On a failure, all of them go off at once, targeting him for each effect.

LEARNING AND CASTING SPELLS

A nganga may learn ritual sorceries and nkisi of any level he is able to cast. Learning a spell requires either a tutor or one of the rare and complex tomes or teaching-idols that instruct in the spell. Ngangas are reluctant to teach their lore for fear of it being used against them, and so often require many favors or very great payment to part with their learning. Once a teacher is found, a spell can be learned in one week per spell level.

Casting a ritual was discussed earlier, but casting a nkisi is a much quicker process. The nganga must have a free hand to hold the nkisi and be capable of speaking to invoke its power. Most such invocations take only a single action, though some require the nganga to chant until the start of their next round. Just as with marabouts, a nganga injured during casting loses the spell and wastes the nkisi.

Unlike marabouts, however, channeling *ashe* places certain limits on the kind of clothing a nganga can wear. Ritually-significant tokens, adornments, and masks are often necessary for focusing *ashe's* power, and so a nganga may not wear armor if he intends to cast spells. Warding amulets and other magical devices with no encumbrance cost may be used, however.

OCCULT CONNECTIONS

Numerous rituals require the use of *occult connections* with a given target. A nganga who possesses such a connection may hurl curses and afflictions at the victim even with the width of the Three Lands between them. Occult connections include nail clippings, blood, hair, spittle, sweat, urine, washing-sponges and water, sleeping mats, worn clothing, familiar jewelry, food scraps, beer dregs, and anything else of similar closeness to the subject- even the soil taken from a very fresh footprint or a handful of earth dug from under their shadow.

A nganga may possess only one occult connection to any given person at a time; he cannot stockpile a mountain of nail clippings to bewitch a victim repeatedly. The quality of connection with a person is diffused over all such suitable links in a nganga's possession, and any use of one discharges the virtue of them all. Once a connection is used, a new one must be gathered afresh. Cunning and clever allies can be employed to steal such things, but they must bring the connection quickly to the nganga before its nature becomes entangled with their own and they risk becoming the target of any sorcery the nganga might work with it.

Occult connections are most often used in ritual magic, and allow a spell to affect a target at any distance. Nkisi are not designed to take proper advantage of them, and so they are of much less use when employed with such spells. If used with a nkisi, the victim suffers a -2 penalty on any saving throw that must be made. Once used, a connection expends its power and becomes useless for further sorcery.

Unsurprisingly, the natives of the Three Lands frown mightily on the gathering of occult connections. Even common peasants understand the dangers of allowing such things to fall into the hands of witches, and kings guard them well.

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

NGANGA SPELL LIST	
FIRST LEVEL RITUALS	FIRST LEVEL NKISI
<i>Cleanse the Curse of Misfortune</i>	<i>Nkisi of the Blessed Spear</i>
<i>Create Charm of Soothing</i>	<i>Nkisi of the Burning Brand</i>
<i>Create Warding Amulet</i>	<i>Nkisi of the Deadened Mind</i>
<i>Open the Hunter's Path</i>	<i>Nkisi of the Evil Eye</i>
<i>Rite of the Twisted Limb</i>	<i>Nkisi of the Nganga's Eye</i>
SECOND LEVEL RITUALS	SECOND LEVEL NKISI
<i>Burden the Accursed House</i>	<i>Nkisi of Grasping Vines</i>
<i>Call Spirit Minion</i>	<i>Nkisi of the Blighted Fate</i>
<i>Create Amulet against Beasts</i>	<i>Nkisi of the Ghost</i>
<i>Create Bakakari Shirt</i>	<i>Nkisi of the Nganga's Command</i>
<i>Create Talisman Against Misfortune</i>	<i>Nkisi of the Sloughing Skin</i>
THIRD LEVEL RITUALS	THIRD LEVEL NKISI
<i>Calling the Veiled Bower</i>	<i>Nkisi of Blinding Rage</i>
<i>Cleanse the Curse of Death</i>	<i>Nkisi of the Cold Clay Limbs</i>
<i>Echoes of the Distant Song</i>	<i>Nkisi of the Speaking Stone</i>
<i>Rite of Death in Life</i>	<i>Nkisi of the Sundered Spell</i>
<i>Rite of the Altered Skin</i>	<i>Nkisi of the Tearer of Veils</i>
FOURTH LEVEL RITUALS	FOURTH LEVEL NKISI
<i>Call Spirit Hunter</i>	<i>Nkisi of Fixing the Soul</i>
<i>Rite of Casting Forth the Eye</i>	<i>Nkisi of the Bestial Form</i>
<i>Rite of Mending the Soul</i>	<i>Nkisi of the Broken Shadow</i>
<i>Ward of the Knotted Path</i>	<i>Nkisi of the Crimson Nail</i>
<i>Ward of the Scabrous Hand</i>	<i>Nkisi of the Invincible Will</i>
FIFTH LEVEL RITUALS	FIFTH LEVEL NKISI
<i>Create Amulet of Might</i>	<i>Nkisi of Severing the Head</i>
<i>Curse of the Far Spear</i>	<i>Nkisi of the Shadow That Kills</i>
<i>Rite of the Listener</i>	<i>Nkisi of the Shattered Name</i>
<i>Rite of the Tempest Rider</i>	<i>Nkisi of the Walker at Night</i>

NGANGA SPELLS

BURDEN THE ACCURSED HOUSE

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

The nganga casts a curse upon a particular dwelling or area, afflicting all within with a subtle blight of misfortune and despair. He must have possession of some fragment of the structure to be cursed, and the ritual will not work on structures larger than sixty feet on a side. When the ritual is complete, all persons who have spent more than six hours inside that structure or area in the past day must save versus Magic or be struck by a Lesser Curse, inflicting a -1 penalty on all hit rolls, damage checks, Morale, saving throws, and skill checks they might face. The curse will persist as long as the subject enters the structure at least once per week. If a nganga breaks the curse on a victim or the place, all curses break.

CALL SPIRIT HUNTER

LEVEL	4	CAST TIME	1 hour
RANGE	Special	COST	500 si
TARGET	One victim	TYPE	Ritual

By means of this nocturnal rite the nganga calls forth a faithful spirit assassin, summoning it to find or slay a particular target. If the nganga has an occult connection with the target the hunter will be able to track them unerringly and go directly to their current location. If without such a connection then the hunter must trail them by conventional means, though it has a total of +4 on all tracking and stealth skill checks. This ritual may be only be cast at night, and the hunter will vanish at the first light of dawn.

The hunter itself may take many forms, all plainly inhuman and roughly man-sized. It can swim the roughest waters or climb the sheerest surfaces as quickly as it can walk. Its stats are AC 5, HD 5, Atk +7/2d6, Move 40', Skill +4, Save 13+. It is intelligent as a human, but it cannot speak, and acts only to track or assassinate a target. If the hunter is slain, the nganga suffers 2d6 points of damage from the *ashe* backlash and cannot call it forth again for one full month.

CALL SPIRIT MINION

LEVEL	2	CAST TIME	1 hour
RANGE	Special	COST	None
TARGET	One minion	TYPE	Ritual

The nganga performs a ritual to conjure up a shell of material flesh around a construct of mystical *ashe*. The spirit minion takes the form of an animal common to the area no smaller than a kitten and no larger than a jackal. The animal always has some unusual coloration or physical trait, and any nganga who spots it can recognize its supernatural nature instantly. Once the spirit is summoned it will obey the nganga utterly. It cannot fight, but has an AC of 7, a movement rate of 20', and 6 hit points. It is as intel-



ligent as a human being, and the nganga can interpret the sounds it makes as human speech. Upon its death or the next sunrise, it vanishes in a plume of white smoke.

CALLING THE VEILED BOWER

LEVEL	3	CAST TIME	1 hour
RANGE	Special	COST	None
TARGET	One hut	TYPE	Ritual

A nganga often has reason to desire the privacy of the deep bush, but comfort is wanted as well. This ritual summons the natural flora of the area to bend and shape itself into a suitable dwelling for the nganga, one made of whatever natural living materials are available. The resultant dwelling might be a grass hut, scrub-brush wicker house, or smooth hardwood building depending on available plant life.

The structure is never more than twenty feet square and one storey in height. The dwelling blends smoothly with its surroundings and exudes a sense of peace; wild animals will not molest those within unless provoked. The dwelling will last indefinitely assuming it receives occasional repair and maintenance.

CLEANSE THE CURSE OF DEATH

LEVEL	3	CAST TIME	6 hours
RANGE	Special	COST	400 si
TARGET	One subject	TYPE	Ritual

The nganga's power is marshaled to strike down the power of a Greater Curse. At the end of this rite, both the nganga and the victim make a saving throw versus Magic. If both fail, the rite cannot be attempted for that victim for another day. If either succeed, one Greater Curse of the nganga's choosing is lifted from the victim.

This ritual may also be used to appease the anger of a cursed or offended magical item, assuming the offending party makes a suitably handsome plea for forgiveness. If both the nganga and the offender fail their Magic saving throw, then the item can only be appeased by some costly or painful offering chosen by the GM.

CLEANSE THE CURSE OF MISFORTUNE

LEVEL	1	CAST TIME	6 hours
RANGE	Special	COST	None
TARGET	One subject	TYPE	Ritual

This rite allows the nganga to fracture the force of a Lesser Curse upon a target, breaking it up and ending its hold upon a victim. At the rite's completion, both the nganga and the target may make saving throws versus Magic; if either succeed, the Lesser Curse is ended. If used by the nganga on himself, only he may make the saving throw. The rite may only target one Lesser Curse at a time, and may only be performed for a given subject once per day. The nganga knows whether or not the rite was successful.

CREATE AMULET AGAINST BEASTS

LEVEL	2	CAST TIME	6 hours
RANGE	Special	COST	100 si
TARGET	One charm	TYPE	Ritual

The nganga works with a subject to fashion magical amulets that will protect them from the anger of the savage animals of the Three Lands. The wearer of such amulets gains a +2 bonus to all reaction rolls from wild animals for purposes of avoiding attack. He also gains a -2 bonus to armor class against their attacks, and a +2 bonus to hit them. These amulets are useless against magically-altered or supernatural beasts. The amulets lose their power if the wearer ever eats the meat of a domestic animal.

CREATE AMULET OF MIGHT

LEVEL	5	CAST TIME	6 hours
RANGE	Special	COST	5,000 si
TARGET	One charm	TYPE	Ritual

This exacting ritual creates an amulet of power suitable for a great hero. The amulet will only ever benefit its designated owner, and only a hero with at least seven hit dice or levels can gain its aid. When worn by its rightful owner, the amulet grants an armor class of 4 and will allow the bearer to reroll one failed saving throw per day. A nganga may have no more than three such amulets in existence at any one time.

CREATE BAKAKARI SHIRT

LEVEL	2	CAST TIME	6 hours
RANGE	Special	COST	500 si
TARGET	One shirt	TYPE	Ritual

The nganga uses his arts to create a "bakakari shirt" for a particular person, a garment sewn with dozens of charms against malevolent sorcery. The shirt may take many forms, from an actual tunic to a bandoleer of amulets. When the wearer of such a shirt is affected by a Lesser Curse, he may make a saving throw versus Magic to resist the effect. If successful, one or more of the amulets on the bakakari shirt flare up brightly before crumbling to dust and dispelling the Lesser Curse. On a failed save, the curse takes its normal course. The shirt will repel one curse for each two full levels of the nganga who fashioned it before it becomes useless. A person may benefit from only one bakakari shirt at a time.

CREATE CHARM OF SOOTHING

LEVEL	1	CAST TIME	6 hours
RANGE	Special	COST	None
TARGET	One charm	TYPE	Ritual

The nganga infuses a bundle of medicinal plants with his *ashe*, encouraging the force of life within them and opening paths by which their strength may withstand sickness. Those who use such a talisman are treated as if they had made one more successful saving throw against a disease's effects, which may be enough to end the illness immediately. A subject can benefit from only one such charm per instance of illness, and a nganga may create no more of these charms at once than he has levels. Any additional charms cause the oldest extant ones to lose their virtue.

CREATE TALISMAN AGAINST MISFORTUNE

LEVEL	2	CAST TIME	6 hours
RANGE	Special	COST	100 si
TARGET	One charm	TYPE	Ritual

Every village conjurer claims to be able to fashion amulets to protect the bearer from accident or trouble. The difference between their promises and those of a true nganga is that the nganga's amulets actually work. The bearer of a talisman against misfortune may reroll the first saving throw they fail after donning the amulets. The amulets only ever work once before crumbling away, and a person may bear no more than one of these amulets at a time.

CREATE WARDING AMULET

LEVEL	1	CAST TIME	1 day
RANGE	Special	COST	30 si
TARGET	One charm	TYPE	Ritual

By careful study of the subject and the use of judiciously-chosen minerals, herbs, and animal parts, the nganga can fashion a set of warding amulets that will protect the bearer from harm in battle. The amulets function only for the intended wearer and grant AC 6 as blows are magically deflected or weakened by the sorcery. The charms will function until they are physically destroyed.

CURSE OF THE FAR SPEAR

LEVEL	5	CAST TIME	1 hour
RANGE	Connection	COST	1,000 si
TARGET	One victim	TYPE	Ritual

A nganga of dreadful might can use an occult connection to kill a wretched victim from afar, burning, slashing, or otherwise destroying the connection to echo the injury on the target's soul-self. At the completion of this rite, the victim must save versus Magic or fall dead on the spot. Even if the target succeeds in the save, they take 3d6 points of damage from the spiritual shock. A careful Wis/Occult examination at difficulty 10 will reveal that the victim perished due to witchcraft.

ECHOES OF THE DISTANT SONG

LEVEL	3	CAST TIME	1 hour
RANGE	Special	COST	None
TARGET	One subject	TYPE	Ritual

The nganga walks far in his dreams to communicate with another sleeper. This ritual requires that the nganga sleep, whereupon he may reach out to a person whom he has met to enter their own dreams, assuming that they too are slumbering. The target may refuse to let the nganga in, remembering only a vague and disquieting sense of being watched when they awaken. If they admit the nganga, the two may converse in a shared and harmless dreamscape, with the conversation remembered perfectly when they awaken.



NKISI OF BLINDING RAGE

LEVEL	3	CAST TIME	1 action
RANGE	120'	DURATION	1 round/level
TARGET	One subject	TYPE	Nkisi

The nganga seizes control of the fury in a warrior's heart, blinding him to the truth and redirecting his rage against his own allies. If the target fails a saving throw versus Mental Effect, he will immediately attack a target of the nganga's own choosing, and will continue to assault that target until the spell ends, using his most effective abilities to do so. The nganga may change his target as a round's actions; if the subject has no target, he stands confused and does nothing for the round.

NKISI OF FIXING THE SOUL

LEVEL	4	CAST TIME	1 action
RANGE	120'	DURATION	1 minute/level
TARGET	One subject	TYPE	Nkisi

The nganga calls nails of spiritual force to pin a living target's soul to their body. For the duration of the spell the target is immune to life-draining effects and cannot actually die. If reduced to zero hit points, they are rendered incapacitated but will not bleed out. If their wounds are not tended by the time the spell elapses, they will begin to bleed to death, and if they have been dismembered or otherwise mangled they will die on the spot.

NKISI OF GRASPING VINES

LEVEL	2	CAST TIME	1 round
RANGE	240'	DURATION	10 minutes/level
TARGET	5' radius area	TYPE	Nkisi

The nganga touches this nkisi as he casts a handful of seeds, vines, or other plant matter at the target. Instantly, a 5' radius sphere around the target point erupts in clinging vines that grasp at anything that enters the area of effect. Larger-than-human enemies can break through the vines in 1d4 rounds, but all others are trapped for the duration of the spell unless they succeed in an Evasion saving throw. Trapped characters are helpless and unable to do anything but speak or cry out in terror. Flames can burn away the vines in 2 rounds, but each round of flame will do 1d6 points of damage to anyone trapped within. Entangling a character who happens to be holding a torch will almost certainly set the strands ablaze.

NKISI OF THE BESTIAL FORM

LEVEL	4	CAST TIME	1 round
RANGE	120'	DURATION	Until dispelled
TARGET	One subject	TYPE	Nkisi

Just as the nganga may transform himself into a beast, so he may transform others. This nkisi induces a cruder, more brutal transformation of the subject, unsparing of their intellect. If the subject fails a saving throw versus Magic they immediately transform into the animal desired by the nganga, gaining the normal statistics and mentality of the beast. The creature can be no larger than a man nor smaller than a kitten and must be a normal animal. Any

nganga will instantly recognize the beast as being a transformed creature, but they otherwise are indistinguishable from a normal animal of their kind. This nkisi will not function against a target with more hit dice than the nganga has levels. The affliction is treated as a Greater Curse for purposes of breaking the effect.

NKISI OF THE BLESSED SPEAR

LEVEL	2	CAST TIME	1 action
RANGE	60'	DURATION	10 minutes/level
TARGET	One weapon	TYPE	Nkisi

This nkisi confers a blessing upon a weapon, granting it a magical +1 bonus to both hit rolls and damage and allowing piercing weapons to inflict full normal damage upon the Eternal. If the weapon is already magical this spell will confer no additional benefits. If cast upon a bow or sling, the effect is applied to any missiles it may discharge.

NKISI OF THE BLIGHTED FATE

LEVEL	2	CAST TIME	1 round
RANGE	240'	DURATION	1 week
TARGET	One subject	TYPE	Nkisi

The nganga strikes a victim with a particularly fearsome curse. If the target fails a saving throw versus Magic, they become afflicted with a Lesser Curse and must roll twice for every attack roll and skill check, taking the worse of the two rolls. A nganga may have only one such curse placed at a time, though he may lift it at will in order to place one on a different target.

NKISI OF THE BROKEN SHADOW

LEVEL	4	CAST TIME	1 action
RANGE	120'	DURATION	1 round/level
TARGET	One subject	TYPE	Nkisi

The nganga channels *ashe* to strengthen the mystical bond between a single target and their shadow, forcing them to make a saving throw versus Magic. On a failure, blows leveled at a target's shadow result in injuries to their fleshly body. The shadow gains no benefit from a creature's armor or natural toughness, and so most targets will have a shadow with AC 9 unless they are unusually quick or magically warded. The size of the creature's shadow will depend on the current lighting conditions.

NKISI OF THE BURNING BRAND

LEVEL	1	CAST TIME	1 action
RANGE	240'	DURATION	Instant
TARGET	One subject	TYPE	Nkisi

Fire-ash and burning plant sap are used in fashioning this nkisi. When invoked, the victim bursts into brief flames as the *ashe* of fire is made manifest upon them. These crackling flames result in 1d6 fire damage plus 1 for every level of the nganga. The nganga can also target unattended objects with this spell, and it will set them aflame unless they have been doused in water or otherwise rendered non-flammable.

NKISI OF THE COLD CLAY LIMBS

LEVEL	3	CAST TIME	1 action
RANGE	240'	DURATION	1 round/level
TARGET	One target/level	TYPE	Nkisi

The nganga drains the *ashe* of motion from up to one target per level within range, sapping their limbs of speed. Targets must save versus Magic or be snared by the nkisi, losing their normal movement allowance each round while under the spell's effect. If they give up their attack action, they may move up to their normal movement rate—thus, an unencumbered warrior may give up his action to move 30 feet during the round.

NKISI OF THE CRIMSON NAIL

LEVEL	4	CAST TIME	1 action
RANGE	240'	DURATION	1 round/level
TARGET	One target	TYPE	Nkisi

The nganga touches a nkisi which has been transfixed with an iron nail while directing his wrath at a single target within range. The victim must save versus Magic or be instantly pinned to their present location by numbing agonies, unable to act. Each round the target is affected by the spell, the torment inflicts 2d6 points of damage. The victim may make a new saving throw versus Magic at the end of each round to end the spell prematurely.

NKISI OF THE DEADENED MIND

LEVEL	1	CAST TIME	1 round
RANGE	120'	DURATION	1 day/level
TARGET	One target	TYPE	Nkisi

This blight temporarily stifles the head-soul of a human victim, severing their motive will from control of their body. If the subject fails a Mental Effect saving throw, they become an empty-eyed, mindless servitor of the nganga, unable to resist the sorcerer's commands. Instinctive survival reflexes will prevent the victim from performing suicidal acts or passively accepting violence, but they will helplessly comply with every other order for the duration of the spell. The enchanted victim is unable to speak or to perform complex actions while bewitched, and any attacks they make are at a -2 penalty to the hit roll. The spell may be ended early by effects that dispel Lesser Curses. The nganga cannot ensorcel a target with more hit dice than he himself has levels.

NKISI OF THE EVIL EYE

LEVEL	1	CAST TIME	1 action
RANGE	240'	DURATION	1 day
TARGET	One target	TYPE	Nkisi

The nganga touches the nkisi while turning an unblinking gaze upon a target. If the victim fails a save versus Magic, they must roll twice on their next skill check performed within the spell's duration and take the worse of the two results. Invoking this nkisi is silent and easily concealed from an inattentive victim, and its effects count as a Lesser Curse.

NKISI OF THE GHOST

LEVEL	2	CAST TIME	1 round
RANGE	Touch	DURATION	10 minutes/level
TARGET	One target	TYPE	Nkisi

The nganga may use this nkisi to render himself or an ally invisible to sight. Any objects within the subject's allowed encumbrance maximum are also rendered invisible, as are objects he may pick up. This spell does not confer silence or lack of scent on the subject, and passing within ten feet of a watcher allows them an opposed Wis/Perception check against the invisible target's Dex/Stealth, with the unseen intruder granted a +4 bonus on the roll. If the subject casts a spell or moves violently such as by running or fighting, the shroud of invisibility will tear and fall away.

NKISI OF THE INVINCIBLE WILL

LEVEL	4	CAST TIME	1 action
RANGE	120'	DURATION	Special
TARGET	One target	TYPE	Nkisi

The nganga channels a surge of raw *ashe* into an ally, imbuing the recipient with a supernatural degree of efficacy. Whatever act they are attempting to accomplish is almost certain to succeed, overwhelmed by sheer mystical force. In conjunction with a skill check, this adds a +4 bonus to the check, and when boosting an attack roll it will result on a hit on anything but a natural 1. The surge is very brief, however, and must be timed precisely- the nganga must hold his action to cast the spell immediately as his comrade acts, and the surge will not aid checks or deeds that require more than one action to complete. Because the nganga must focus on controlling the surge he cannot cast this nkisi on himself.

NKISI OF THE NGANGA'S COMMAND

LEVEL	2	CAST TIME	1 round
RANGE	120'	DURATION	10 minutes/level
TARGET	1d4 targets/level	TYPE	Nkisi

The nganga may command 1d4 animals per level, provided that none of the targets have more hit dice than he has levels. The target with the best saving throw may save versus Mental Effect; on a success, none of the animals are affected, while on a failure all are bewitched. For the duration of the spell the animals will understand the nganga's speech as if they had human intelligence and will obey all but suicidal orders. This spell will even function on magically-altered or spirit beasts, though only one such creature can be commanded per level and they gain a +2 bonus on their saving throw.

NKISI OF THE NGANGA'S EYE

LEVEL	1	CAST TIME	1 round
RANGE	Self	DURATION	1 minute/level
TARGET	Self	TYPE	Nkisi

This nkisi allows the nganga to sense the presence of sorcery or curses. For the duration of the spell, the nganga can see magical auras around objects or people. Even hidden amulets are instantly identified, and those persons or objects under curses are marked

out, though the nature of the curse is not obvious unless the nganga knows the spell which was used to inflict it. While this nkisi is in effect the nganga is blind to the material world, though it may be ended prematurely as a round's action.

NKISI OF SEVERING THE HEAD

LEVEL	5	CAST TIME	1 action
RANGE	120'	DURATION	Instant
TARGET	30' radius	TYPE	Nkisi

The connection between a person's head-soul and their physical body is brutally severed by the expulsion of its *ashe*. The nganga chooses a point within the spell's range to target, whereupon each living enemy targeted within 30' of that point suffers an instant 1d6 damage per nganga level, with a saving throw versus Magic for half damage. Targets reduced to zero hit points are not dead, but are simply "locked in", unable to perform any action until liberated by an effect capable of lifting a Greater Curse.

NKISI OF THE SHADOW THAT KILLS

LEVEL	5	CAST TIME	1 action
RANGE	120'	DURATION	1 round/level
TARGET	One subject	TYPE	Nkisi

The nganga infuses the victim's shadow with a surge of murderous *ashe*, imbuing it with the power of violence. If the victim fails a saving throw versus Magic, the shadow then attacks its owner, striking with the same attack bonus and weapon and attacking when its owner's combat turn comes up. If the victim manages to eliminate their shadow through darkness or shadeless light, the spell is broken.

NKISI OF THE SHATTERED NAME

LEVEL	5	CAST TIME	1 action
RANGE	120'	DURATION	1 round/level
TARGET	One subject	TYPE	Nkisi

A ruthless press of the nganga's will deadens the *ashe* of loyalty within the hearts of the target's allies. When the spell is cast, the subject makes no saving throw- instead, the ally within range with the best Mental Effect saving throw rolls for it. On a success, the spell has no effect. On a failure, every ally of the target within range suddenly becomes utterly indifferent to the target's fate, and will do absolutely nothing to help or aid him. They will become no friendlier to the nganga and their comrades, but they will not lift a finger to help the subject, and will perform no action to his advantage unless it is vital to their own interests.

NKISI OF THE SLOUGHING SKIN

LEVEL	2	CAST TIME	1 round
RANGE	240'	DURATION	Special
TARGET	One target	TYPE	Nkisi

The nganga smites a foe with a sudden and terrible sickness that leaves their flesh erupting in boils and sloughing away if they fail a saving throw versus Magic. This plague counts as a Virulence 1, Interval 1 round, Toxicity 10 sickness that forces a saving throw



versus Physical Effect each round until one is successful. At the beginning of each round in which the subject is afflicted, they suffer 1d6 damage and lose 1d4 Charisma points as they become a figure of horror and disgust. Even after the spell ends the Charisma damage lingers, healing at the rate of one point a day.

NKISI OF THE SPEAKING STONE

LEVEL	3	CAST TIME	1 round
RANGE	Touch	DURATION	1 minute/level
TARGET	One target	TYPE	Nkisi

The nganga may touch a stone, pool of water, or other inanimate object and bid it answer questions. The object may answer up to one question per two full levels of the nganga, having a fairly clear memory of actions taken within sight of it, but unable to comprehend or relate human speech. Answers will never be more than a sentence or two in length. Objects will answer questions on a particular topic only once per day, so repeated castings are unlikely to reveal further details without more time being spent in the investigation.

NKISI OF THE SUNDERED SPELL

LEVEL	3	CAST TIME	1 action
RANGE	240'	DURATION	Instant
TARGET	One spell	TYPE	Nkisi

This nkisi is favored to quickly avert hostile magic, shattering an enemy's spell before it can do harm. If the nganga wins initiative and holds his action to cast this spell just as his enemy hurls his sorcery then the nkisi is expended and the enemy's spell fizzles harmlessly. This form of countermagic functions only against hostile ngangas and similar sorceries.

Alternately, the nganga may cast it on an target who is currently under the effects of hostile magic, whereupon it will immediately lift the most recent harmful sorcery in effect upon the victim. If attempting to dispel a more powerful caster's magic, the nganga must roll 1d20 and add his level, beating a difficulty of 10 plus the hostile caster's level or hit dice.

This nkisi can sunder a Lesser Curse, but can do nothing to end an effect that counts as a Greater Curse. It can also be used to dispel the effects of permanent or long-duration spells such as the *Nkisi of Grasping Vines*, but must defeat a stronger caster as above if the effect's originator is more powerful.

NKISI OF THE TEARER OF VEILS

LEVEL	3	CAST TIME	1 round
RANGE	240'	DURATION	Instant
TARGET	One target/level	TYPE	Nkisi

Mighty Oya is the lady of storms and lightning-torn clouds. This nkisi echoes her anger, casting a brilliant spark of killing light to strike one target per level of the nganga for 1d6 damage per level of the caster. The nganga may arc the spark around allies and obstacles, but each target must be visible and further away than the prior target. A saving throw versus Evasion allows a victim to take only half damage.

NKISI OF THE WALKER AT NIGHT

LEVEL	5	CAST TIME	1 round
RANGE	Special	DURATION	Instant
TARGET	Self and allies	TYPE	Nkisi

By means of this nkisi the nganga is empowered to step between shadows, vanishing into the darkness to emerge far away. The nkisi may be cast anywhere with a shadow of at least man-size, though perfect darkness is unsuitable for the spell.

The target destination must be a location known intimately well to the nganga, either a dwelling-place or an area he has intensively studied for at least a week. An adequate shadow must exist somewhere in the destination area or else the spell fails with no effect. When cast, the nganga may bring along willing allies, up to one entity per caster level.

OPEN THE HUNTER'S PATH

LEVEL	1	CAST TIME	30 minutes
RANGE	Special	COST	None
TARGET	One subject	TYPE	Ritual

The nganga sits with a hunter in a long ritual of incantation and meditation, opening the mystical channels between the hunter's desire for his prey and the physical realization of his will. Until dusk or dawn, whichever comes first, the hunter may roll twice on all skill checks related to tracking, stalking or finding their desired prey and take the better roll. The prey may be named as a general type- "wild pigs", "antelope", "men", and so forth, or a specific person may be named.

RITE OF CASTING FORTH THE EYE

LEVEL	4	CAST TIME	1 hour
RANGE	Special	COST	100 si
TARGET	Self	TYPE	Ritual

A deep trance induced by incantations and ritual opens the secrets of the world to the nganga's awareness. He may cast his awareness out of his body and travel in an instant to any location his body has been before. Once there, his awareness may move at the rate of 60' per round, seeing and hearing everything that takes place within his spirit-self's line of sight. The nganga's spirit-self cannot pass through solid objects. Rare magical wards may also bar the nganga's spirit-self, and supernaturally-perceptive entities- including ngangas and those marabouts favored of the Spirit sphere- can see and affect him as if he were present in the flesh, to the point of injuring or perhaps killing him. While so transported, he can neither cast spells nor fight back, but must flee back to the point where he first cast his awareness before he can end the ritual. If his spirit-self is slain, his body dies.

RITE OF DEATH IN LIFE

LEVEL	3	CAST TIME	1 hour
RANGE	Connection	COST	500 si
TARGET	One subject	TYPE	Ritual

The nganga uses a dozen different incantations and imprecations to blight a victim's life. This ritual requires an occult connection to the target. If the victim saves versus Magic this spell cannot be attempted again for one week. If the victim fails the saving throw, they suffer a Greater Curse that inflicts a lasting -2 penalty on all skill checks, -4 to all hit rolls, and automatic failure on all saving throws versus disease. The curse will last until it is dispelled or the nganga chooses to lift it.

RITE OF MENDING THE SOUL

LEVEL	4	CAST TIME	6 hours
RANGE	Special	COST	500 si
TARGET	One subject	TYPE	Ritual

This long, laborious rite works to heal the terrible damage that certain spirits can inflict upon a human soul, channeling waves of unformed *ashe* to patch the wounds left by intangible claws. At the end of the ritual, both the nganga and the target make saving

throws versus Magic. If either are successful, the victim regains any experience levels lost to level draining effects. The rite aids only a single subject at a time, and can be applied to a particular target only once per day.

RITE OF THE ALTERED SKIN

LEVEL	3	CAST TIME	1 hour
RANGE	Self	COST	None
TARGET	Self	TYPE	Ritual

By means of a careful ritual and the use of the complete skin of a wild animal no smaller than a rat or larger than a buffalo, the nganga may transform himself into a normal, non-supernatural beast until the next sunrise. While in animal form the nganga retains all his normal attributes and hit points, but gains the movement rate possessed by the animal. Spells cannot be cast in beast form. A nganga may fight in animal form, using the attack modes and attack bonus of the beast, but shedding blood is dangerous. Each time the nganga intentionally kills a creature in beast form, he must save versus Magic or be trapped in the animal shape until it is dispelled by another, with the shape counting as a Greater Curse. Otherwise, the nganga may freely shift back and forth from the chosen animal's shape as a round's action until the ritual ends.

RITE OF THE TWISTED LIMB

LEVEL	1	CAST TIME	1 hour
RANGE	Connection	COST	50 si
TARGET	One victim	TYPE	Ritual

With a fire and a low incantation, the nganga may send evil fortune to a subject. The nganga must possess an occult connection to the victim. The nganga may name a particular sort of activity to curse or simply level a general malediction against the subject. The victim immediately suffers a Lesser Curse, and is forced to reroll the next skill check they make and take the worse result. If the nganga has specified a particular activity, only the next check of that kind is affected. If "combat" is specified as the activity, the victim must reroll their next successful hit roll and take the worse result. The curse lasts for one month if not expended earlier, and only one instance of this rite may afflict a subject at once.

RITE OF THE KNOTTED PATH

LEVEL	4	CAST TIME	30 minutes
RANGE	Special	COST	None
TARGET	Self	TYPE	Ritual

By this enchantment, the nganga "ties up" the path to his present location, making it very difficult for outsiders to find it. An area up to a hundred feet in diameter may be warded by the ritual. Once it is cast, anyone not already present within the zone is unable to find it or perceive anything within it unless they succeed on a Wis/Perception check at a difficulty equal to 4 plus the nganga's experience level. The spell ends with the following sunrise, or if someone within the zone departs it, attacks or otherwise draws the attention of someone outside it.



RITE OF THE LISTENER

LEVEL	5	CAST TIME	1 hour
RANGE	Connection	COST	500 si
TARGET	One subject	TYPE	Ritual

This insidious curse has no obvious effect upon the target, but instead opens their innermost counsels to the nganga. By use of the occult connection, the nganga can listen in on everything the victim hears. Listening through the victim's ears requires concentration, but the nganga will be alerted should particular names or topics of interest arise in conversation. The victim is allowed a saving throw versus Magic to repulse this Greater Curse.

If the spell is not resisted, the ritual will last until the next new moon, allowing the nganga to freely eavesdrop on the subject. If a suspicious bystander attempts to detect magic or curses on the subject, they must beat the nganga's roll in an opposed Wis/Oc-cult skill check to discern this subtle malediction.

RITE OF THE TEMPEST RIDER

LEVEL	5	CAST TIME	1 hour
RANGE	Special	COST	None
TARGET	Special	TYPE	Ritual

The nganga gathers together a mighty store of *ashe*, focusing it on the principle of motion and wind. At the ritual's completion, the nganga and up to a dozen allies and their mounts are whisked into the air and hurled through the sky to land at a chosen destination

up to two hundred miles distant. Any destination may be chosen, but it must be accessible from the air, and this ritual will not work if cast out from under the open sky. The ritual is potent but imprecise- the nganga's destination must be at least a mile distant from his present location, and he and his comrades will generally land 1d10 x 10 yards away from their exact intended landing point.

WARD OF THE SCABROUS HAND

LEVEL	4	CAST TIME	1 hour
RANGE	Special	COST	250 si
TARGET	One container	TYPE	Ritual

This painstaking ritual is favored by those ngangas who prefer to have a great deal of security to their belongings, and is cast upon a box, calabash, chest, or some other sealable object. The nganga may name certain others or describe a particular sort of person or type of token- those matching or bearing the items described may open the item safely. All others will discharge the ward, forcing them to save versus Magic. If successful, their hands become numb, leaving them unable to hold anything for 1d4 rounds, and they suffer 2d6 damage from the jolt. If they fail their save, they take 3d8 damage and their hands begin to rot. Every round the blight eats at them, they suffer an additional 1d6 damage and can hold nothing. At the end of each round they can make a new saving throw to end the effect, whereupon their hands become functional 1d4 rounds later. The scars and pustules will require a week to fade. The ward lasts indefinitely until triggered, but a nganga cannot have more items warded at once than they have experience levels.



THE THREE LANDS

For ages unnumbered, the people of the Three Lands have dwelled between the western sea and the Weeping Mountains of the east. In the youth of the world the Old Kings raised mighty realms and wrought wonders of stone and steel and cunning artifice. Empires clashed and cities crumbled, but little changed for the humble folk who lived their lives in the broad lands in between.

Two centuries ago the eastern land of Deshur, the Sixth Kingdom, was driven to the brink of destruction by the armies of Nyala. The empire's legions were hurled back into the black deserts of the east and Deshur's king was driven to take shelter beneath the stones of the mountains in temples long since lost to men. There he discovered new teachers and an old power, and with it he bought a damnable salvation for his people, a salvation that made them Eternal.

They were called Eternal because they could never truly die. Their flesh was made still and unaging, their blood turned stagnant in their veins, their breath unmoving within their breasts. The people of Deshur could live deep within the deserts now, without water or meat or bread, because they no longer had need for such things. They lived strange pantomimes of life, echoing patterns that no longer signified. Their dead lords sat enthroned amid the majesty of silent stone cities, and above them all was the Eternal King himself, who swore vengeance upon all that lived within the Three Lands.

The Long War that followed lasted for a hundred and fifty years. Wave upon wave of Eternal warriors marched from the eastern wastes into the savannahs and dry hills of the Yellow Land, and from there into the green verdancy of the west and the seats of the Old Kings. Only the quarrels among their undying lords slowed their efforts, and if they had acted as one beneath the Eternal King's rule the west would surely have fallen.

Such was their horrible might that even some among the living began to worship as the Eternal taught, forming cults and secret societies within the heart of the Five Kingdoms that remained. Against these loathsome traitors stood the stern teachers of the Sun Faith, Deshur's last desperate defiance against the night that the Eternal King had drawn over his people.

For too many generations the great emperors of Nyala cared more for sustaining their rule than driving back the Eternal. They fought rebels, crushed insurrections, and forced surly tribes to bow to their emperors. Their nobles insisted that once the Three Lands were united under a single hand they would be strong enough to crush Deshur.

In the end, they were right. Emperor Kaday of Nyala at last abandoned his people's efforts to enforce obedience to his crown and instead worked to bind an alliance of equals against the ever-strengthening Sixth Kingdom. Many of his nobles were furious at his efforts, for he abandoned ancient claims upon lands and rights that the great clans had cherished for generations. The emperor was deaf to their complaints, and paid any price required to win the cooperation of the "rebel provinces".

Forty years ago, the Emperor led a unified army into the east. At his left hand stood the sorcerer-king of Lokossa and at his right was the greatest of the sage olabons of Meru. Before him rode the iron-armored lancers of Kirsu and at their flanks marched the sea-wide legions of Sokone. The Five Kingdoms were united at last, and the quarreling Sixth could not stand against them.

They passed by the Silent City that was the westernmost reach of the Eternal and crossed the savannahs of the Yellow Land in a tide of iron and cleansing fire. The Meru herdsmen fed them of their cattle and the griots of the Sokone sang them remembrance of the names of their heroes. The Eternal barred their way with undying armies, but the runkus and swords of the west smashed the immortals into hewn flesh and broken bone. The black sands of the east were wetted with the blood of living warriors, but the Sixth Kingdom could not bar their way.

In the shadow of the eastern mountains they stormed the walls of Desheret, the throne-city of the Sixth Kingdom. There the Emperor was slain in battle with the Eternal King, but in his death he dealt the immortal tyrant such a wound that his foe was overcome as well. The serpentine teachers of the Eternal King took him into the eastern mountains, to the temples forgotten by men, and the Eternal were left scattered before the armies of the Five Kingdoms. Still, some say that the Emperor died not at the Eternal King's hand, but on the knives of his embittered nobles. Who is to know the truth?

With the Emperor dead and the Sixth Kingdom broken, the armies scattered to their homes. The Eternal remained strong in places, in secret cults and distant strongholds and in the Silent City at the heart of the Five Kingdoms, but there was no longer any will to finish the purge. The nation that spent its warriors cleansing the last remnants would be left fatally weakened before the hunger of their neighbors. The Five Kingdoms retreated to lick their wounds and try to restore what they had lost. Only a few bands of warriors were dispatched to mop up the remaining Eternal, and these Spears of the Dawn had little support from their own lords. In time they became no more than a tradition and a role with few to uphold it.

In the two generations since the Sixth Kingdom was shattered, the Three Lands have kept to a tenuous peace. Raids, skirmishes, unofficial wars, and grasping ambitions have all tainted their relations, and every kingdom is now surrounded by a broad band of land that they control in name only. Dark things prosper in this fresh wilderness- bandits, cultists, abominations of sorcery and Eternal can all be found in these wastelands, and crossing from one kingdom to another is a perilous undertaking. Even in the great cities of the west, darkness lurks in the shadow of quiet houses and buried tombs.

The Five Kingdoms balance between two destinies. At their right hand is the promise of a better morrow, of peace and the steady conquest of the chaos that surrounds them. With the Eternal driven back and the example of Emperor Kaday before them, they could unite in peaceful bonds of trade and mutual prosperity. If

the malice of old grudges and fresh greeds can be contained, the Five Kingdoms stand on the brink of an age of glory unknown since the days of the Old Kings.

At their left hand is a new and terrible night of broken kingdoms and resurgent doom. Too many ambitious souls are seeking secrets in the darkness and making bargains that should never be made. Too many bitter nobles remember what their fathers lost and seek to regain it at any price. Too many raiders and petty chiefs and renegade sorcerers are profiting by the present disorder to welcome a more peaceful age. All these powers must be overcome if the Five Kingdoms are not to slump into a ruin more terrible than the age of war just passed.

THE ETERNAL

The accursed creatures known as the Eternal are the result of a grim and forbidden lore. They are a product of the unholy rites dredged up by the pharaoh of Deshur in the face of his realm's destruction, learned from serpentine teachers among the roots of the Weeping Mountains. Their existence is an abomination to the Sun and the spirits alike, but the satisfactions of their undying state still tempt many in the Three Lands.

An Eternal is created from an intact human corpse, one lacking no major limb or organ. Through a series of rituals of greater or lesser complexity, the hold of death is broken upon the remains, and the subject rises up as they did in life. Their flesh is in the same condition as it was upon their death, whole or torn, but it has all the warmth, pliancy, and response of life. Indeed, the most perfectly-restored Eternal are indistinguishable in every way from a living human. The Eternal do not age, or breathe, or eat common food, or drink mortal wines. They do not sleep or dream, and they do not weary as mortal flesh wearies.

Eternal are incredibly resilient. Piercing weapons such as spears and knives do little to slow them, as only the crushing of their bones or the lopping of great slabs of muscle can fell them. The ordinary Eternal are only dimly aware of pain or fear, and they continue to grope toward their enemies so long as the bones of their arms remain intact and their hands are attached to their limbs. They do not bleed or die of shock or perish as living things die.

Few Eternal return from death with their mental faculties entirely intact. Most exist in a hazy, dreamlike state, repeating patterns of behavior that they knew in life. They know distant joys and vague pleasures, and even fear and pain are but shadows on their minds. They remember their identity and past in an indistinct way, and will instinctively seek to continue the kind of life they once led, even one defined by suffering and mistreatment. These common Eternal are used as soldiers and slaves by the more intelligent varieties, as they are obedient to those with stronger wills.

Still, some Eternal come back with a keener awareness of their surroundings. Such intelligence is usually the product of more elaborate and costly rites of preparation, but sometimes simple will or black fortune brings back an Eternal with their full intellect. In the tomb-cities of the Black Land these Eternal are the nobility, creatures who scheme constantly to depose their peers and gather more corpses with which to swell the ranks of their servants.



As pleasant as this half-existence may be to some, there are two very substantial drawbacks to an Eternal's existence. The first is that though they do not age, they also do not naturally heal. A wound or bruise will never mend unless the Eternal consumes human flesh and blood sufficient to repair it. While they have no need of sustenance for survival, the simple wear and desiccation of their flesh by the environment will gradually reduce them to hideous corpse-figures without warm human flesh to sustain them. For the best results, an Eternal must consume a human adult once every three months to remain in perfect condition. Wounds and injuries during that time may require greater feasts.

The second flaw is the hateful repulsiveness of all living things in the eyes of the Eternal. Whether green grass or simple beast or living human being, the sight of such creatures inspires loathing and revulsion in an Eternal. Even running water disgusts them with the echo of life in its flow. Half-aware varieties will simply seek to extinguish the life, while those that retain their full intellect can control their reactions and deal with the living when necessary. Such masters must keep their less aware minions under firm control if they are to associate with living cultists.

The third and most terrible flaw of the Eternal is that they cannot actually die. With death once banished from them, it will not come again. Even if an Eternal is smashed to pulp or burnt to ashes, forever scattered to the winds, its consciousness will persist in an everlasting haze of agony and confusion. An Eternal damaged too greatly can no longer be revived by human flesh, but neither can it ever escape into the peace of final death.

The cells of remaining Eternal are a scourge in the wilderness of the Five Kingdoms. They cannot be starved out, or waited out, and a nest of them can persist indefinitely until they are finally hacked to pieces. Many of the intelligent Eternal are former cultists who know the rites of creation, and if they can get the right

ingredients and a sufficient supply of corpses, their numbers can explode in a matter of weeks. All agree that they must be rooted up, but many fear to face them. Failure means not only death, but the prospect of a hideous eternity in slavery to their conquerors.

Outside of the tomb-cities of the Black Land, the greatest concentration of Eternal dwell in the Silent City, once called Chakari, the capital of Sokone. A great surge of Eternal warriors seized it in the early years of the Long War and the atrocities that took place within its walls are named only in the whispers of old griots and the pages of hidden books. The remaining Eternal within seem largely interested in dueling each other for control and raiding outlying villages for fresh food and recruits to immortality. Their depredations are calculated to avoid the rich and powerful, and so no king has been goaded into facing the terrible cost in blood that would be required to purge the Silent City of its undying masters.

Other Eternal dwell in “tomb-houses” constructed during their former rule, usually excavated by enslaved villagers or lesser Eternal. These tomb-houses were underground, where the inhabitants would not dry out so quickly. They were fashioned to allow the less intelligent Eternal to continue the pantomime of their former lives and give their greater leaders a suitably comfortable place in which to dwell. Even tomb-houses devoid of Eternal are often occupied by those who do not care to be troubled by strangers.

Still, despite their hideous habits there are those who wish to make a private peace with the Eternal. While the immortals hate the sight of the living, the intelligent among them recognize the usefulness of human cultists and reward the most faithful with their own brand of “life” everlasting.

THE SPEARS OF THE DAWN

During the last great campaign to break the Sixth Kingdom, Emperor Kaday recognized that many pockets of Eternal would be left behind. His army could not veer to stamp out every cell and cult of darkness, and even the grim Silent City was passed over in favor of striking at the Eternal King. All these chances of evil would have to be lanced, and the Emperor feared that there would be no one to do it after the Deshrites were finally smashed.

To answer this need, he broke off a handful of the best warriors from each of the Five Kingdoms’ armies. These elite soldiers were charged with the dirty, brutal work of digging the last Eternal out of their holes and crushing the remnants that the great army left in its wake. Deprived of glory and consigned to such humble work, the Emperor swore to repay them with land and riches for their sacrifice when the victory was finally won. In the meanwhile, he commanded that the lesser lords of the Five Kingdoms should show deference to these “Spears of the Dawn”, give them land, and permit them to work without interference. Grudgingly, the kings of the other lands agreed to this stipulation, and ordered that the Spears of any land be permitted to work within their domains. The land they reserved for after the war was complete.

The Emperor died before he could make good his promise and the Five Kingdoms never troubled to give the land, but these warriors were true to their cause. In many cases, it was simply because they had no better work than the clearing of tomb-houses and the cull-

ing of cults. The plunder of the Eternal could at least keep them fed, and it was more honorable work than thieving from the peasants or returning to the service of kings who were eager to hurl them at their own neighbors.

In time, they began hunting more than Eternal. They fought bandits, maneating beasts, supernatural perils, and anything else that tormented the common folk. Communities began seeking them out as protectors and troubleshooters, keeping them long enough to solve their troubles before bidding them a firm and enthusiastic farewell. Many Spears settled down to a sedate life in a grateful village, while those that remained numbered the few who could be satisfied with no lesser life.

In the decades since the end of the Long War, the Spears of the Dawn have replenished their numbers out of farmboys, veteran soldiers, runaway brides, ambitious city girls, escaped convicts, and everyone else with the gall to name themselves Spears. Most of the ones who survive have received at least a little training from another Spear, but the role has been sanctified by time and tradition. Anyone who proclaims their membership and volunteers to face these evils is treated as one- until they stop showing an eagerness to perform their duties.

Spears of the Dawn have a provisional exemption from the customs and lesser laws of the Five Kingdoms. They can get away with far more troublemaking, insult, and minor violence than any ordinary commoner could, and they are not expected to conform to the usual roles of their gender or social class. This tolerance has its limits, and serious crimes of theft and violence will be punished, but a Spear who can demonstrate that his actions were necessary for the good of the community gains immunity to many things. Even if a lord may wish him dead, the gratitude of the common folk can stay a ruler’s wrath.

Some Spears of the Dawn dare to lay claim to the full extent of their promised rights, calling upon the old pacts of the alliance to claim land and the authority to do whatever they think best to free the Five Kingdoms of their enemies. By the terms of the old bargain, there is no doubt they have the right- they were promised this freedom and this land. By the measure of modern practicality, only the mightiest and best-loved Spears dare to “claim Kaday’s law”. Any lesser figure can expect only a quick execution at the hands of the local lord, as they dare not allow the rise of rivals to their authority.

Spears of the Dawn are expected to hunt evil. Evil in the wilderness and abandoned tomb-houses, preferably, but a were-leopard in the village or an Eternal cult in the city can also be a fit subject of their interest. Periods of rest and recuperation are expected, of course, but a Spear who neglects to go forth against evil is expected to retire to a more conventional role or they will rapidly lose the credit of the name. Such disgraced souls are considered no better than bandits, and can expect to be driven from a village with stones and curses for their cowardice. Most Spears who live long enough to weary of the work retire to life as a simple villager, teaching the youth such skills as they possess. In times of great danger they might take up the role once more, and stories tell of villages that have been saved when some gnarled old grandmother suddenly showed herself a heroine of a time not yet passed.

LIFE IN THE THREE LANDS

In the Five Kingdoms, the ways of the people are old and set. Peasants live as peasants, nobles live as nobles, men do as men should do and women are expected to keep to their own duties. Within the scope of a person's role in life they are expected to seek whatever advantages they can obtain, but they are expected to remain within the place that society has decreed for them. Whether in the villages or in the cities, those who step outside these boundaries of custom expose themselves to social rebuke and occasional physical punishment. Those who refuse to bow to the ways of their people are dangerous renegades who cannot be fully trusted by their neighbors, self-made outsiders who might do anything to gain advantage. Few communities will tolerate such people.

Yet sometimes a person demonstrates more than mere rebellion. Sometimes a discontented man or woman defies the expectations of their neighbors with a skill or a deed so great that even their bad behavior is justified by it. These "remarkable people" pass from a world of rigid roles and expectations into a formless liberty unchecked by the old laws. They have proven themselves touched by the spirits or blessed by the gods, gifted in a way their fellows cannot equal. What they do is countenanced by virtue of its success, and behavior that would see a girl whipped through the market or a boy beaten senseless is merely taken as a sign of their uniqueness.

Spears of the Dawn and other adventurers are often marked out as such "remarkable people". They are still subject to the formal laws, to the hard limits of theft and murder and other grave crimes, but social behavior that would result in the exile of lesser souls is simply accepted as the way of a remarkable person. Gender roles and social classes mean less and less to them as they grow in fame and power, until the greatest heroes become laws unto themselves, their deeds taken as patterns for new customs and new ways of life.

What does this mean in play? It means that most people the PCs meet will not be champing at the bit to escape their social roles. Individuals may have genuinely terrible lots in life, but they will attempt to improve them within the bounds of the role they have been assigned, rather than seeking some completely new life. A young Kirsi peasant girl might be facing life as a rich old warlord's third wife and promised an existence of nothing but drudgery and weaving after he tires of her, but only the most remarkable and independent will actually try to escape such a fate. A Lokossan field slave might groan under his burdens and perform all manner of petty cheats and tricks to ease his lot, but everything about his culture teaches him that his role is deserved and any attempt to escape it is doomed only to suffering and failure. In the same vein, a Lokossan nobleman may not especially care to stand at the forefront of the next charge against a vast Night Man warband, but he was raised from birth to understand his place as that of an expendable military officer. Even the richest and most exalted are prisoners of their own role in society. They can be no other than they are.

This strict, confining social model of roles and responsibilities has come under attack with the Long War and the dark years that have followed. War brings change, chaos, and uncertainty into familiar things. The fighting breaks old patterns of dependence and subor-

dination, and old strength that once protected or compelled now has no power to do either. These crumbling verities have set a ripple of unease bordering on panic through the peoples of the Five Kingdoms. Soon, it may not even be possible to keep to one's role, for that role may no longer exist in the new world that is coming. More and more people are starting to reconsider the timeless persistence of the old ways, and are breaking out of their customary places to seek something more for themselves and their families. For some, they rebel only in attaining more than custom says they should. For others, it is easier to take what others have.

In these uneasy times the people look for new models. Centuries of custom tremble on their foundations, and men and women with sufficient courage and fame might well have the power to break old ways to make new ones. These new customs might yet shatter the old limits that have circled so many of the Five Kingdom's people, freeing them to accomplish all that their gifts allow them to achieve and leaving them ready to pay the price in confusion and conflict that must inevitably follow. Or it may be the new ways will merely be worse versions of the old. It will be so if the Eternal and slavers and warlords have their way in the days that are now dawning.

SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

The Three Lands prize courtesy. Elegant speech, genteel manners, and a hospitable generosity toward strangers are all greatly esteemed traits. Among closely allied clans or families, mild insults and rudeness are even considered to be proof of warm ties of mutual aid, because only near-kinsmen would dare speak so coarsely to each other.

Part of this affection for courtesy comes from the long, close communal ties within a settlement, and the need to maintain unity against the dangers of an unfriendly world. Petty slights and insults can fester into feuds that threaten the survival of the whole village, and so men and women take care not to give needless offense to their neighbors.

Another part comes from the lack of any impersonal system of law and personal protection. A villager who incites his neighbors against him has no outside defender to protect him from their anger or dangerous indifference. If he becomes obnoxious to his neighbors they will do nothing to protect him from his enemies and might even quietly welcome an outsider "settling the matter" with the troublemaker. In the wilds between towns, any meeting of armed men carries the potential to explode into sudden violence if one group feels itself threatened or provoked. Wayfarers find it prudent not to incite any trouble under such circumstances.

Even when nobles address their inferiors, certain basic minimums are usually observed. These may be very cursory, as in Lokossa when a noble "asks" when the rice planting will be complete rather than simply ordering the peasants out into the fields, or they may be the elaborate dance of implication that a Nyalan lord exhibits when he tacitly commands a court artist to make a statuette of his new favorite. A noble might mention how a particular lady's features put him in mind of the grace of a specific artistic school,



only to find the artist making him a “gift” of such a statuette a week later, and the sculptor receiving a “gift” in turn a week after that. An outsider may not even realize that a business transaction has taken place, ignorant of the allusions, social forms, and coded expressions that are clear as day to an initiate of the court.

Rudeness is a sign of real trouble. When a man stops being polite and starts uttering blunt, hostile words, he is likely very near the point of violent action. A noble who makes no effort to show even minimal courtesy to his inferiors is probably an unvarnished tyrant with a towering contempt for his subjects. A GM can use such crude boorishness to signal that an NPC is an exceptionally brutal sort and likely to become dangerous at any excuse.

As a GM, you should cut the players a great deal of slack about maintaining their own genteel manner. Spears are expected to be strange people in the first place, and a lot of players aren’t terribly interested in delicate social interactions. Take their words in the spirit they are given rather than expecting them to perform all the social niceties, and have NPCs react to the sentiments behind them rather than the way they’re delivered.

Instead, focus on your NPCs and how they’re presented in the right light. You’ll do more to foster the flavor of the setting that way, and players will likely eventually start copying your style and expectations. Until then, don’t punish them for using more curt modern habits or force them out of immersion by making them observe complex protocols.

FAMILY AND MARRIAGE

Common relationships in the Three Lands are expressed in terms of nations, clans, and families. In the days of the Old Kings, nations often consisted of tribes that assimilated or conquered neighboring powers, until the archaic concept of the tribe was dissolved into the new ideal of the nation-state. On the periphery of the settled lands there remain those groups that identify themselves as tribes rather than members of a kingdom, but for most folk their ancient roots are now subsumed in their identity as Nyalans, Kirsi, Meruans, Lokossans, or Sokone.

Clans are much more important to the daily life of the people. Each clan draws its identity from shared descent from a particular hero, spirit, or founding historical experience, though some were originally tribes that assimilated into their homeland. The largest clans might sprawl over multiple kingdoms, but most are restricted to a particular homeland, and often to a particular town or province.

Men and women have responsibilities toward fellow members of their clan. Food, shelter, and reasonable aid is expected within the power of a member to grant it, and support in legal disputes and other quarrels is part of the duty of a good clanmate. Such aid is often a survival mechanism in hard times, with the richer families of a clan supporting the weaker in the face of hardships. In return, the lesser families are expected to support the greater with their aid and manpower when the situation requires it. Families that shirk these responsibilities risk losing the support of their kindred,

which can leave them vulnerable to abuse from outsiders eager to pounce on them.

Individual families are the basic unit of most villages and towns, with as many as three or four generations all sharing a single house or compound. Women are expected to leave their kindred and join their husband's family, though they may choose to return if widowed or badly mistreated. Leadership of a family is usually conferred on the eldest vigorous male, though remarkable women are sometimes recognized as matriarchs. Rebellion against the patriarch's decisions can result in exile from the home for the culprit and his immediate relations.

Marriage is traditionally polygamous among the elite of the Five Kingdoms, with both the Sun Faith and the Spirit Way blessing the practice. Poor men rarely have more than one wife, and that one acquired only through backbreaking labor to gather her bride-price. For greater men, a large collection of wives is considered a status symbol and a sign of their wealth and power. The Sun Faith limits the number of wives permitted to four, but the Spirit Way admits no such restraint. The Ahonsu of Lokossa has hundreds of wives, while the elderly Mai of Nyala has scores that he has never even met, their numbers swelled by noble families who use them as tools for their own glorification.

Brides are rarely consulted in matters of matrimony, most being married between their sixteenth and eighteenth year to a man most often in his late twenties or early thirties. A poor woman might be wed off cheaply for the sake of love, as she was never going to bring much bride-price anyway, but the daughters of the great know they will be given to those families that can bring the best price or most advantageous alliance. Exceptionally beautiful young women can also find themselves wed to withered old men who have more gold than their fathers have reservations, or be handed over in payment for some fine or criminal penalty. The bride-price is usually paid to the woman's father, and is expected to compensate him for the loss of her labor and insure her children against want if her husband should die or divorce her.

Marrying for love is an idle dream for most women in the Three Lands. A hard life and the weight of customs leaves most wishing only for a husband who will be able to provide well for her and her children. There are always stories and songs of unquenched romance, and many will shake their heads in dismay at the spectacle of some gray-headed noble celebrating his marriage to a quietly miserable young beauty, but such is the way of custom.

Divorce is permitted by both the Sun Faith and the Spirit Way. Theoretically it is only at the man's discretion, though a husband who disgraces or mistreats his wife will incur the anger of her kinsmen, and if she flees him to return to her own family they will defend her. Such a flight is humiliating to the offending husband, and he can expect to be jeered in the village as having driven his wife away and wasted his wealth, for the bride-price is never returned upon divorce. The most wretched wives are those with cruel husbands and weak relations who are unable to give them shelter. Most women endure such suffering as best they can, though folk stories tell of spectacular acts of revenge performed by wives too long abused.

Within a family, the venom of old wives toward young ones is notorious. Limited resources mean that one will often have to go without, and natural jealousy and awareness of their own fading charms is sharpened by husbands who suddenly lose all interest in them in favor of a fresher face. Such struggles often play out in the women's children, with the sons and daughters of one wife set against the offspring of another. In famine seasons, it can result in anguished choices over which wife's children are to receive the limited available food.

In some places polygamy is supported by a lack of men, such as in Lokossa where so many die in fighting the Night Men raiders. In other places, it is simply the calcified result of the Long War's drain on manpower and the force of tradition. Young men grow up desperate to earn a bride-price and seethe at the sight of the aged and wealthy snapping up the best and loveliest of the young women. More than one childhood romance has been shattered by a rich man's gold, and this bitterness endures wherever there is such a great imbalance.

For most women of the Three Lands, the custom is simply the way it has always been. While it does little to nourish their spirits, it at least promises them the safety of a provider strong enough and committed enough to have accumulated a bride-price. They find what happiness they can in their lives, befriending their new family's other women and taking pleasure in their children and a husband they often come to love.

Yet some still reject this life. They refuse to be wedded off at their father's discretion, or they have no family left to compel them. These "remarkable women" are determined to surpass the boundaries that their societies have set for them, and turn their natural talents toward ends that can equal or surpass their would-be husbands. A common girl who bemoans her lot can expect only a rebuke or a corrective beating. A remarkable woman who demands her own say must be heeded, because she has the steel or the sorcery or the irresistible speech to compel it. In time, it may be that these women will give a voice to others and fashion new customs more to the liking of their less richly-gifted sisters.

GENDER AND SEXUALITY

The Three Lands tend toward a patriarchal social structure, with men responsible for governance, warfare, and most other high-prestige positions. Exceptions exist in every culture, however, and in each of the Five Kingdoms a woman with great talent and determination can rise to be the equal of any man. They will be forced to endure greater challenges and sharp social disapproval at first, but once they are shown to be a "remarkable person", they are no longer considered to belong to the same social realm as other women. Female adventurers in particular are often considered to be outside the usual boundaries of their gender. In the unstable flux of the current age, it's possible that a sufficiently determined and persuasive heroine might be able to stamp a more equal mode of social relations on those cultures she leads by her example.

Romances between unwed adults are tacitly accepted provided the participants are sufficiently discreet, as decorous public behavior is expected throughout the Five Kingdoms. Even pregnancy is not considered particularly disastrous, as the girl's family will raise the



child as one of their own if no father steps forward with a bride-price. In some places such a proof of the girl's fertility is prized by potential husbands. A girl too wide-ranging in her favors is looked down upon as untrustworthy material for a wife, however, and prostitutes and similar courtesans occupy a low social level.

Once within the marriage bond, however, adultery becomes a grave matter. While the rich might have concubines or catamites, any transgression outside the household is considered a dire insult to the spouse. Discreet trespasses might escape reproof, but public discovery requires public penitence. Even then, the open discovery of adultery is grounds for divorce, with the wounded party keeping the children. Just as significantly, their kinsmen might express their unhappiness in more direct, painful ways.

Sexual orientation tends to be understood in a very particular sense by most people of the Three Lands. For most people of the Five Kingdoms, sexual behavior is something someone *does* rather than something they *are*. Even those who exclusively prefer partners of the same sex are expected to marry and raise families according to the customs of their people. So long as they fulfill their social duties, they are at worst thought to be excessively lustful rather than morally perverted. It is those who openly defy their expected roles that suffer scorn and sometimes open violence from their outraged kinsmen. Such rejection of one's familial duties is considered a far graver crime than the discreet "play" that can be overlooked.

As inherent outsiders, adventurers are less burdened by these expectations, and some who refuse to play the roles expected of them are forced to take up a wandering life in order to have the freedom to live as they choose. Other cultures have made concessions, such as the lagredis or Reapers of Lokossa, creating new roles for those who cannot tolerate the old. With so much changing in this twilight age, there may be room for even greater liberty- if there are heroes willing to champion it by their example.

LAWS AND CRIMINALITY

Most law that adventurers are likely to care about is relatively uniform throughout the Three Lands. Most of the former provinces of the Nyalan Empire have maintained that kingdom's rational and just code of laws, supplemented with those local ordinances that suit their needs. The fact that most people live in small villages also tends to make for a fairly informal, community-oriented brand of law. Among the common folk, the village chief usually passes judgment with the counsel of the local elders, while in the cities a noble magistrate hears complaints.

The greatest crimes are murder, rape, and violent blasphemy, the latter consisting of an assault upon a community's holy places or an intentional and violent insult to their patron spirits. Injury to marabouts and other priests does not fall under this heading unless they are in the midst of some ritual important to the community. Those who perform such evil acts may expect exile at the least and execution at the worst, the death usually administered by a spear or sword in the hands of an official executioner.

Serious crimes include hostile witchcraft not resulting in death, the theft of cattle or other substantial property, grave physical assault, or destruction of valuable property. Witchcraft can often be difficult to prove, and is sometimes used as a catch-all to banish a disliked member of the community out of a sincere or fabricated suspicion. The worst criminals are exiled, while all are expected to pay reparations to the afflicted party. A badly-beaten man may expect three months' wages in reparation, while three times the value of any stolen or destroyed property is usually levied upon the criminal. A corrective beating may follow, but public humiliation of the criminal is done only in serious cases, for it is considered to be a harsher punishment than fines or private beatings.

The petty crimes of small theft, brawling, insult to officials, disturbance of the peace, or annoyance of nobles are usually punished with a small fine and a few blows of the rod. Those who make a habit of such things can expect harsher punishment, and those who strike a noble or other local official will be lucky if they escape with their life intact.

In all cases, the quality of justice will depend on the identity of the offended victim and the impartiality of the local law. Most cities are harsh with offenders, and most villages have little patience with troublesome outsiders. Spears of the Dawn are accorded a certain degree of latitude in their actions so long as they are clearly helping the community, but this willingness to overlook small breaches in the law is contingent on their continuing efforts against the forces of darkness.

SLAVERY

In the time of the Old Kings, slavery was a relatively widespread institution throughout all six kingdoms. When the Long War commenced, the relentless bloodshed and the need to enlist every possible hand in defense against the Eternal led to a gradual diminishment of the practice. By the time the war was over, slavery had been effectively outlawed everywhere outside of Lokossa and a few of the most remote and isolated areas. Even in Lokossa, it was viewed at best as a bitter necessity, and most citizens of the other Five Kingdoms consider it barbaric.

With the great depletion in population left in the wake of the war and the broad tracts of land now depopulated of workers, labor has become valuable enough that some lords and powerful merchants are beginning to take slaves once more. They stand on their “ancient rights”, and insist that the end of the Sixth Kingdom also ends the numerous proclamations of freedom that were made in light of that threat. These slaves are dragooned into workshops, timber camps, vast farms, or personal seraglios, and a sufficiently powerful lord can defy his neighbors in keeping them.

Technically, all such slavers are criminals and kidnappers, but there are few with the strength to defy the powerful ones that practice it. Good folk shake their heads in dismay and complain to the kings of the trouble, but the slaves taken are often criminals, foreigners, or the impoverished, and they have few friends to truly care about their fate. It is left for those with the courage to act against the slavers to do true harm to the festering institution, and bring it to a halt before it infects the rest of the Three Lands with the ancient, vicious custom. Many local lawgivers will avert their eyes from harm done to slavers so long as it can be done safely.

FOOD AND DRINK

The staples of life in the western lands are threefold- wheat, maize, and rice. These three grains form the overwhelming majority of the diet of those who dwell in Kirsí, Sokone, and Nyala, with wheat and corn prevalent in the north. Most peasants live on rice or on the dried corn kernels called “mealies”, with the more prosperous eating wheat bread instead. Taxes are usually paid in grain rather than in scarce coin, and the difference between a year of good rains and a year of drought is the number of children who will live to see the next wet season. Among the Meru, nearly their entire diet is derived from their herds- blood, milk, meat, and vitamin-rich organ flesh. Most eat their meat raw in memory of their ancestral need to move too quickly to kindle fires, though they will cure and dry it when a surplus is at hand. Those Meru men who eat too much cooked food risk derision from their fellows as having “taken a garden-woman’s pot” and are thought unmanly.

In Lokossa, the staple food is cassava, the woody root of a shrub grown in clearings cut in the jungle. The root is laced with cyanide in its natural state, and can cause permanent nerve damage in those who eat it raw. It must be carefully soaked or fermented before it is safe to eat. In times of famine or disturbance, it is occasionally necessary to take shortcuts in the processing, and some villagers die or become afflicted with the sickness called *konzo*. It strikes women and children most often and is incurable by mundane means, leaving its victims partially blinded, limping,

or wholly unable to stand. What sustenance the cassava does not provide is usually acquired through the hunter’s skill, as livestock are difficult to keep alive in the jungle.

In the small villages of the Five Kingdoms there is almost always a greater or lesser amount of communal sharing of food among the populace. Hunters who bring in game will often share it out with their clanmates, and a farmer with a good crop will help sustain clan-kindred with bad ones- with the understanding that they will reciprocate in time.

Those who offend their neighbors might be excluded from such sharing, while in seasons of great hardship the old will refuse to eat. In famine times the very young and the very old are left to starve so that some of the adult men and women may survive. Such occasions always bring terrible grief and anguish to a village, and many among them will perform desperate acts if they offer some hope of saving their children and elderly parents from such a lingering death.

In towns and cities, there is no such sharing aside from close family relations and near clanmates. In desperate times many urbanites can return to their ancestral villages, but these wanderers often find little help there and are prone to starvation in famine seasons. Their mealie riots can drive princes to make raids on more prosperous neighbors or take brutal exactions from the villages in hope of satisfying the furious urban mob. Some lords have the prudence to lay up grain in good years against the inevitable bad ones, but too many are more interested in spending wealth than in saving it up for later need.

Cannibalism is universally despised among the Five Kingdoms. Aside from their natural horror at the practice, consuming another human’s flesh and blood is considered to be unanswerable proof that the criminal is an Eternal deserving only immediate execution and burning. Even in times of famine it will appear only in circumstances of complete societal collapse. Even in those cases, those villages known to have eaten “standing flesh” are usually burned by their neighbors. Eternal cults sometimes make a habit of forcing initiates to consume human meat, knowing that such a crime must forever sever them from civilized humanity.

For drink, the preference varies by nation. Palm wine is favored in the Green Land; the palm flower bud is cut in the morning, and its sweet white sap has fermented to a mildly alcoholic state by noon, becoming much stronger and sourer by midnight, and undrinkable vinegar with another twelve hours. A distilled form known as *tesh* keeps longer, though only a confirmed carouser will find it drinkable.

In the west, beer is the common drink of those well-off enough to have something more than palm wine. Made of rice, wheat, or corn, the quality tends to vary drastically with the skill of the woman who brewed it and the type of herbs the locals prefer to add. Some villages create more sophisticated distilled drinks out of fruit or grain, but such “country spirits” can be poisonous if made carelessly.

The rich favor certain fruit brandies made by old and careful means, often within the walls of their own palaces. There are no grapes in the Three Lands, so the fruit stock tends to be such as is



conveniently local- bananas, mangoes, plums, melons, plantains, tamarinds, coconuts, dates, or whatever other fruits can be had.

The Meru have no local tradition of alcoholic drinks. They tap the veins of their cattle for fresh blood, which is considered a particularly suitable drink for a warrior, and use the milk of their cows for ordinary consumption.

CLIMATE

The Three Lands are hot, from the steaming southern jungles of the Green Land to the warm temperate forests that lap the Mountains of the Sun in the north. Snow is known only on the highest peaks, and even on the coolest days of the wet season the temperature never drops much below sixty degrees Fahrenheit. The exception is in the black sand deserts of the east, where the night air grows so cold that a skin of ice will form on open water. This chill is matched by blazing heat during the day, with temperatures rising halfway to boiling on the shadeless black sands.

There are but two seasons in the Three Lands- the wet and the dry. The wet season falls in the six months between October and March, starting with a damping of the arid skies and rising to near-daily rainstorms during its peak in early January. During December and January most people are loath to travel beyond their home village, lest they be forced to endure endless mud and rain. The dry season begins in April and ends in September, with the rains fading away in time for the farmers to put in their dry-season crops and pray for a good harvest.

The Green Land of the west is wet and humid, with a fierce heat in the Lokossan jungles and a more gentle warmth in the meadows and temperate forests of Nyala. The Yellow Land of the central region shares the same range of heat, but is much drier, with the jungle giving way to golden grass savannahs and the rolling forests of the north petering out in scrubby dry hills.

The Black Land of the east is near-unendurable by humans, and only along the banks of the mighty Iteru or on the fringes of the desert oases can significant human settlements survive. Further east the sands give way to dark, craggy hills and the forbidding peaks of the Weeping Mountains where the Iteru has its secret source.

The bones of Deshur's mighty cities lie beside the Iteru's flow. They are empty now save for their remnant Eternal masters and the strange beasts and madmen of the desert, though in the days before the Long War the people of Deshur were fed by great fields of grain grown on the Iteru's banks. When Nyala pushed into the east and drove them from their fields they were forced back into the hills, into the shadow of the black throne-city of Desheret. Without control of the Iteru's wheat, Deshur was doomed to starvation or surrender- until its bitter master chose a different and darker answer. Now there are few in the Black Land who have need of bread or water, but many who prefer a different and redder food.

RELIGION IN THE THREE LANDS

The Three Lands are pious, and the men and women of the Five Kingdoms honor the spirits and the Sun with great sincerity. Only a fool could doubt the power of the supernatural world, and it is by faithful adherence and regular sacrifice that people hope to escape both the troubles of this world and the trials of the next.

There are two main faiths within the Three Lands: the worship of the countless gods, ancestor-spirits and local divinities known as the Spirit Way and the monotheistic believers of the Sun Faith. While tension is inevitable given the communal nature of faith in the Five Kingdoms, these believers get along with one another as best they can, each with their own ideas about how the spiritual realm is to be ordered. Aside from these two great faiths, there are a number of smaller creeds with more esoteric or peculiar beliefs, and also the loathsome worshippers of the Gods Below and their unholy servants, the Eternal.

THE NATURE OF THE WORLD

All the reputable sages agree that world is ordered into two spheres: the mundane world where men are born, live, and perish, and the spirit world where the gods and the ancestors dwell. The spirit world is much like its mundane counterpart, but grander and more dramatic in both good and harmful qualities. The correct offerings and worship must be given to the dwellers in the spirit world or they will grow angry at being denied their rightful due. Wrathful gods can cause misfortune, sickness and natural disasters, while ancestors who have been neglected can scourge their ungrateful children with curses and disease. It is the responsibility of the head of a family or a clan to conduct the necessary rituals to remember the ancestors and appease the spirits. Such a patriarch is expected to be a priest to his family, with outside clergy only called for special rituals or unusual spiritual difficulties.

For those who follow the Sun Faith, the cosmos is ordered in much the same fashion, but they believe that beyond the spirit world is the Burning Heaven of the Sun, a glorious realm of light and truth where everlasting happiness is bestowed upon those virtuous souls who die in the faith. They do not consider it necessary to sacrifice to their ancestors, for they are entirely satisfied by the Sun. The strictest among them do not even offer rites to the gods, for the Sun is the only true divinity and requires no sacrifice. In Kirsí, many of the local believers retain enough of the old ways to make discreet offerings to the spirits out of “tradition” and healthy fear.

WAYS OF WORSHIP

Acts of worship are of two kinds in the Five Kingdoms- domestic worship meant to maintain a family's good relations with the spirit world, and communal worship meant to keep the entire community safe from spiritual dangers and earthly misfortune.

For family worship, sacrifices are made at the family shrine, which may be as simple as a carved wooden icon in a peasant hut to a grandly-appointed chapel in a nobleman's palace. An offering of food and drink is placed before the shrine, traditional prayers are uttered, and after the spirits have enjoyed the spiritual elements of the food it is shared out among the family members present. These

household rites are ordinary matters conducted weekly, or more often in times of trouble. The Sun Faithful do not have shrines, but instead gather weekly to listen to a scriptural lesson from a Sun Teacher and join in communal prayer.

Communal worship is conducted by specially-trained priests capable of conducting the elaborate and often-costly rites expected by the spirits. Communal songs, dances, prayers, and joint sacrifices gather the entire community together in a shared affirmation of their belief and reverence for the spirits. These rituals can be expensive, requiring burnt sacrifices and special implements, and sometimes they are postponed due to poverty. In the grimmest cases they can even involve the sacrifice of human lives, such as during the red-handed “Traditions” of Lokossa. Still, only the most desperate or depraved communities resort to such things, and Lokossa itself would not have its Traditions if it were not constantly and bitterly pressed by the Night Men raiders from the south.

The Sun Faithful do not conduct sacrifices of any kind, and their rituals are very simple in comparison to the elaborate propitiations of the Spirit Way. Some believers appreciate the modest material demands of the faith, but Spirit Wayists find it a foolish economy. What use is an unslaughtered bullock, they argue, when your refusal has made the spirits scorn you? In those villages and towns where both Sun Faithful and Spirit Wayists live there is sometimes tension when the former refuse to participate in the communal rituals of the latter. In the worst cases, these tensions can flare into riots or vandalism as the Sun Faithful punish the “idolatrous pagans” or the Spirit Wayists strike at the “traitorous ingrates”.

HOLY PLACES

The Spirit Way has innumerable shrines and temples across the Three Lands. Even the rudest farming village has a hut set aside for worship of the gods and ancestors, and Spirit Way towns are proud of their fine temples of carved woods, sculpted stone, or bright-painted adobe. The most popular and powerful gods in a region might have their own shrines set aside for them, but most market towns make do with a single temple for all the spirits. Different images and decorations are brought out for different rites, and the priests all share the temple's roof in arrangements hallowed by tradition. They also serve as guardians to ensure that no outrageous scoundrel dares slip in to steal the precious ornaments and ritual tools these temples often possess. To be caught plundering a town's temple is a crime all but certain to result in execution, if the priests leave the culprit alive in the first place.

The temples of Nyala are especially grand, some forming huge, spired structures that extend many levels underground to provide suitable places for worshipping the gods of earth and death. But such great temples also require great outlays, and in the wake of the Long War many such shrines have fallen into ruin and decay. Their towns were broken during the invasions and their priests slaughtered by the Eternal. Some have been repurposed for darker ends, becoming fortresses for bandit chieftains or seats for worshippers of newer and more terrible gods.

The Sun Faith does not have temples in the same sense, for they do not believe that the Sun requires any material objects for suitable worship. Instead, they have prayer houses where believers gather every week to listen to lessons from the Sun Prophet's scripture taught by specially-trained teachers. These Sun Teachers are clergy to the community of the faithful, and are expected to interpret the Four Corners of the Mountain and the holy words of scripture in ways useful to the community of believers. These prayer houses can be quite grand in Kirsi where the faith is strong, but they are more often simple, serviceable buildings decorated with Sun Faithful scripture and symbols. The Meru rarely employ even that, holding their lessons in the open air as they listen to their honored olabons.

Still, tales persist of older houses deep within the deserts of the Black Land, temples that were once devoted to the beast-headed gods of Deshur until the Sun Faith became strong and turned them to new worship. When the Eternal King drove the Sun Faith out of the east, they were left behind by their faithful, their ancient treasures and inherited wealth still buried beneath the trackless dunes of black sand.

PRIESTS AND SUN TEACHERS

Priesthood, like most positions of social importance in the Three Lands, is largely a male profession. Suitably clever boys are selected by the priests as apprentices and initiates, brought up to learn the intricate rites and complex theological considerations necessary for their duties. Most parents are eager to offer their children to the temples, for a priest's lot is commonly a well-fed one that is respected and honored by the community. They do not abandon their family ties, either, though in theory their devotion to the gods is expected to be foremost.

Female deities such as Oshun are known for accepting female clergy as well, and there are always those small communities or splinter sects who allow for female equality or outright matriarchy among their clerics. In addition, there are occasionally those women who demonstrate striking spiritual powers, ones whom the priests are forced to acknowledge as worthy of the role.

Priests are first and foremost the technicians of spiritual relationships. They know the correct words, right rituals, and traditional expectations of the gods, and they can fulfil the duties they expect of men. Most communities also expect that their priests should be good and upright men, but their chief function is that of a knowledgeable specialist rather than a moral exemplar. A priest who behaves wickedly will be reprovved by his neighbors and reproached by his colleagues, but no one will suggest that he is therefore unable to perform the rituals unless his sin has involved him breaking one of the purity taboos some rites require.

Village priests are expected to be ecumenical. They may have favorite gods, but they conduct rituals and propitiations for all the important powers, and are available for any kind of need. Town priests are sometimes more specialized, initiated into the deeper mysteries of specific deities and taught the secrets of more advanced rituals. Apart from these recognized clergy are those holy men and women who dwell deep in the bush, seeking some pri-



vate understanding with the spirits or cultivating their magical powers.

Followers of the Sun Faith have no such clergy, instead relying upon the wisdom of their Sun Teachers. These men- and sometimes women- are trained from youth in the memorization of the holy scripture and the finer points of interpreting the Four Corners of the Mountain. Their weekly sermons are occasions of communal prayer, and throughout the week they entertain visitors who seek their counsel or conduct smaller gatherings of faithful who wish to study together.

Hierarchy in both the Spirit Way and Sun Faith is strictly local. While towns and villages often have high priests, seniors, and junior initiates, outsider priests are not bound to obey these figures. There is no "supreme high priest" recognized by all clergy, and indeed, differences can sometimes grow very hot between temples in adjoining towns. Sun Teachers usually sort themselves out by seniority and community respect within a settlement of the faithful, but the degree of respect they earn from outsiders will likely be based upon their fame and personal respect rather than any formal hierarchy.

Priests rarely have any overt magical powers, for the gifts of a marabout are rare and the practice of sorcery is frowned upon by most temples. Larger temples often have at least one marabout affiliated with them to provide blessings to suitably devout petitioners, though these favored of the spirits are rarely the sort of men and women to gladly handle the day-to-day temple duties that a high priest must mind. These marabouts are greatly respected by the locals, and it is not unknown for a high priest to be gnawed by jealousy of their gifts.

DEATH AND THE AFTERLIFE

One of the most important functions provided by a priest is the conducting of funeral rites for the dead. While any family patriarch is familiar with the necessary rituals, the spiritual force of the priest is anxiously prized as a further guarantee against the deceased's suffering in the afterlife. The people of the Three Lands believe that one who has just died is vulnerable and disoriented by their new condition, and must have help and guidance if they are to safely reach the spirit world. Those without this aid will often go astray, becoming tormented ghosts who share their suffering with their kinsmen. To die alone and unburied is a horrifying fate for any man.

The most minimal rites involve washing the body, arranging its limbs neatly, and burying it with appropriate prayers for its peace and right guidance. Such a pauper's burial is better than nothing, but still a cause for fear and anxiety. A proper funeral involves the entire community, with a great funeral meal, priestly rituals, and sacrifices to the gods for their aid and favor. The Sun Faithful replace the sacrifices with prayer, but they too share the anxieties of their neighbors over safe passage to the Burning Heavens of their god.

Many peasants and common folk are too poor to afford such a grand funeral, and so instead place their reliance in secret societies of funerary adepts. These societies assure members of power-

GODS OF THE THREE LANDS

The true number of deities worshiped between the sea and the Weeping Mountains is uncountable. Every province has its gods, and the entities listed below usually have their own regional cults until different names and attributes.

The Ancestors are universally worshiped by those of the Spirit Way, with every family patriarch expected to make regular offerings at their household shrine. Careful remembrance of them brings luck and spiritual aid, while neglect brings disease and bitter misfortune.

Aganyu is the Burning God, the master of flames, mountains and volcanoes. He is a ferocious and violent god, but is also worshiped as a special protector of children and the weak.

The Gods Below are hideous things, their numberless names foul upon the lips and tainting to the soul. It was their whispers that taught the Eternal King the black secrets of immortality. Some men secretly worship them for the sorcery they teach, but their rites are invariably and unspeakably loathsome.

Gu is the master of iron and war, god of blacksmiths and soldiers. All that is of metal is his purview, and soldiers pray to him for strength in battle and the courage to bear their wounds well.

Olokun, the deity of wisdom and of water, most often appears in a female guise and often favors female marabouts and priests. She gives health, riches, and self-understanding to those who demonstrate the proper degree of deep introspection.

Oya, the Tearer of the Veil, is the lady of storms, wind, and travelers. She is wild and heedless of the wishes of men, but her interest can be piqued by the correct prayers and sacrifices. As the goddess of those who journey forth, her aid is often begged in guarding the newly-dead on their journey to the spirit world.

Sagbata is the fearsome Scourger, the fist of the gods and the punisher of those who have sinned. He sends smallpox and madness to the wicked, but so terrible is his anger and so common is human frailty that he is known for afflicting the almost-innocent along with the gravely wicked. His priests strive to calm him and turn his attention away.

The Sun is the monotheistic deity of the Sun Faith, their sole god. The Sun Teachers say that all other entities are but great spirits in service to his glory, and so it is right to only give true worship to the Sun alone. Most devout Spirit Way followers find the idea too ridiculous to be offensive, and others say the gods will take care of the matter, but some take more direct and violent umbrage.

Oko is the father of crops and the earth, the patron of farmers and those who make their living from the soil. He is a calm and reasonable god, often sought by his peers for his good judgment.

Oshun is the lady of passion, beauty, and eloquence. She mends disputes in ways that please both sides, and inflames the hearts of lovers and artists. Merchants sacrifice to her in hopes of being able to strike good bargains with their honeyed words.

ful magical rites to make up for the lack of material expenditure, and conduct elaborate secret rituals over their deceased members. While membership in these societies is common knowledge, the inner secrets of their practices are guarded jealously. Though a great comfort to the poor, they also sometimes form the nucleus of bands of rebels, dark cultists, and other malefactors meeting under the guise of innocent charity. Other societies restrict their membership to the community's elite and count nobles, chieftains, and great priests among their number. They join not because they cannot afford the customary feasting, but because the society promises a still better place in the world to come for those worthies who aid it on earth. Sometimes that betterment extends to material concerns or the quiet advancement of their members in court society.

The stronger and better the rites, the more aid is given to the spirit of the deceased. If a dead man or woman is courageous and clear-minded their soul can win through to the spirit world even without any aid. Lesser souls require more help, or they may lose their way between this world and the next and forever haunt the living. Their pain and confusion makes them dangerous to everyone, and ngangas or other spiritual adepts must be called in for exorcisms.

THE SPIRIT WORLD

Even the dullest peasant in the Three Lands knows that the gods and ancestors dwell in the spirit world, an echo of the world below. The spirit world is roughly equivalent to the mundane world, with mountains and jungles and cities in the same places, and the dead of every land dwelling in the places that were theirs in life. The gods live in grand palaces that sages cannot precisely locate, while lesser spirits are thick in the forests of the dead.

The dead live as they did in life, conducting the same business and dwelling in the same place. The dead do not grow and change the way that the living do, however- they are not pricked by ambition or gnawed by discontent. They are what they are, and they will always be such, and the strife and tumult of living society is unknown among them. Dead kings rule in their several palaces, but there is no contradiction in their commands, for there are no commands to be uttered. Merchants and farmers trade in the markets, but there is no chaffering for prices, for neither merchant-ghost nor farmer-shade care about becoming rich. Every soul seeks its own proper role and is troubled and upset until it obtains it.

Ancestors who receive no sacrifices, prayers, or remembrance grow agitated by the neglect. Angry spirits can strike their descendants with curses and misfortune, travelling from the spirit world to the mundane one in order to manifest their umbrage. By the same token, beautiful sacrifices and honeyed words can sometimes briefly awaken a memory of love in the spirit's heart, and persuade it to act on behalf of its faithful heirs. Particularly splendid rites and burial rituals can even elevate a soul's place in death, giving him a more exalted state for eternity. The Deshrites were notorious for the wealth and elaboration of their tombs- and for the rage of their dead when despoilers dared to open them.

Sometimes spirits wander into the mundane world, or manage to work their way among the living through patient effort or the

beckoning of a convenient cult. These rogue spirits are sometimes harmlessly confused, but most of them are vicious, dangerous things who relish the blood of men. Spirits who mean to do good for their followers can do so from their own world. If they come to this one, it is for redder pleasures. By the same measure, living men and women are not welcome in the spirit world. It is a place for the dead and the gods, and only the mightiest ngangas and marabouts can hope to safely journey along its misty roads.

Spirits slain in the mundane world are driven back to their homes with pain and confusion that may last for years. Lost souls who are disrupted by a sorcerer or a brave hero's blade are scattered and may take years to reform, and may do so many miles distant. Each "death" strips away more of their memories and self, until nothing remains but rage and longing for a peace they can never know. It is said that the gods can destroy spirits forever if they so choose, tearing apart the constituent elements that make up a human soul. Even the wickedest spirits are rarely punished in this way, instead being confined by the gods in dark places beneath the spirit world's earth, there to suffer until they have been duly punished for their evil deeds.

This justice falls heaviest upon the lowly and the common, however, and those without the substance to have splendid burial rites. It is for this reason that many of the wickedest men and women labor so carefully to leave behind a splendid tomb full of precious objects, the better to bribe the attendants on the road to the spirit world and escape the punishment their lives have earned them. These tombs are a great attraction to the heroes of later years.

VIRTUE AND SIN

All but the most meditative philosophers agree that virtue and wickedness derive from the decrees of the gods and the customs of a nation- and that what is suitable for one set of people may not be appropriate for another. Followers of some gods or esoteric cults consider themselves liberated from the limits that shackle other souls, and rejoice in their moral privileges to do what they most desire. They may be punished by mundane society and even executed for their crimes, but they know that their patrons will welcome them in the afterlife and absolve them of any celestial punishment for their acts.

As a general rule the gods require honesty in word and deed, filial loyalty to kinsmen, hospitality to strangers, kindness to the weak, and obedience to the traditions of the community. Both the Spirit Way and the Sun Faith agree on these virtues, with the latter enshrining them as the "Four Corners of the Mountain". Sun Faithful believers who wish to enter the Burning Heavens must practice mercy to the weak, truthfulness in all things, obedience to lawful authority, and justice to the wicked. Failure to abide by these principles will result in suffering on earth and eventual celestial punishment.

The gods may see fit to forgive a sinner if he makes suitable recompense for his crimes, giving restitution to his victims and penitent offerings to the spirits. For crimes that cannot be undone, the sages insist that the only hope lies in fervent prayer and elaborate purification rituals overseen by expert priests.

THE FIVE KINGDOMS

The following pages give certain practical details of the five great kingdoms of the Three Lands. The sinister Sixth Kingdom, the blasted land of Deshur, has been desolate for forty years, ever since the Long War ended with the repulse of the Eternal King and the shattering of his immortal armies. Now that land hosts only empty cities haunted by ghosts and brooding Eternal, their black stone temples standing silent on the banks of the Iteru.

The map opposite depicts the rough boundaries of each nation and the major cities within its borders, with the PDF version of this book allowing selective layering. In theory, virtually every square mile of the Three Lands is claimed by one king or another, but it has been seven generations since the kingdoms were strong enough to enforce their writ. Even within their borders, they are plagued by bandits and petty warlords too strong to be put down.

MONARCHS, OBAS, AND CHIEFS

Each kingdom varies in the titles and honors they confer, but the general outline of rule between them is similar. For each there is a monarch, strong or weak, and beneath him a court of noble advisors and officials dwelling with him in the capital. Outlying cities and market towns are ruled by *obas*, the “kings” of these lesser places who rule with an absoluteness tempered only by the limits of their practical power. An oba is sometimes appointed by the monarch, but is most often the patriarch of the city’s foremost noble family. His position is vulnerable to all the intrigues and treacheries typical to kings. If enough rivals cooperate in his overthrow, there is little a distant monarch can do to save him.

Most villages and backwater communities do not rate the dignity of an oba, and are instead ruled by chiefs advised by the village elders. Some rule by right of blood and others by general acclaim, but the harsh necessities of these villages and bush settlements rapidly cull out any chief incapable of dealing with the challenges of survival.

CITIES AND VILLAGES

The capitals listed on the map are all large cities teeming with artisans and craftsfolk. Even the smallest of them houses fifty thousand people, and Sokone’s capital claims the cosmopolitan glory of almost a hundred thousand residents. The other major cities range from ten to thirty thousand inhabitants, all fed on the tireless labors of countless farming villages that pay tribute to its oba and his court.

The cities of the Three Lands are old, most of them built atop raised mounds of earth where earlier cities have crumbled or been razed to the dust. Tunnels and half-collapsed passageways are common in all of them as the legacy of ancient builders and the detritus of long-forgotten wars. Good people do not enter such underways, but those who do not pretend to goodness find them useful refuge against the attention of upright society.

Seven generations ago, there were perhaps twice as many cities in the Three Lands. When the Eternals came, whole provinces were put to the sword, and great and splendid cities were tumbled down into rubble and tears. Adventurers sometimes dare these desolate places to relieve the dead of their possessions or reclaim some long-lost artifact, but it is terribly dangerous work. Those brave souls whom the ghosts do not slay are often taken by the Eternal who still lurk within the broken walls.

The villages of the land are without number and all but without name. The nobles and schemers of the great cities hardly notice their existence save to rebuke them when a tribute shipment is late. Their desperate struggles against bandits and worse are often ignored as the mere bleatings of cowardly peasants. A large village might have no more than five or six hundred souls, and many have less. Often it is not enough to stand against some eldritch peril, and so the courage of the Spears of the Dawn is sought for much-needed aid.

NOBLES AND NOBILITY

Nobility in the Three Lands is not so rigidly regimented and graded as it is in some other civilizations. Outside of notoriously protocol-minded Nyala, nobility is a status more of clans than of individuals, an honor conferred by membership in a particularly powerful or venerable family. Within that family there are greater and lesser distinctions but there is no concept of a “title of nobility” handed down from parent to child. Even a king’s son is required to show his worth if he is to have his father’s throne. Failure makes for an abrupt change of dynasties.

The authority of a noble clan is vested in its patriarch. He is the final arbiter of the will of the clan and his choice is, in theory, unassailable. In practice, much of his authority is delegated or simply taken by other elders and important figures in the family, and he needs their aid if he is not to be deposed in favor of a different leader. These quarrels are usually every bit as vicious and bitter as might be expected from a family crisis.

Nobles of no formal position are often addressed simply as “lord” or “lady” by the common folk. Those who fulfill specific duties in a city or who command impressive estates are sometimes referred to instead by those titles, such as “Keeper of the Dia’s Horses”, or “Lord of the Red Tower”.

Clans become noble by becoming too powerful to ignore. Over the course of generations, a martially-talented or mercantile clan might gain so much power and make so many friends that the other noble clans are forced to acknowledge them as equals. In the same fashion, a clan loses nobility by an inability to maintain the servant-allies and influence expected of them, gradually becoming a merely “hollow noble” clan before relegation to the common folk.

Because of this, monarchs are rarely in a position to confer nobility upon a favored individual. The most kings can do is reward them, and hope that they make something of the new influence.

KIRSI

In the dry hills of the Yellow Land dwell the riders of the Kirsi. Proud, quarrelsome, and red-handed, they are the finest horsemen in all the Three Lands. In the days of the Old Kings Kirsi was simply the easternmost province of the Nyalan Empire, the rough borderlands made hot by war with their Deshrite neighbors to the east. When Kirsi's warriors weren't fighting in Nyalan legions, they fought their half-kin at home over matters of honor, land, and simple spite. Glory among the Kirsi was won with a blade, and if the opportunity to get it could not be found on the borders then it was made at home.

Kirsi was always a troublesome province for Nyala. Too many of its men were trained warriors, and their tradition of mounted warfare made any attempt at chastisement a questionable prospect. Still, decades of relentless pressure by Nyalan legions and the judicious diplomacy of wise emperors had eventually persuaded the Kirsine clans to swear fealty to the Nyalan throne and seek their glory against the Deshrites to the east. The Nyalans paid well for these proud soldiers, and there still remain fortresses and palaces in the dry hills adorned in opulent western styles.

When the Eternal struck into the west, their march was halted by the lancers of Kirsi, and the bloody price these warriors paid shielded their Nyalan overlords from the dread hand of the Eternal King. Nyala was in chaos with the repulse of its armies from the black deserts of the east, and the emperor took counsel from those nobles who demanded time for recovery and negotiation, for the striking of a peace with the Eternal King and the restoration of the tattered legions. They refused to commit their forces to the eastern border until they were ready- and they were never ready.

The men and women of Kirsi fought and died for a dozen years before they finally renounced their oaths and damned their former lords as cowards. So long as they had remained obedient, the western nobles could afford to concern themselves with recovery and useless negotiations with the implacable Eternal. Once the Kirsi killed the Nyalan governor and drove out the nobles that had supported the throne, these courtiers suddenly realized that their precious eastern estates and domains were no more than names on papyrus. They demanded that the rebels be chastised.

The story that followed was the story of all the Long War. Nyalan forces fought their "rebel provinces" as much as they fought Eternal armies. The turncoat nations acquired a fresh and vivid hatred of their former masters, but were left torn and bleeding by the Eternal. Had the forces of the Eternal King not been bogged down in their own intrigues and the strange pleasures and obsessions of that undying race, the quarreling west would surely have been overthrown.

By the time that Emperor Kaday finally broke the Eternal, Kirsi was a free nation both in law and in fact. The hot-blooded clans of the hill country are free to govern themselves as they please- but in the absence of a shared foe, too many clans are instead struggling with each other. The Dia is said to rule Kirsi from his clan-home of Koro, but his will extends no further than the lances of his riders. He must threaten, bribe, and cozen the other great clans

of the Kirsi to make them obey his will, and he exerts such effort only in dire need.

The other great clans keep up a more-or-less constant flow of deniable raiding and skirmishing. The only visible difference between bandits and clan warriors is that one group will refrain from attacking their own people- most of the time. Poor villagers are known to suffer when a band of riders from its "protecting" clan come through in need of goods or food, and lesser family branches are sometimes "permitted" to generously gift to the greater. These tensions can grow poisonous within some clans, but they hold together knowing that only in unity can they survive their foes.

KIRSI SOCIETY

Every major culture in the Three Lands is distinctly oriented toward family and clan relations, but Kirsi takes this to an extreme. Every man and woman in the land knows precisely how their own kindred relate to the area's dominant clan, and every member within a clan knows their exact standing within the group. Every adult male can trace a line of command between himself and the leader of the clan, usually starting with his father and tracing upward along a baroque path defined by the accomplishments and status of those more elevated in the clan.

Glory is the universal prize for Kirsi warriors. Glory makes the difference between a hungry foot soldier, a bright-clad rider, and the mighty leader of the clan. Deeds which exalt a warrior are eagerly sought, and those things that shame or disgrace him are avoided- or hidden, if the case permits. In all cases, the final arbiters of glory are the griots of the Kirsi and the voices of the women of their clan.

For the Kirsi, glory is gained in several specific ways. First and most importantly, there is glory in personal battle. Without a strong sword arm and a keen-aimed lance, a Kirsi will never amount to anything of importance among his people. The greatest slayers are praised and honored, their deeds celebrated by the griots and sung by the fairest unwed maidens. If they lack judgment or skill in the wise handling of men they may become champions for the Dia or the clan leader.

Glory is also to be had by keen judgment. To choose a course that is successful is glorious; to pick a course of action that fails is ignoble. This is an amoral sort of judgment on the part of the Kirsi, and they will praise the prudence of a wicked man as swiftly as he who plans justly. The key distinction to them is power- power of the intellect and of the ability to give reality to one's desires. Such power is honored, even if it is not always virtuously employed.

The third great glory is in leadership. The warrior who can persuade others to follow him, who can inspire them in hours of peril and encourage them in the face of defeat is a glorious leader indeed. Even a poor plan may be forgiven if it is executed with zeal and charisma by a warrior. To have one's followers reject you and denounce you is shameful in this light, and treachery among the Kirsi is considered a shame to the one betrayed as much as it is a weakness in the traitor.



This old love of glory was once the soul of Kirsi culture, and it remains strong among them. Still, in the past century the Sun Faith has made serious inroads in the old traditions of ancestor-worship and reverence for the spirits. The first missionaries from the Meru met much resistance from the suspicious locals, but the obvious hatred the Eternals felt for the faith was a point of much credit to the Kirsi. The vigorous miracles and determined zeal of the Sun Teachers have since left perhaps four of every five Kirsi a more-or-less faithful believer in the sun-scripture and the “Four Corners of the Mountain” taught by the faith.

This new emphasis on mercy, justice, obedience, and truthfulness has tempered the old Kirsine lust for glory. Over the past several generations, some warriors of Kirsi have turned away from the endless internecine strife to serve a higher purpose, seeking to turn their martial skills toward the defense of the weak and the chastisement of those who would plunder the innocent. These “Sunriders” are a chiefly Kirsine phenomenon, though strangers from the other Five Kingdoms sometimes make their way to the dry hills to learn the ways of these pious warriors. They are unpopular with many of the clan-lords, as their loyalty is not to their own clan but to their fellow Sunriders- and those that pass the training and prove their worth to the order are mighty warriors indeed. Their popularity among the common folk and their close affiliation with the Sun Faith has kept the order from facing the combined anger of the more corrupt magnates, but some suspect it is only a matter of time before their enemies band together to break these meddling horsemen.

APPEARANCE AND CLOTHING

The Kirsi are very dark-skinned, with hawkish features and faces often lined by the scouring of the arid northern winds. Both men and women tend to slenderness and a whipcord build, and every man among them is proud of his battle scars. Their hair is straight and black, with men braiding it as a second layer of protection beneath their helmets or binding it up in thick turbans. The women wear it long, and the wives of wealthy men adorn it with rich ornaments of beaten gold and gemstones brought from Sokone or taken from the hands of dead foemen. It is a woman’s glory to be dressed in the wealth of the mighty dead, and even those few women who take up the warrior’s lance are known to indulge in the fashion. Those of a more retiring life who need not work often conceal all below their eyes with veils of thin dyed cotton.

Outer clothing for both sexes usually consists of a white robe split for riding, thrown on over leggings. Women will wear a breast-band beneath their robe to make riding more comfortable, but men will often go without more when working. When at leisure or celebrating, both sexes will wear elaborately-embroidered tunics and trousers beneath their robes, vying with one another for the richness of their dress beneath the sober exterior. The wealthy also dye their outer robes in swaths of bright color.

Kirsi are much more likely to wear armor than their southern Meru neighbors. Suits of heavy Kirsi mail are common for lancers, and the men take pride in the stoicism with which they endure the heat and discomfort of it. Footmen without the luxury of a horse to bear their weight will often prefer leather armor or quilted layers of cotton instead.

KIRSINE ADVENTURERS

Most Spears of the Dawn who come from Kirsi are warriors, blooded by border raids and versed in the arts of the lance and the sword. Some are idealistic Sunriders who seek to build a glorious name to better convince their peers of the wisdom of their cause, while others are simple horsemen or peasant foot soldiers knocked loose by the fighting. A certain worldly cynicism about the realities of warfare is often wedded to a bone-deep lust for glory.

Ngangas are least common out of Kirsi, as there are few to teach them. Some are “born-witches”, men and women gifted with the power to control *ashe* but without the awareness of it. They channel their nkisi instinctively and unpredictably until they can find someone to teach them its control, and are dreaded by their fellows as unpredictable sources of maledictions.

Griots are more common, praising and condemning the riders of Kirsi as their deeds require. There are times when a too-candid appraisal of a lord’s courage obliges a griot to seek more distant patrons.

Marabouts are usually of the Sun Faith, though some villages and town shrines cling jealously to the creeds of the Spirit Way. Such insistence sometimes compels them to move on before they are driven out by less tolerant souls.

LOKOSSA

In the fever-hot jungles of the southern Green Land dwell the grim Lokossans, a people made harsh by the cruelty of their home. The jungles of Lokossa do not welcome men, and life there is a struggle against both the perilous creatures of the forest and the constant threat of invasion by the terrible Night Men of the south. Lokossa has been a shield to the other kingdoms against these inhuman enemies, but the price of that vigilance has left deep scars.

Lokossa is a land of sorcery, and the greatest of their *ngangas* is their king, the Ahonsu. The noble families of the land all number at least a few accomplished *ngangas* in each generation, for the “strong blood” which brings forth such magical prodigies is proof of their nobility. They will wed only amongst themselves or to proven sorcerers of other families, lest their bloodline be diluted by less gifted stock. The Ahonsu himself is always succeeded by another sorcerer, though not always the son or rare daughter he picked to do so. His word is law in life, but once his corpse has been shut up in his tomb-palace, his will is not so important as the whispered plans of the nobles.

The Lokossans are practitioners of both slavery and human sacrifice. The slaves are criminals, disgraced soldiers, children born to the shackles, prisoners captured in wars or raids, or those luckless souls who offend the sensibilities of the noble-born. The human sacrifices are drawn from these number, their deaths conducted across the kingdom at customary times known as the “Traditions”. Their blood waters the graves of the dead Ahonsus and strengthens the living sorcerers of the Lokossa.

Such sacrifices are counted as necessary because of the Night Men. South, across the Akpara River, the jungles teem with things that are not men but wear shapes that are horribly alike. Scholars have argued about them for generations, some saying that they are spirits made flesh, others that they are beasts that mimic human shape, and a few insisting that they are simply barbaric humans or even runaway exiles of the other Five Kingdoms. The Lokossans know them only as the Night Men, and their soldiers are constantly at war to protect the borders against their incursions.

There are ruins in the southern jungles, great cities of stone and overgrown palaces, all the proof of some long-dead land of the days of the Old Kings. To enter them is death, for the Night Men catch and devour all whom they find. Their numbers seem limitless, and the warriors of Lokossa pay bitterly to hold back their constant probing raids. Bands of Night Men seem to have chieftains or priest-masters, but if they have a king, no one has lived to return with proof of it. All that the people of Lokossa know is that the Night Men are always hungry, and the Night Men always come. It has been so for as long as men have dwelled in the Five Kingdoms, since the first stories were told in the shadow of the great trees.

The Lokossa are aware of their grim reputation with the other kingdoms. Their bloody rites, their cruel lords, and the way they spend their soldiers’ lives like water poured from a gourd all inspire fear and suspicion of these southerners. Those Lokossa who bother to think on the opinions of outsiders are often scornful of

them; they cannot appreciate the sacrifices the Lokossans make to hold back the Night Men, or the price that they pay to keep the other kingdoms safe. Were it not for their *ngangas* and the swords of their soldiers, the tumbled ruins of palaces would not lie beyond the Akpara- they would be in the capitals of every kingdom in the Three Lands. The Lokossans pay, and they are proud of their sacrifice.

LOKOSSAN SOCIETY

The social world of the Lokossa is harshly regimented. Most common people live in nuclear families in farming villages hacked out of the all-encompassing jungle, often on the banks of one of the countless small rivers that wind slowly beneath the green boughs. Every village is the property of a particular noble family, and some of the villagers are literally so, being slaves acquired from merchants or born into that condition from bondwoman mothers.

The gulf is absolute between the nobles and the commoners. Commoners cannot marry nobles, for all that they might be taken as concubines, and any offspring of a noble and a commoner is automatically a slave belonging to their noble parent. The only exception to this rule is in the case of a young man or woman who demonstrates supernatural gifts of some kind. These men and women are adopted into a noble family if their gifts are suitable for a *nganga*, or inducted into one of the many noble priestly societies if they show the aptitudes of a marabout.

Even foreign *ngangas* and marabouts are accorded a certain amount of respect from the common folk, and more care than usual will be taken to avoid offending them. Magic is the backbone of Lokossa’s survival, and those who can summon up strong *ashe* or enlist supernatural allies are simply more important than those who cannot.

The will of a noble family is absolute with regard to their own lands and people. Their word is law and there is no appeal from their decisions. Even a freeman can do no more than flee their anger and seek a home in a different village. A slave cannot hope for even that, as only an open enemy of their former owners would consider giving them shelter. Now and then a noble family goes too far and sets off a rebellion in some hard-pressed village. Most of the time these disputes end in swift retribution, but sometimes the rebels can deliver serious reverses to their tormentors. Noble families are loathe to admit to such rebellions, both out of a reluctance to give other villages any ideas, and out of a very real fear of being thought too weak to control their own peasants.

Such autocratic power comes at a price. The noble families are all expected to serve the state from adulthood on into extreme old age. All men who have no talent for sorcery must train as warriors and officers of the Lokossan army, and all women without magical gifts must serve as administrators, scribes, or in other service to the Ahonsu until they are married. Those nobles who do have sorcerous prowess have even greater duties, and must spend their lives either as priestly support for the state or magical aides to Lokossan officers and officials. Aside from respites for training and occult

initiation, nobles may expect to serve continuously from adulthood on through their sixtieth year.

The body count is predictably enormous, and few noblemen ever live to see their sixtieth year. Polygamy is common among the nobility in order to ensure the survival of a family, though commoners usually keep only one wife. Among nobles, such alliances are formed to cement political ties or take a share in some potent magical bloodline. Among commoners, love is more often the motivation, or a desire to tie two wealthy families together.

APPEARANCE AND CLOTHING

The people of the southern green tend to be somewhat shorter than their northern neighbors, with lush features and very dark skin. Both male and female commoners clip their tightly-curved locks close to their skull, the better for comfort in the humid heat. Among nobles, warriors often favor tight cornrows to give a little extra cushioning for their helmets, and noble women sometimes sport luxuriantly elaborate braids, each strand adorned with golden beads and ornaments fashioned of river gems and lustrous shells. Such casual ostentation is unknown among commoner women, who reserve their finery for the privacy of their homes and occasional celebrations.

Lokossan clothing also varies by social class and circumstance. In the cassava fields and forests, commoners wear little more than a woven skirt or loincloth, with women adding a breastband when strenuous motion is necessary. When at home, men favor a flowing calf-length waist wrap of brightly-dyed cloth that flows upward into a sash over the shoulder. Women prefer a snug-fitting wrap that runs from the breast to calf, often with a counter-patterned scarf draped over their shoulders. Noble warriors flaunt their warding amulets and their battle scars as proof of their courage, and their dress is aggressively Spartan and practical, often no more

than a waist wrap. Well-born women luxuriate in intricately-woven cloth wraps and elaborate headdresses of ornamented fabric.

Ritual scarification is extremely common among the Lokossa. Warriors are marked with raised lines of scarring as part of their training, and young women usually receive intricate patterns of small, fine scars on their bellies, thighs, and arms as a token of their strength and vibrant health. Among nobles or the favored, these scars might be infused with plant extracts that lend them a vivid, jewel-bright array of colors at the cost of excruciating pain while they heal. Lokossans particularly admire battle scars, and even a noble might pause to consider the words of a commoner who bears the marks of many spears.

LOKOSSAN ADVENTURERS

While the Lokossa are a patriarchal people, the merit of sorcerous skill or martial prowess outweighs gender considerations. Many young women who desire more than life as a dutiful wife throw themselves into military training, and with so many men lost in the constant fighting with the Night Men, the Lokossans are forced to include them among their warriors. They make up the dreaded Lokossan Reapers, the warrior-women famed for their brutality, their unflinching discipline, and their mastery of the terrible two-handed “great razor” that is their customary weapon. A young woman who succeeds in proving her prowess is permitted to join the Reapers and thereafter treated with all the deference any other warrior might receive.

Customary Lokossan society is very regimented and demanding, but Spears have the latitude to deal with such problems as they think most pressing. Beside them are those Lokossans who have found it wisest to leave their homeland: escaped slaves, scapegoats for pretended crimes, true criminals, and those commoners who have earned a noble family’s anger.



MERU

When the Eternal King slew the Sun Prophet and commanded the worship of the Gods Below, not all the people of Deshur consented to obey him. Some among them refused to abandon the Sun Faith and others shunned the horrors of the depths, refusing the accursed gifts that the Eternal King promised to those who would serve his new gods. These renunciates fled Deshur, seeking refuge in the empty savannahs west of the great desert.

Among them were some of the wisest and greatest sorcerers of Deshur. These sages understood that the Eternal King would permit no sorcery but his own, and that their lives would surely be forfeit on the altars of his red priests. With the help of their divinations and the miracles of the Sun Faith's marabouts, those who would become the Meru escaped the vengeance of the Eternal King and made a new life amid the yellow grasses of the plains.

There they were aided by the indigenous peoples of the plains, the small bands that had lived by concealing themselves from the interests of Deshur. The prophets and seers of these people recognized what was coming, and they put aside old enmities to teach the refugees what they needed to know to survive the time to come. Many were aggrieved at this, knowing that their people would vanish among the vastly more numerous Meruans, but their choice was between that and mutual destruction at the Eternal King's hands. All but a few of the most embittered clans joined with the strangers and intermarried in time. Those that refused to make peace are said to hide in secret passages beneath the savannah, emerging only to slaughter unwary Meruans in the dark of the moon.

For the whole of the Sixth Kingdom's existence, the lands of the Meru had no peace. Wave upon wave of Eternal soldiers marched into the grasslands to seek living blood. The Meru called it the Long Hunt, for there was no end to it. The living could not build cities or even towns, nor pause to farm the earth. Their lives were spent in leading their herds in an endless journey to evade the clumsy, vicious reprisals of the Eternal King. There was not always even time to stop and kindle a cookfire, so the Meru learned to eat their meat and milk and blood raw, with their weapons in their hands.

In the end, the wisdom of the Meruan olabons and the strength of their warriors was instrumental in overthrowing the Sixth Kingdom. Their scouts had preserved the secrets of Deshur and knew the ways by which the desert could be opened and armies could be led to water and shade. Their sages made the mountains stoop to welcome the Five Kingdoms. Their warriors were brought up from birth for the destruction of Eternal soldiers and they knew no fear of the immortals.

In the forty years since the Sixth Kingdom fell, the people of Meru have largely kept to their ways. No one hunts them now, but their villages are few and temporary. Some do a little farming if it does not interfere with their herding, but they are proud of the customs that preserved them. Still, brave young men and bold young women are restless in any age, and some seek more than the lowing of their cattle to content them.



MERUAN SOCIETY

The chief unit of Meru society is the extended family, traced down through the male line. These families remain together in their journeys, with daughters leaving to join their husband's kindred. Each family belongs to a particular "city" - a legacy of their flight from Deshur, when refugees from particular cities banded together with their fellows. Losses to the Sixth Kingdom and the hard life of the plains has left five city-clans in existence: Jenu, Waret, Akor, Medjed, and Jayet. Apart from these is the "Written City", the clan to which all olabons are considered to belong, whatever their family. Each of the five city-clans has traditional control over a particular section of the plains, and other families are expected to respect those boundaries save in times of great need.

Some families are heirs to a noble lineage, and from these noble families are chosen the chiefs of the cities. Any family of the city may speak out in favor of a candidate, but only nobles may become city-chiefs. Patriarchs of the noble families have the right to determine pasturage and other important inter-family negotiations, and not all such patriarchs are equally fair. Within a family, its patriarch's word is law, though if he deviates too greatly from the customs of the Meru his kinsmen may rebel and split off into their own family. Judicial execution is unknown among the Meru; the worst penalty is exile from the family. These outlaws are

shunned by all the Meru, and must either gather together in vicious packs of their own kind or flee to more distant lands.

Most Meru follow the customary ways, journeying with their herds through the grasslands and sleeping beneath leather tents. Those settled Meru live in extended-family kraals with walls of thornbush and thatched mud huts, with fields stretching out beyond the walls. Changing patterns of rain and pasturage force such settlements to move regularly, and so the Meru rarely find it worthwhile to build more elaborate structures. A family's herd of cattle is its life. To lose a herd is a death sentence for a family, and cattle are traded for everything of real value, whether bride-prices from other families, permission to use another city's grazing land, or a forfeit in the case of some fine. A reasonably well-off family will have forty head of cattle for every adult male householder in its number, while a good bride-price might be thirty head.

Meru permit polygamy, and the death of many young men in skirmishes or the defense of the herds leaves many young women with no other prospect of marriage. The Sun Faith demands that every wife be given an equal portion of attention and wealth, but up to four wives may be taken by those capable of keeping them properly. Bride-prices are paid directly to the woman who is to be wed, who passes it down to her children when they come of age.

Meru do not practice slavery or bond service, and slave owners are not welcome in their lands. Prisoners taken in battle may be turned out of the kraal or initiated into a Meru family, but they may not be kept as mere servants.

Meru cities keep a tenuous peace. Ancient bonds of aid and their shared Sun Faith unite them, but the harsh privations of the grasslands and the constant need for pasturage and water create an unending source of friction between the families. Cattle raids are common between cities, as are quick drives into a neighboring city's domain to steal use of green pasture for a time. Families nurse bitter feuds over deaths during such events, and there are times when a city-chief must command two clans to trade their pasture for more distant fields simply to separate the two families.

The marabouts and griots of the Meru do what they can to contain this pressure, but things are getting worse. For forty years the Meru have been free of the scourge of the Sixth Kingdom, and their numbers and herds have constantly grown. There is not enough pasture or water for all of them any more, and they are starting to fight in earnest- not just cattle raids, but actual wars between families, acts that leave men silent and looking away when asked how a neighbor's kraal came to be burnt. Meru warriors of the western Jenu and Akor city-clans are even pushing into Sokone and Lokossa, an act which is sure to bring eventual reprisals.

APPEARANCE AND CLOTHING

The Meru are the lightest-skinned of the peoples of the Five Kingdoms, a legacy of their Deshrite ancestry. Most are of a deep coppery complexion, with straighter hair than is common among other folk. Olabons and wise elders often shave their heads by custom, but adult men wear their hair in long braids. Those born to families with strong traces of indigenous blood are much darker,

though they often retain the straight hair of their kinsmen. The Meru are tall and slender as a rule, and famed for their tireless runners and careless indifference to hardship.

The Meru dress themselves in the produce of their herds, with a leather waist-wrap for men and women and a breast-wrap for the married female followers of the Sun Faith. These wraps are intricately tooled by the women who make them, elaborate patterns picked out with awls, beads, natural dyes, furs, feathers, and thread acquired from traders. Those families who follow the more extreme versions of the Sun Faith insist on veils of woven grasses for the women. The Meru scorn shoes as a sign of a bad runner.

MERUAN ADVENTURERS

The Meru are a strictly patriarchal people, and women are expected to be docile wives and good workers in the home while the men herd and guard. Many of the bolder and more ambitious girls of the Meru chafe at this limit, and in light of the growing population pressure in the plains the elders of the families are finding it wisest to give their blessing to these malcontents to seek their fortune elsewhere. These "remarkable women" must demonstrate some distinct martial or spiritual talent before winning such a place, but once proven they are credited with all the rights of men. If they manage to accumulate great wealth or fame, they may then return to their family and have their pick of husbands eager for the glory of their hand in marriage.

The nganga among the Meru are known as olabons, and are heir to the ancient sorceries of Deshur. Membership among the olabons is decided by signs and portents and such incidents as might persuade a master that a young boy or girl has special talent for manipulating *ashe*. The olabon prize the ancient secrets of their people, and some ambitious young sorcerers travel far from their people in hopes of finding some lost lore to bring them glory when they return.

Griots often serve as negotiators on behalf of a city-chief or important family, and the best-trusted griots in this role are those who have traveled farthest beyond the plains. Their wealth of worldly experience is considered necessary to make a good diplomat and advisor, and so ambitious young griots often find themselves journeying far beyond the grasslands to earn the respect they crave.

Marabouts are important among the Meru, and the women among them are exempt from many of the limits that apply to their sisters. Almost all are faithful teachers of the Sun Faith, and many are fired with a missionary zeal to spread the faith among outsiders. Even those without the urge to share their truth often feel an obligation to journey beyond the grasslands to succor the benighted unbelievers and demonstrate the power of the Sun Faith.

Warriors leave the plains for many reasons; misfortune in love, loss of their herd, the desire to earn a bride-price, the ambition for foreign glory, or a simple youthful desire to run beyond the yellow waves. Outsiders often know them by their traditional weapons- the short *siare* throwing club and the heavy *runku* war staff. Spears are considered tools of ill-omen among the Meru, for they are more useful in killing men than in breaking the bones of Eternal.

Nyala

The people of Nyala are heirs to a past both glorious and long dead. It was under the leadership of its Emperor Kaday that the Sixth Kingdom was finally broken forty years ago, but it was because of his ancestors' ambitions that the Deshrites had been driven to make their unholy bargains more than a century before. Nyala has always hungered for glory, and more than once it has been reckless of its cost.

Centuries ago, Nyala was simply the northwesternmost state of the Three Lands, just one more domain in the time of the Old Kings. The oldest books and scrolls give the impression of a bucolic, pastoral nation still troubled by raids from the giants who dwelled in the Mountains of the Sun to the north. The ancestor-states of Kirsi and Sokone and lost Umthalu fought over the central regions while the ruling Mais of Nyala struggled against foes almost twice as tall as their own warriors.

This changed some five hundred years ago, when the great Mai Mansay reorganized Nyala's makeshift armies into ruthlessly disciplined legions. The giant raiders preferred to fight as individuals, and despite their vastly superior artistry in steelworking and artifice their disorganized bands were driven back by Nyala's serried ranks. The giant-king Musa was struck with admiration for the courage of the Nyalans, and offered trade and teaching in place of the former war. Famed for his prudence as much as his courage, Mansay agreed to the bargain.

For the next hundred years the Nyalans prospered greatly under the tutelage of the giants. They learned the secrets to fashioning silk and exquisite sculptures, and they were taught subtleties in metalworking and the shaping of stone. Their cities grew splendid under their chisels, and the artistry and sophistication of the giants was blended with the vigor and organized discipline of the humans. Nyala expanded, driving lesser tribes south into the swampy lands along the Iteru River's banks. It was the start of a golden age.

Four hundred years ago, the giants withdrew into the mountains. The records are unclear as to what led them to break the pact, but implications linger that it was something the humans did—or rather, something the humans could not do. The raids did not resume, but even to this day no human who travels too far into the Mountains of the Sun can ever expect to return. The giants will not treat with those who seek them out, and their mountaintop citadels and palaces of dark stone are places of death for men.

While they had lost their old allies, Nyala had gained much in a century of vigorous learning. Even some of their people were marked with giantish blood, most of them the sons and daughters of concubines taken by giant craftsages, the children left behind when the great ones retreated to the north. These “halfbreed” men and women looked much like other humans, but many sported strange, giantish hair coloring or patterns of jewel-bright tattoos. These marks show up even now in Nyala's citizenry, with the occasional long-distant descendant birthed with hair of yellow, white or red and brightly-colored body patterns that admit of no obvi-

ous meaning. Such children are expected to be remarkable in some way, and many die in attempting to live up to these expectations.

The retreat of the giants marked the start of the Nyalan Empire. The legions of Nyala marched east into the dry hills of the Kirsi and subdued their quarreling warlords with iron and clever words. To the south they struck a bargain with Sokone's merchant-lords for fealty in exchange for help against Umthalu, and Umthalu itself was shattered so completely that not a single clan in the Three Lands still claims descent from that nation. Their capital of Chakari was made the new provincial capital of Sokone, and the westerners flooded in to fill the empty streets and shops. The tunnels below they did not enter, both for stories of bitter Umthali survivors and for tales of older things in the dark.

Only in the south was Nyala's will denied. The Lokossans saw Nyala's intent, and quickly conducted great raids into Sokone to seize men and women for sacrifice at the Traditions. The enormous amounts of bloodshed fueled their ngangas with the power to simultaneously drive back the Night Men in the south and confound the Nyalan legions who marched from the north. The jungle trapped and devoured the interlopers, every root and beast making war upon them as they passed, until the few wretched survivors were taken as prisoners for sacrifice. The Lokossan front became a graveyard for failed Nyalan nobles, a place of dispatch for those whom the Emperor wished to see dead without the noise of a nobleman's trial.

In the south-central savannahs, the Nyalans laid claim to the great grass seas. The natives there cared nothing for the empty words of the governor, and moved too quickly for the armored legions to ever catch them. Few Nyalans cared to make a life in that hard land. It became a province in name only, a paper domain used only to decorate the titles of the great.

The empire is blamed for setting off the Long War with their invasion of the eastern kingdom of Deshur. The Black Land's pharaoh was not a good man but he had done little to earn Nyala's wrath. Still, Emperor Shangmay would not be content until he ruled the whole of the Three Lands, and his legions pushed the Deshrites up the banks of the Iteru into the foothills of the Weeping Mountains. They made their stand near their stony throne-city of Desheret, and the pharaoh went down into the forbidden temples in the mountains' roots to make bargains with the servants of the Gods Below.

The secrets he brought back transformed him and his people. The new-fashioned Eternals drove the Nyalans back past the borders of the black sand desert and into the old Nyalan heartland. Chakari was overrun and made the terrible Silent City it still is today, and the provinces of Sokone and Kirsi splintered off in outrage at the ineffectuality of their imperial overlords. Had the Eternal not been so absorbed in “pacifying” the land they had conquered, Nyala would have been crushed in a few years' time. As it was, there was barely enough of a respite for the Nyalans to regroup and dig in against the Eternal incursions.

The Long War that followed was the death of Nyalas's empire. Successive emperors fought the Eternal with only one hand, the other grasping for their wayward provinces. Noble families raged more at the rebels than at the unholy creatures at their borders, each clan demanding that their ancestral domains be reclaimed by the empire. The emperor could not get them to cooperate against the Eternal without sending troops against the "traitors", and so his efforts were inevitably too weak to accomplish either. Every year the Eternals advanced a little further, and Sokone and Kirsu became a little less concerned with the wishes of Nyalas's ruler.

In the end, the stalemate was broken by the Emperor Kaday. Trusting in his own coterie of defenders, he negotiated directly with the lords of Kirsu and Sokone, offering to abandon Nyalas's claims upon their lands if only they would work together to drive back the Eternal. To the outrage of the noble clans, the rebels agreed. The Nyalan legions were mustered alongside the Kirsu lancers and Sokone's vast wealth in men and material. Even Lokossa and the Meru contributed to the effort. Together, they drove the Eternal out of the west and back into the black sands of the east, and the Eternal King was dealt a mortal wound. Emperor Kaday died in the fighting, and today many still whisper that it was the work of noble knives rather than Deshrite steel.

Since the Long War ended forty years ago, Nyalas has been an exhausted land. The nobles squabble bitterly over the scraps that remain of empire, and Kaday's son Issay rules little more than the capital. He lacks even the name of emperor, for his father agreed to abandon it in favor of the old Nyalan title of Mai. He is an old man now, and a tired one, and the elaborate court about him orbits his throne with little interest in his wishes. He is but another piece of furniture in the palace, and true power is held by whichever clan has managed to seize the viziership most recently. The common people love him in memory of his father, but the nobles let him live only because they fear some other clan would fill an empty throne.

NYALAN SOCIETY

Nyalans are acutely aware of status and ranking within their communities. Perhaps one in every fifty clans is noble, though twice as many are "hollow clans" that once numbered among the nobility until they lost their lands and holdings. Nobles are wealthy, culturally sophisticated, and utterly ruthless about maintaining their place. Failure to keep the necessary trappings of nobility, the guards and garments and ritual ceremonies, will inevitably result in their rejection by their peers. In the days of the emperor only an imperial edict could strip a clan of its rank, but in these days all that is required is that enough of their peers agree to bar them from the Mai's court. Without some representation there, they cannot be counted nobles.

Nobles are subject only to the judgment of their peers, in trials conducted at the Mai's court. Only the most egregious crimes can force a noble to face such a trial, and little short of unprovoked public murder might compel them to give justice to a commoner. Sins against fellow nobles are punished much more harshly, though with a judicious consideration as to any disparities in power or rank between those involved.

Beneath the nobles are the sea of common Nyalans. They work the rich black soil of Nyalas's rolling hills and strive to avoid the attention of nobles and their incessant taxes and exactions. A beautiful or talented young woman might hope to be wed by a lesser noble, but a man can only seek distinction in war or artistry. Nobility might fill all the officer's ranks in Nyalas's legions, but most of them prefer to have an "adjunct" who is actually a professional soldier do the actual fighting. Such positions can be richly remunerative, though failure can be fatal on and off the battlefield.

Artistry is the other path for commoner's success in Nyalas. They have always loved beauty and grace in all its forms, and an artist who can paint beautiful images, sing moving songs, or craft exquisite objects will earn the patronage of the greatest clans. In the rarified court of the Mai artistic extravagance and elegant good taste mark the infinitesimal distinctions that noble clans will murder to maintain. Artists who fail to choose their patrons wisely sometimes are permanently relieved of the burden of creation.

APPEARANCE AND CLOTHING

Nyalans are almost as tall as Meruans, slim-featured and straight-haired, with dark mahogany skin. The jewel-toned eyes of giants show up now and then, most often in noble clans, and the black hair of most Nyalans is sometimes traded for the white or red or yellow of their titanic ancestors. Patterns like tattoos in bright colors have also been known to appear on the heirs to the old blood. Those with such markings are expected to excel in some distinct fashion, and a merely ordinary life is reproached.

Clothing for Nyalan laborers consists of tunics and trousers, often patterned in colorful dyes by the housewives who weave them. Plain and unadorned cloth is thought to be only half-finished, and worn only during mourning. Those with wealth or leisure prefer flowing robes of brocaded or patterned cloth, several gauze-light layers worn together to let the colors flash at their wide sleeves and hems. Nobles are expected to wear costly Nyalan silks.

NYALAN ADVENTURERS

Most Nyalan adventurers are driven to it by necessity, if from a noble clan, or ambition, if from the common class. The nobility are expected to draw their wealth from tribute and taxes rather than manual labor, and many "excess" scions are sent to find their fortune in far lands, where they won't tax the coffers of their family. Commoners in search of upward advancement sometimes take up an adventurer's life in hope for more rapid results than in the simple pursuit of a noble's patronage.

Nyalan griots are known for their deep scholarly learning, and often journey far in search of some relic of Nyalan empire to gloriously commemorate. Marabouts disquiet the self-satisfied Spirit Way temples, and those that fail to cooperate with the noble high priest of a given temple are often "encouraged" to go elsewhere. Ngangas leave Nyalans as uneasy as they do most people, but there are always teachers in the bush and stern occult scholars in the great cities. Warriors are produced regularly by the Nyalan legions, but common thieves, adventuring scholars, hard-pressed peasants and bored nobles can all show the particular idahuns that mark that role.

SOKONE

The Sokone are the people of the river and the trade that it brings. They are the dwellers in the rich valleys and boggy lowlands of the vast Iteru river that splits the Three Lands between north and south. Since the days of the Old Kings they have made their living on what they can barter along its slow-flowing shores. No finer traders or explorers are to be found north or south, and no richer nation has risen since the days of ancient Deshur and the lost empire of Nyala.

The Sokone are a people forged by necessity. Those tribes driven south by the expanding Nyalan Empire were met by other refugees in flight from the witch-kings of Lokossa. They were the common prey of Lokossan slavers and were treated like rabble to be dispersed by Nyalan steel, but their shared sufferings wove these disparate tribes together in bonds of mutual aid and resistance. Petty kings and minor lords rose among them, but all their quarrels were put aside when time came to chastise slaver raids or repulse a Nyalan expedition.

Much of the land flanking the Iteru is low and swampy, and the soil is not always fit for rice and other crops. Here and there would be patches of rich cropland, but those tribes that took it were forced to constantly be on guard against a hungrier neighbor's warriors. Lesser clans could not hope to seize these bottomlands by force, so they turned to trade instead, fashioning useful implements from the swamp's bounty and smelting ingots of bog-iron for their blacksmiths. Pressed constantly by outsiders, the Sokone soon ceased wasting their warriors' blood on each other and saved it for repulsing their enemies. Quarrels would be settled by negotiations and bargains instead.

The lords of the Sokone were chosen from among those who made the best bargains for their people, and in time their old martial function was lost beneath the importance of their business acumen. Rule was not a matter of blood, as in Nyala, or steel, as in Kirsi, or magical might, as in Lokossa- rule was a matter of wealth, and he who got the most bounty for his people was most worthy to rule them.

Yet there was no peace in Sokone. To the east, the ancient city-state of Umthalu was angered by the encroachment of Sokone traders as they expanded further upriver. The men of Umthalu were said to be strange, with the blood of serpents in their veins, and for ages beyond mind they had dwelled in their city of Chakari at the border between the Green and Yellow lands. They were a notorious race of wizards and sorcerers, and their secret lore had passed into many hands over the years, but they treated little with the outside world. They did not like the way that the men of Sokone drew closer every year.

They struck back with witchcraft and armies of yellow-eyed warriors. The Sokone were brave and blooded by their struggles with their neighbors, but the Umthalu had too much sorcery at their command. The merchant-princes feared that their people would be destroyed by the snake-men's anger, and struck a great bargain with the emperor of Nyala. In exchange for tribute from the river lands, Nyala would protect Sokone from its enemies.

The legions of Nyala marched to the aid of Sokone, and between the two forces Chakari was overthrown and the Umthalu broken forever. So great was the slaughter that no clan alive today claims descent from the serpent-men of Chakari, though sometimes men whisper of strangers with slitted eyes or scaly tessellations upon hidden flesh. Chakari became the new capital of Sokone once it had been cleared of its former inhabitants and the glyphs and strange signs effaced from its walls. The smooth surfaces and bright-colored plasters used to hide the old stone are still a mark of Sokone buildings today.

SOKONE SOCIETY

The people of the river order their lives around commerce and production. Every family has its enterprise, from simple rice farmers and nomadic day laborers to the exalted clan of a merchant-lord who controls half a city's business. Leadership within a family is based on present and past production- a grown man may be counted the leader of his family, but his elderly father is honored for what he built in years past. The work of women in maintaining a household and raising children is respected, but it is not counted sufficient to merit leadership. Only those women who work outside the home or produce notable craftwork may claim a more active say in the affairs of the family.

Production that is simply hoarded is likewise worthless. A man who does not employ his profits wisely to build his enterprise and provide abundantly for his family is considered to be worse than a mere useless mouth, for he neglects his duty to those who trust in his leadership. Many families come to ruin when their patriarch spends too greatly on luxuries and flamboyant display rather than the less practical necessities of their work. A patriarch is expected to provide for his family members, and in turn they are expected to work in the family enterprise and turn their own skills to the good of their kindred. Those who do well might come in time to supplant the former patriarch, as family members cease to ask or accept aid from the former leader and instead rely upon the generosity of the new.

As a consequence, gift-giving in Sokone is a delicate matter, as accepting a gift implies a choice of obedience and acquiescence to the gift-giver. The most scrupulously polite "discard" their excess where the recipient may be expected to gather it, while the less considerate outright bully others into accepting their "generous largesse" and the implicit social status that follows. A Sokone man will sell you river sand for silver if he can strike such a bargain, but he will not take charity unless in desperate straits.

In most nations, clan relations are almost as important as families, but in Sokone, these bonds are weak. Families are defined by close blood relations and those servants who take the patriarch's largesse. Outside this charmed circle there may be kindred, but their relations are much more distant and less supportive. Some are outright competitors in the same line of business.

The merchant-princes of Sokone rule by the force of their enterprises. So many family heads draw their sustenance from work performed for the prince's farms and businesses that the prince



may command the cooperation of hundreds or even thousands of families. A dissatisfied family may abandon the prince's service to seek work with a different lord, but this is not always practical—and in the case of those princes who weave their servants about with unpayable debts, it may not even be possible. Some men and women are lordless, working trades that have nothing to do with the merchant-princes, but they often have difficulty conducting their business without a lord's cooperation. Slavery was forbidden in Sokone long ago, but debt servitude can often shade into a relationship little different. Arbiters are available to negotiate disputes between families in Sokone, but those who find themselves the subject of a merchant-prince's interest have little recourse.

The relentless churn of business and commerce in Sokone leaves paupers as well as princes. While Sokone is the richest of the Five Kingdoms, much of this wealth remains in the hands of the merchant-princes and their immediate families. The thieves of Sokone are notorious for their daring, particularly since such theft is often punished with the loss of a hand— and when those run out, the head goes next. These fearless men and women will scale the smooth walls of a prince's palace or empty the jungle warehouse of a careless merchant with equal elan. Many of them are the beggared remnants of families that failed to show sufficient deference.

APPEARANCE AND CLOTHING

As the Sokone are a cosmopolitan people, they vary more widely in appearance than any of the other Five Kingdoms. Beggared Nyalan nobles, Meru outcasts, escaped Lokossan slaves, and the small tribes of half a hundred vanished lands have all mingled here, and the exotic beauty of Sokone women is praised by the griots of distant kings.

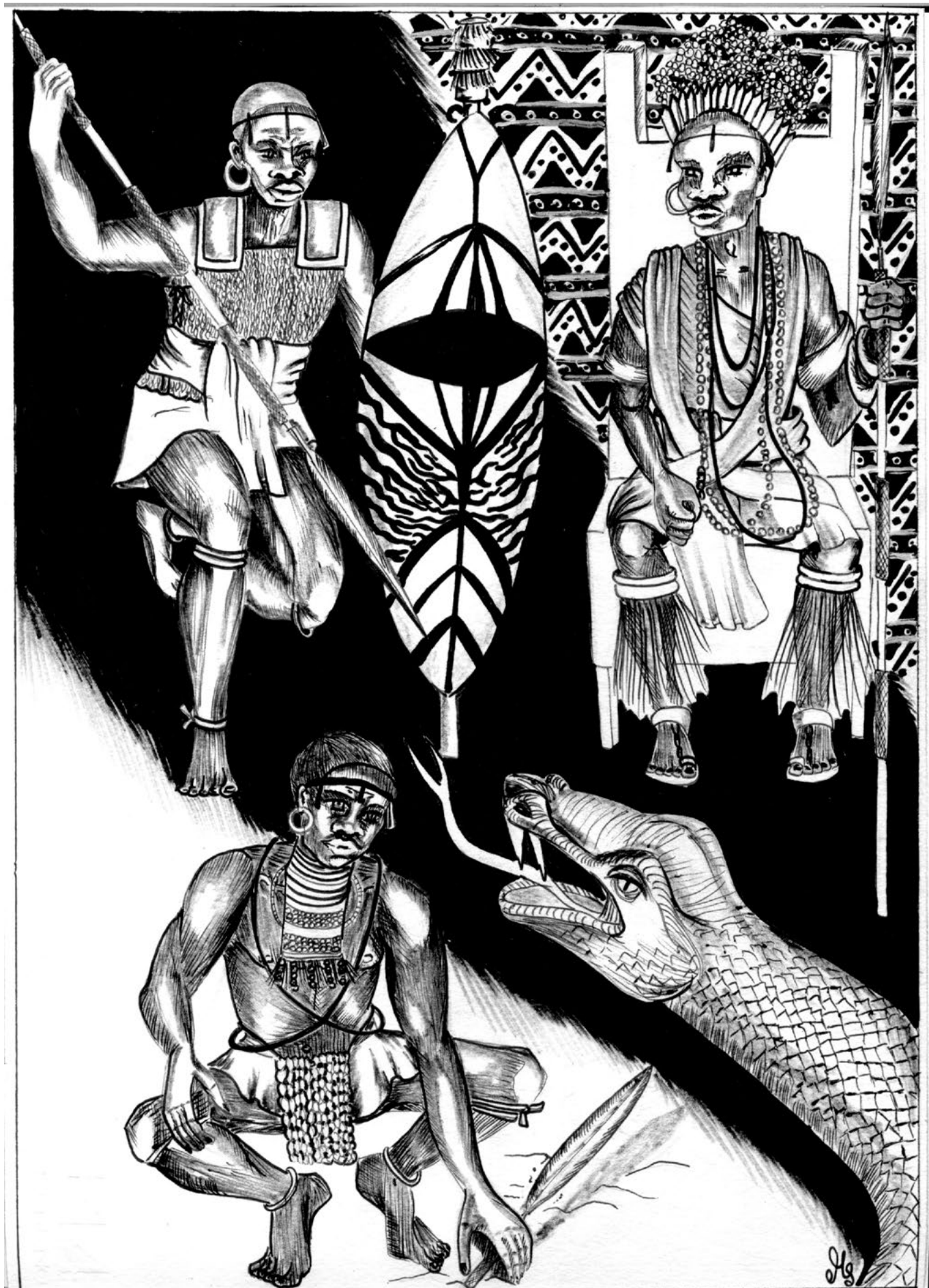
The Sokone wear the clothing of many lands, mixing the styles in an eclectic and fashionable melange of robes, loincloths, tunics, trousers, wraps, and skirts. Bright colors and obvious wealth are favored by those of great standing, while working merchants prefer sober, hard-wearing cloth and leathers, saying of it that “a trader should never look wealthier than his customers”.

SOKONE ADVENTURERS

For a Sokone youth who has no interest in the clan business or no aptitude for a mercantile existence, life as an adventurer is a compelling choice. The prospect of quick riches and easy glory lure many in to a still easier death. Misfits and malcontents are sometimes quietly encouraged to such careers by the family patriarch, the better to spare the family one more burden on its wealth. A few of them go on their own initiative, dreaming of founding their own merchant-clan with the plunder they might seize from the clutches of fearsome foes.

Marabouts may be found both among the Spirit Way and Sun Faith, for both religions have many adherents in Sokone. Ngangas are as likely to be scholars of strange foreign lore as they are to be bush sorcerers, and the griots of Sokone are notorious for their willingness to go where sensible men would fear to tread.

Sokone does not have the famous martial tradition of Kirsi or Lokossa, but its warriors are well-equipped with Sokone wealth and encouraged to find more in the hands of their people's enemies. Some even live to enjoy the fruits of this alternate mode of commerce.



RUNNING A CAMPAIGN

Spears of the Dawn is intended to provide a setting for sandbox adventuring. In place of pre-planned storylines and specific plot arcs, the game is meant to help achieve a more freeform experience of the game world. PCs are expected to craft their own stories from the deeds they do and the tasks they leave undone. It may be that they will accomplish glorious feats and live on in legend, or they might find a quick and brutal end on a bandit horseman's lance. Their fates rest on the choices they make.

Understanding this style of play is important for running a successful *Spears of the Dawn* game. If the GM or players aren't both aware of the assumptions of this playstyle and the particular responsibilities they have for producing good fun, it can crash a campaign in a hurry.

UNDERSTANDING THE SANDBOX

Sandbox play can be jarring to GMs and players. Many games of more recent vintage have relied heavily on the idea of tightly-plotted story arcs that progress through multiple sessions. PCs naturally play an important role in events and have more or less latitude to alter the outcome, but it's tacitly assumed that they're going to play through the entire story arc in the sequence intended by the GM. The social contract of the group is such that they won't simply turn around and head in the opposite direction, even if that might seem like the most rational response for the party. In exchange for this social agreement they have a chance to play out a sequence of events that are reasonably certain to touch on elements that both the GM and players find fun and engaging.

Sandbox gaming breaks that contract. There may be individual sessions that revolve around a specific series of events or a particular location, but the idea of a "storyline" never extends beyond the immediate session. If the GM has prepared a particular chunk of content for the session's gaming, the players will likely run with it out of consideration for the effort, but at the end of the night's gaming they have every right to say "Okay, we're pretty sure the vizier wants us dead and we think the Mai's third wife is just setting us up as patsies for her succession scheme. We collect our belongings, sneak out the Dawn Gate, and make for the Kirsi border. Remember that tomb-house we heard rumors about a few weeks ago? We're going to check that out instead. Maybe we can find something valuable enough to buy us some friends."

Sandbox gaming makes very few promises to anyone. It doesn't promise that a given PC is going to survive their next fight. It doesn't promise that a particular sequence of events is going to be important to the party. It doesn't promise that a particular event will ever come to pass, or that the party will be in the right place to do something about it if it does. All that sandbox gaming promises is that the PCs will be allowed to attempt whatever they please and get a logical and coherent response from the world.

Sandboxes continue to operate even when the PCs aren't there to see it. If the PCs turn around and flee the intrigue at the Mai's court, it's going to continue without them. Maybe the third wife's plan falls through without the PCs to help her, and she ends up

being executed as the vizier uncovers her plot. Maybe she survives, but now nurses a seething hatred for the "treacherous mercenaries" who failed her. A GM can't keep an entire world in motion between sessions, but he can track the events that are most important to the PCs and the world and keep them moving behind the scenes. This chapter includes a domain system to help a GM keep events rolling without a major investment of time and effort.

Ultimately, the outcome of a sandbox campaign is up to the players. It will be about the things that are important to their PCs, and their goals and motivations will shape the events that follow. If they act with prudence, daring, and a keen awareness that no plot device is going to save them from their own mistakes, then they might just survive to see the glorious success they desire.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PLAYERS

Before rolling up characters for a *Spears of the Dawn* campaign, the GM needs to make sure that the players understand their responsibilities to the game. The campaign will die quickly if they don't understand what they need to bring to the table, and it's up to the GM to make certain that they know what's expected of them.

Most importantly, the players need to understand that their PCs *must* have goals. The entire game is predicated on the assumption that the PCs want to accomplish something and will take action toward achieving their ends. A PC who simply waits for something to happen or who expects to be coaxed into action is a very bad PC for this type of game. Even if their goal is no more elaborate than "achieve great wealth and glory", they need to have a purpose that will motivate them even when no other purpose is obviously at hand. They don't even need to have a single consistent goal; an ambition that changes every session is perfectly fine so long as it gives them something to pursue for the next evening's play.

The players need to understand that their PCs lack any form of plot armor. While a group can always negotiate a different set of assumptions, the default presumption of the game is that anyone can die or fail at any time. Just because a PC has an intricate backstory involving multiple unresolved threads, it doesn't mean that he can't still die from an unlucky spear through the gut. A particular outcome for a character might be aesthetically perfect and artistically balanced, but if she does something that logically precludes that happy ending then she's about to become part of a sad, sad story. Stories and past events are starting points that have no more promise of a satisfying ending than they would in real life. If the PC wants such an ending, they're going to need to make it the hard way and dodge the inevitable obstacles that will rise in their path.

Finally, the players need to understand that the game world really is open. The best time to tell the GM that they're veering in a different direction is at the end of an evening's play, but if they want to go to a particular place or do a particular thing, they can do it. They're not obliged to play along with any storyline or stick around any place that doesn't appeal to them. There are no plot-critical NPCs, no events that must happen, and no responsibility

to a particular plot arc. They need to drive the campaign, but they have the freedom to take it in any direction they please. Some directions may be more lethal than others, of course, but neither the table's social contract nor the rules of the game oblige them to ignore any possibilities.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE GM

As the GM, it's your responsibility to give the PCs opportunities to pursue their goals. A certain amount of initiative is expected from them, of course, but they need some clearly-marked opportunities for chasing their ambitions. Especially in a campaign setting that involves tropes and elements that may not be entirely familiar to them, it's necessary that you be very clear about signaling these opportunities. Inventive players or ones comfortable in the setting will soon come up with their own angles of attack, but you need to give them something to work with until they're ready to strike out in their own directions.

The GM also needs to provide consistent, logical responses to party actions. If the PCs clean out a tomb-house, the local villagers are going to be grateful to them, and will respond positively to requests for favors or aid. If the PCs make an enemy out of a local lord, they're going to have to deal with his inevitable expressions of displeasure. In some cases the PCs will move on before the consequences of their actions have the chance to affect them, but those consequences will happen whether or not they're there to witness them. PC actions are pointless if they don't get a logical and consistent reaction from the world.

As a final point, the GM needs to manage the necessary adventure content for the campaign. If you know that the party intends to infiltrate the Kirsi border fort and assassinate its bandit chieftain ruler, then you need to sketch up a plan of the fort and decide on its inhabitants. If you've been told what the party plans to attempt for their next play session, you need to have the relevant content ready in hand. In most cases, you'll only have the time between one session and the next in which to come up with this material. Fortunately, in most cases that's all the time you'll need, as you're fine so long as you have enough material to occupy the next gaming session. Additional elaborations are completely unnecessary, unless you find enjoyment in making them up.

The golden rule of sandbox content creation is simple- *if you don't need it for the next session, or you're not having fun creating it, then don't bother with it.* You don't need to do it. A game that leaves you drained and exhausted is a game that's certain to fail. Running a sandbox is meant to be fun for the GM too, and you shouldn't force yourself to do preparation work that isn't satisfying or entertaining for you.

Running a sandbox campaign demands a lot from a GM, but it offers rewards that most other play styles have a hard time providing. A sandbox GM is gifted with surprise. You'll never be entirely sure where the PCs are going to end up, or what events are going to unfold as a result of their actions. You're under no obligation to steer them in any direction and you don't need to worry about maintaining the integrity of any particular storyline. You get to sit back, eat your popcorn, and just watch the party deal with the world that you've made for them.

SETTING UP YOUR CAMPAIGN

Before you begin your campaign, there are a few things you ought to plan out. You can start a *Spears of the Dawn* campaign with nothing more than a table full of players and a tomb-house to delve, but there are some steps you can take at the beginning of the campaign that will make your future play a great deal easier for you to manage.

First, decide whether or not you want to use the domain rules provided later in this chapter. They allow you to assign particular troubles and qualities to each of the Five Kingdoms and then handle the conflicts and alliances between them through a simple resolution system. These troubles and struggles make for convenient plot seeds for your adventures and give you a good idea as to what kind of problems a particular kingdom might be facing- and what problems a group of PCs might be asked to solve. Still, if you prefer to just autocratically decide how the flow of politics progresses then you can skip this step.

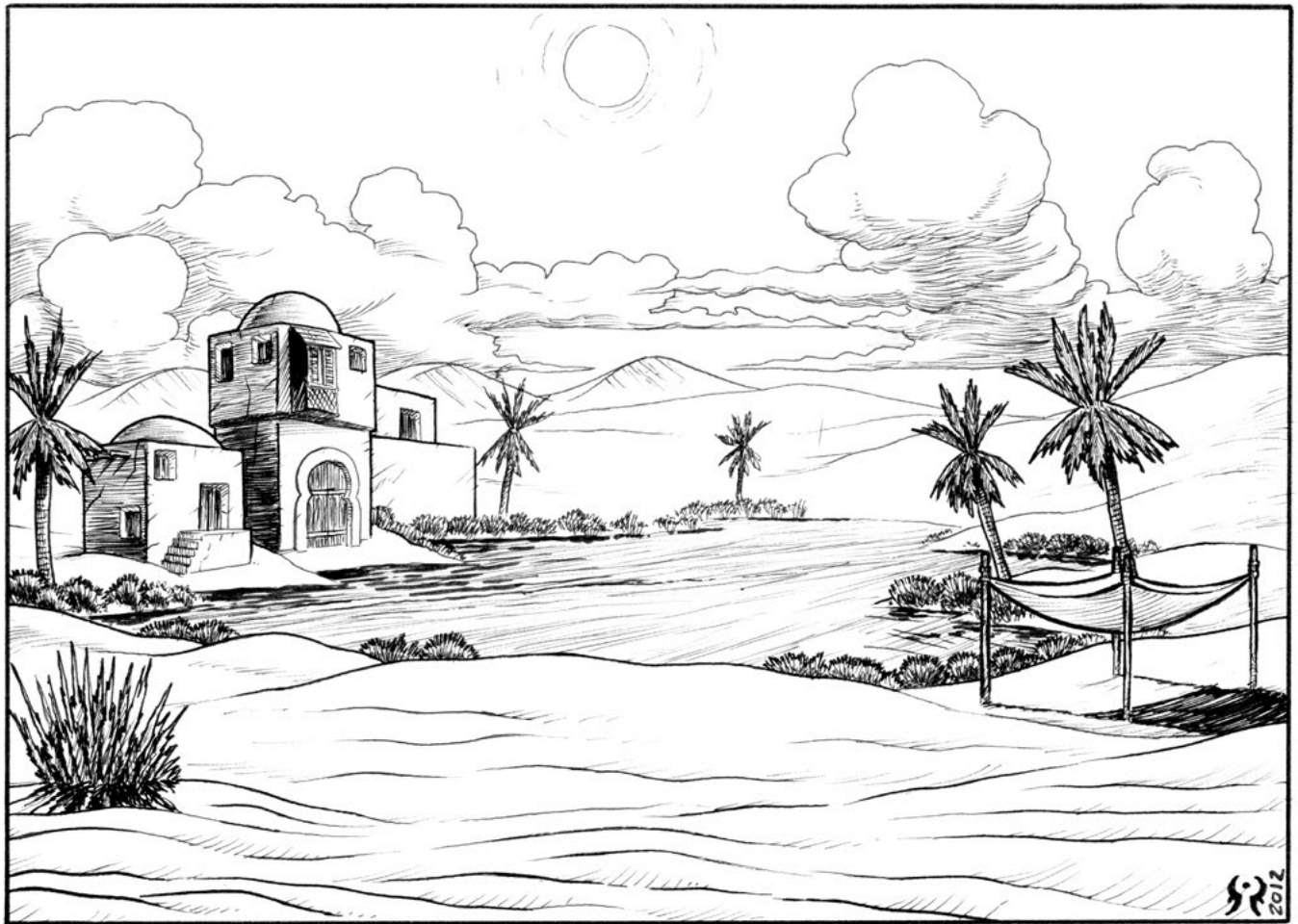
Next, establish a starting point for the campaign. A rural market town is usually a good choice for a starting point, as it's likely to provide most of the services needed by a group of adventurers without being so large as to leave them feeling irrelevant. Smaller towns are usually closer to the borders of settled civilization as well, and are more likely to have nearby tomb-houses, bandit strongholds, cult shrines, or other traditional adventuring spots. Alternately, you might choose to set things in one of the great cities of the Three Lands, with the intention of fleshing out a suitable site for urban adventures and high political intrigue if you know your players are going to be interested in that sort of thing. The Resources chapter in the back of the book provides a number of utilities useful in this sort of work.

Finally, build a starting adventure for the group. Make the hook something obvious and compelling- you might even decide to simply drop the PCs in *media res* and let them sort out the situation as best they can. While almost every other adventure they go on should be the result of their conscious choice, this first session needs something to help them gel as a group and gain familiarity with the setting, so they can identify useful angles for approaching their own personal goals. A short, vigorous adventure during the first session lets them get their feet under them and get acquainted with the setting. When designing this adventure, make sure that the resolution doesn't drag out over multiple sessions. If they can't prudently walk away from it after the end of the first session, the adventure is probably too "sticky" and confining.

RUNNING YOUR CAMPAIGN

Once you have your campaign set up, you can start your first session. It's common for character generation to take place during the first session, and if time allows it can be useful to have each player roll up two PCs. Low-level characters are extremely fragile, and if one of these aspiring heroes should take a runku to the skull it can save time if a replacement is ready to be quickly inserted into events.

For the very first session, you can present the adventure hook to the group with the assumption that they'll take it. While they play, watch to see what elements of the setting or situation are most



interesting to them, and be ready to provide answers to any questions that crop up. As a general rule, you should never consult this book for setting information during play. Just decide on an answer and write it down in your notes to keep it consistent. Later, you can check back here and see if the answer was canonical, but even if it wasn't, you shouldn't feel obliged to change it unless you think it's really worth it. This is *your* game world, and if the book doesn't match what you've decreed then that's just too bad for the book.

Keep the quick reference sheets close to hand while playing. With them available, you shouldn't need to open up the this book for anything but spell descriptions, and you are well within your rights to ask for the ngangas, marabouts and griots to note down the details of their magical abilities when they take them.

At the end of the session, immediately write down a capsule summary of events. Include the date, any major NPCs involved, any friends or enemies made, and your appraisal of the most likely immediate consequences from events. This may seem like overkill, but six weeks from now you're not going to remember these details nearly so well.

Before adjourning, ask the players what it is they mean to attempt during the next session. Go over the more direct actions they could take to advance their goals to make sure they recognize the hooks available to them. Once they decide on their general plans, you know what you need to prepare for the next session. If you know their plans will turn out to be impractical or aren't likely to fill a full session, you can cook up some alternative content that

appeals to their current goals, or else an adventure that invokes some old consequence come back to haunt them. The notes you've kept from prior sessions will pay off here, as you can go back and pluck out some situations from the brief writeups you've kept of the session.

Between sessions, create the content you know you're going to need for the next session. Be thorough, but don't feel the obligation to flesh out every fussy detail. You're going to be there, after all, and the prep only needs to be thorough enough to support your needs. If you've got leftover creative energy after doing that, you can spend it building tomb-houses, haunted villages, quarrelling noble households, or other sorts of content you can easily drop in to provide entertainment when you need fast material. Nothing you make needs to be wasted. Just change the names, put on a different skin, and you can plant your premade material anywhere you need it to be.

While working on this content, be wary of the pitfalls of sandbox world creation. Too many GMs feel the need to detail *everything* about their campaign world, including those parts that are of no interest to them. They map out economic relations, rain patterns, create exhaustive lists of nobles and farming hamlets, and otherwise burn themselves out in fashioning material that isn't immediately necessary but seems like it "should be made" by someone. Shun this instinct. Make what you need for the next session, and then make what you find fun to create. Everything else can go hang, whether or not it's "logically necessary" to delineate it.

COMMON CHALLENGES

Some issues crop up regularly in a game like *Spears of the Dawn*, and it's useful to keep an eye out for them before they impact your play. Be watchful for these pitfalls and you can save yourself a lot of aggravation at the table.

COMBAT

Combat in *Spears of the Dawn* is deadly, especially at low levels. One good thrust of a spear can mortally wound just about any first-level character, and if there's no talented healer able to drop everything and stop the bleeding that luckless hero is going to perish. Both you and the players need to realize that every low-level combat runs an excellent chance of killing a PC.

With that in mind, don't set up situations that mandate combat. If you write events or adventures that force the PCs to fight, some of them are going to get killed. Particularly at low levels, always give them a chance to back out or get away from a conflict. If they get into a fight, it should be because they've chosen to fight, or because they've chosen a course of action that could clearly lead to combat. Even in tomb-houses and other lairs of evil, the PCs should be able to calibrate their exposure to danger, pulling out when things get too hairy or deducing ways to get at loot without fighting its guardians. For adventurers, defeating a terrible foe to seize its treasure isn't nearly as appealing as skipping the "fighting" part entirely and going straight to the treasure theft. Warriors are there to deal with the situation when the optimal plan falls through.

Remember the reaction and morale rules. Not every band of violent humans is going to be instantly hostile to the PCs, and a smooth tongue and a griot's skills can make friends out of unlikely people. Give the PCs a chance to parley in anything short of an obvious ambush or a clear reason for killing. In the same vein, remember the limits of enemy morale. Most assailants will not keep fighting once the battle starts to obviously go against them, and even a single dead friend can send a less disciplined group fleeing. Intelligent foes will flee rather than face likely doom, and this flight can give a party time to stabilize mortally-wounded friends that might otherwise perish.

Finally, don't feel obligated to "gate" combats to the PCs' level or capabilities. If you've established the Yellow House of Amon Nejet as the lair of a fearsome Eternal sorcerer and his nine-and-ninety unliving amazon brides, it's not your job to make them a suitable challenge for a group of novice Spears. Let reasonably attentive PCs recognize a potentially lethal set of opponents before they commit themselves, and let the sensible parties flee impending destruction. If they know the odds and insist on trying anyway, well, let the dice fall where they may.

DEATH

Heroes tend to die a lot in *Spears of the Dawn*, particularly at lower levels, before they've had time to acquire the magic and expertise necessary to survive extended peril. You should make sure that you and the players are on the same page about this before the campaign starts. Many of them may be accustomed to systems

that allow novice characters more resilience or give them "luck points" to avert otherwise-certain death. They may need to have some things spelled out to really understand the dangers involved in their PC's new career.

If your group doesn't care for this fragility, you are well within your rights to change it. Maybe dead characters are simply "gravely wounded", and unable to do anything until they've had time or magic to heal them. Perhaps they might have a limited reserve of luck points to save them, or an additional well of 10 hit points at first level, or any other mitigating factor you and your group prefer to introduce. The risk of sudden, swift death adds a great deal of spice to adventuring, but it's a spice not all groups prefer to sample.

If a character does snuff it in the course of an adventure, get their replacement in as quickly as possible. Perhaps they're a captive in the place, or the survivor of a decimated party, or a wanderer who happens to be in the right place at the right time. Bend the situation as necessary to insert them. It's enough of a setback to lose a PC, and there's no call to prolong the situation by forcing them to sit out of the game as well.

Most GMs will prefer to have replacement PCs come in at the same level as the dead character in order to keep things simple. Players should be encouraged to keep "backup PCs" of appropriate levels to hand, but if they suddenly need to make a higher-level PC they can just roll up a fresh set of stats and use one of the sample NPCs out of the back of the book. After the game they can adjust things to better suit their concept and add whatever elements you find reasonable.

Even if they come in as a brand-new first level character, however, the way that experience scales for advanced PCs means that they'll rapidly catch up with their peers. A single share of experience after a high-level adventure can rocket a novice to a very respectable level.

If the group has the resources or friends necessary to obtain the resurrection of their dead comrade, the replacement PC can be shaded back into the background once more until they are needed again. Such a stand-in will certainly expect to receive their fair share of the proceeds of any adventure, however, and can hardly be expected to hand over their lawful plunder to the newly-resurrected hero.

INVESTIGATION

It's a staple of adventuring; the PCs need to learn a fact or discover an object if they mean to accomplish their ends. Maybe it's a hidden lever in a tomb-house, or a village chief's guilt, or a marabout's secret affiliation with an Eternal cult. Investigations can be painful to run if the players aren't sure how to progress or if you aren't certain how to determine their success or failure.

For physical objects, it's relatively simple. If a PC specifically looks in the place where the object is located, they'll find it. If the key is hidden in the thatching and a player notes that his character

is checking the hut's thatch, then he's going to find the key. You might also credit it if the PC is looking somewhere reasonably close, like a statement that they're searching the ceiling. If they don't provide the requisite specifics, a Wisdom/Perception check can determine whether or not the characters stumble across the object in their search.

For more abstract investigations, don't leave the players fumbling. If they want to find something out and they haven't an immediate clue as to who to ask about it, direct them to a likely source who would be reasonably considered by their characters. Once they have a lead, the challenge shifts to providing the necessary payment, favor, or pressure required to get the source to cough up the information desired. Just as we abstract the knowledge necessary to duel with swords, we also need to abstract the knowledge necessary to root out street contacts, find palace informers, and grill obscure griots. Even if the players don't know how to do these things, characters with the right skills or backgrounds certainly do. Just as you wouldn't make a player explain how he's parrying an Eternal's axe, it's not necessarily fair to make him explain how he's locating a pliant tesh-drunkard who might know about a bandit fence.

This isn't to say that player choices should have no effect on an investigation, or that they should be automatically handed the results they seek. A character's choice of approach can easily foreclose their best sources of information, forcing them to seek progressively worse providers of the information they need, ones who will charge more or be less accessible. The right phrasing or the correct favors can make their path much smoother, and a source presented with a mutual interest can be easily persuaded to cooperate. And in the end, if the characters really do burn all their leads or commit some unforgivable blunder, it's perfectly legitimate to simply inform them that they've botched things beyond recovery and run the consequences from there.

The key to investigations is to keep the players from confronting a dead end. There should always be *some* perceptible way forward, however painful or expensive. Players deprived of any logical means of advance will rapidly start to seek illogical means, and frustration can provoke their characters into doing foolish, counterproductive things just in the hope of shaking loose some result they can use. In a sandbox game they can always throw up their hands and try something else, but if they've bungled their current schemes so badly as to require their abandonment you should let them know it straight rather than force them to batter a wall for half a session.

Loot

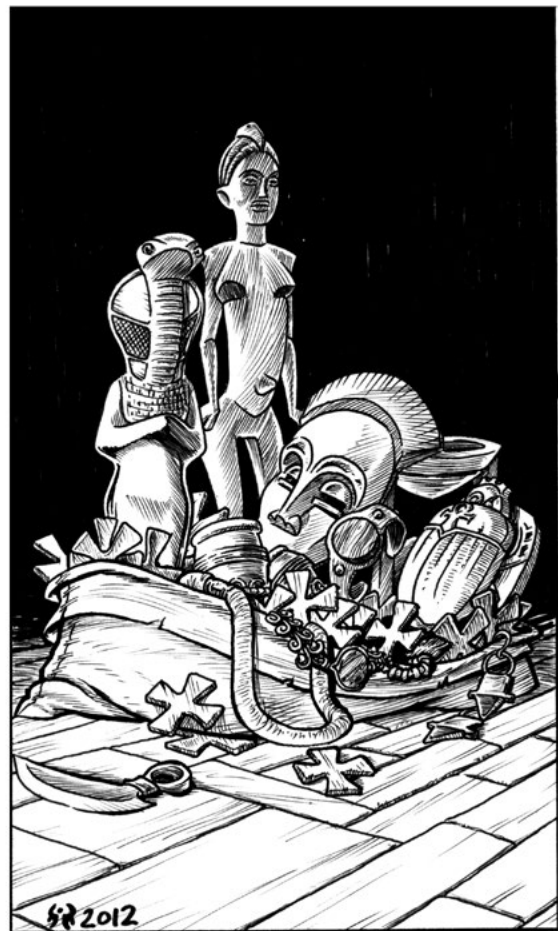
By cunning play, good treasure rolls, and a healthy dose of luck, it's quite possible for PCs to end up with a huge amount of money. Some GMs worry about this sort of thing, but it's really not harmful to your campaign unless you let it become that way. Remember that you are always the final arbiter of what can and cannot be purchased in your campaign, and an infinite supply of gold is of no particular use if what the player wants can't be got with gold.

In particular, avoid creating a market in powerful magic items. The charms and amulets of ngangas and the curative brews of healers are intended to be available fairly freely, but powerful magic items

should almost never be available for simple expenditures of gold. The spirits that infuse most magic items despise the thought of being bartered for mere ingots and may refuse to function for those who so disgrace them. Even if the item is a simple repository of *ashe*, announcing your possession of the object and your willingness to part with it will soon bring a parade of lordly messengers to your door, "inviting" you to gift it to the ruler as a sign of your loyalty. Thieves will harass the seller and cheats will seek them out.

Those with powerful artifacts usually have the sense to either keep quiet about their possession or to keep them away from potential confiscation or theft. Powerful magic items are much more often used as gifts or recompense for great deeds. The spirit of a mighty spear will not object to being given to a hero who has earned the honor of the weapon's possession.

Aside from magic, wealth can also be used to buy land, recruit followers, acquire favors, or otherwise prove instrumental in accomplishing a character's goals. Characters who accumulate truly vast hoards of gold will have to do some measure of all three, as the adventurer can hardly carry a kingdom's ransom on his back and will need allies to defend his stored wealth. A country estate is much harder to steal than a fist-sized sapphire, and the discreet friendship of a king is more flexible than an ingot of gold. Let the PCs spend their gold and let them get the benefits from doing so. So long as the expenditure does not increase their personal, individual power too greatly, they'll still be able to be challenged by the same sort of tests that engaged them before their wealth was obtained.



SETTING UNFAMILIARITY

Many participants in a *Spears of the Dawn* game session will not have the slightest idea about what medieval Africa was like, not even enough to operate in a gaming-pastiche setting. They may be playing the game out of an interest in the idea, or out of a desire for novelty, or simply because they like old-school gaming and this game fits the bill. They're interested in participating, but they don't have the sort of bone-deep familiarity with basic cultural cliches that they often have with faux-medieval European settings. This can leave both GMs and players confused and hesitant about acting because they're not entirely sure how to fit into the game's setting. To deal with this, take refuge in three tools- cliché, translation, and agreement.

Cliches are powerful tools for making sense of complex situations. Players don't need to understand the subtleties of the Long War and the founding of the Spears of the Dawn and their fraught history with the kings of the present day. All they need to know is that they are wandering troubleshooters respected by the locals, and that a lot of trouble is left over from a war that ended forty years ago. This trouble is often centered in old subterranean tomb-houses and everyone would be really grateful if they went in there and made sure there was nothing dangerous left. It's a cliché because it works- players understand it, they see what sort of adventure it provides, and they know how to comport themselves in dealing with it. As they play, more details will accrue and more backstory will come up, but it's nothing they need to worry about in order to simply play the game.

Use cliches to structure player expectations and give them a framework for understanding a situation. Some players will naturally be interested in the details and complexities of a setting, but starting things simple will give them a point of departure for their investigations. For example, the Dia of Kirsi may be the product of a complex social conception of glory and have limited authority beyond the reach of his lancers' spears, but all the players really need to understand is that he is a somewhat less than absolute king. Players have a mental template for how to behave with such people, and you should let these templates work without frightening them with complex nuances that the players aren't ready to deal with yet.

Translation is the technique of responding to the *intent* of an action rather than the specific details of its implementation. When a player tries to accomplish something in a way that's inappropriate to the situation, just tacitly adjust the outcome to take into account the cultural knowledge that his PC would naturally possess. In many cases, you can do this seamlessly in play. Spears are practically *expected* to demonstrate marginal social skills and a thorough contempt for custom. Approaching a chieftain or a city official with the kind of brusque insolence that might get another commoner beaten will be accepted as simply the ordinary way of things with their kind. If you know that the player isn't intentionally trying to insult or fumble a social exchange, let their obvious intentions trump any setting-inappropriate choice of approach.

If you want to model the correct way of doing things, let the NPCs demonstrate by how they behave and speak. Some players will then mimic this with their own PCs, others will simply enjoy the extra flavor, and a few will be blithely oblivious to the whole thing. If they need to find particular services or get certain favors, simply give them the answer if it's the sort of thing that their PCs would naturally understand. The setting is not meant to be a puzzle to be solved, but a context to be enjoyed.

Agreement is a simple and effective trick for making alien cultural settings more amenable to new players. In essence, the trick is to agree with the assumptions your players make about the setting. Unless it is important to contradict them, always let the players' assumptions operate. Every time you call a halt to confirm some fact with the book, or stop them to correct some mistaken cultural assumption, or pause to elaborate some complex bit of backstory, you're pushing the players farther and farther away from comfort with your world. You're discouraging them from acting fluently within your setting and giving them the sensation that they need to find the "right answers" to progress.

Instead, even if you notice a mistake in their assumptions, just let it slide unless it's going to cause you significant problems down the road. If necessary, write down a note to yourself to keep it straight later. You'll find most players will make a lot of assumptions about social relationships and political structures, instinctively mapping their assumptions about standard fantasy faux-Europe onto the Three Lands. If you don't want this to happen, sketch out the relationships as part of a session's play before it becomes an issue.

Ultimately, just as with feudal Eurolandia, there are a lot of cultural elements that don't mesh well with modern Western conceptions of civilization. Most women are chattel, aggressive warfare is considered a profitable and glorious pastime, non-heterosexual relationships are usually tolerated only as discreet diversions from "proper" relations, and there remains the widespread assumption that a society's leaders are fundamentally superior to their social lessers. Moreover, most people, if not all, *accept* these things, and have no idea that there could be anything objectionable about any of them. Striking these notes in a game can emphasize the different context of the setting and how it's not just a reskinned version of a Generic Enlightened Fantasy Land. The PCs live in a different place that has different values.

And if they don't like those values, they can join with those other members of society who want to change them. The Three Lands are undergoing a period of enormous social upheaval and uncertainty. Heroes with the determination to change things can do so, if their glory and their example are sufficient to inspire people to new ways of living. Many people want something better than they have now- they want peace, they want prosperity, they want safety from the monsters that lurk beyond the fire. Heroes who give that to them can persuade a great many to try a different way of living. If a PC doesn't like the way something is, make it clear that they can try to do something about it. Maybe they can only change the customs of one small village at first, but if they are determined and really want to make their campaign about the effort, the possibility is always there.

RUNNING THE FIVE KINGDOMS

The Five Kingdoms provide a basic sandbox for your explorations, but this setting is intended to be fully fleshed out by you, the GM. The diplomatic goals, kingdom relationships, and underlying truths of your own personal campaign must be your own, and they will be more intuitive to you and serve your gaming needs more perfectly if you're the one to establish them. With that in mind, this section provides tools for creating an ongoing sweep of events for your Three Lands, situations that you can use to create adventures and provoke your players.

You may have your own ideas about how you want the Five Kingdoms to relate to each other and the role you want the Sixth Kingdom to play in your own game. That's perfectly reasonable and you should always go with your best feelings regardless of what the tools might say. But one of the great pleasures of sandbox gaming is the feeling of surprise that even the GM can get from a game. Not even the GM is entirely certain of what's about to happen at the table, and the systems in this section allow you to give yourself that pleasant frisson of surprise when things start going in directions you hadn't anticipated.

USING THESE TOOLS

Why should you map out these relationships and goals at all? Isn't it sufficient to just have a tomb-house, a party of PCs, and a home village to supply them? At one level, it's completely sufficient. If you have all the content you need to supply the next gaming session, you're ready to game, and you don't absolutely *need* any of this material. But building a solid Three Lands before you start the campaign will save you a lot of work later on in your game, when your players start to look beyond dealing with the next Sixth Kingdom cult or Night Man incursion.

A vibrant, active region is its own generator of adventures and motivations. Players see the fortunes of kingdoms wax and wane, they see the consequences of kingly choices played out in their own humble villages, and they have the opportunity to intervene in situations that don't suit their sense of propriety. A vigorous region creates conflict, and conflict is the quick, easy route to campaign content and gaming fun. Whenever you have two parties struggling over a point, the PCs can always be put in there to help tip the balance in the direction they think best. Once they do, they've likely made friends- and enemies- and the consequences of their choices can easily ripple out into months worth of engaged gaming. Best of all, the goals and reactions of the players create their own adventure outlines, so all a GM has to do is put statistics and specifics to the situations the PCs are trying to create.

Let these tools and the players work for you. The diplomatic and military backdrop of the Three Lands isn't there for its own sake, it's there to give you adventure seeds and engage your players in larger events. If you're getting easy material and engaged players out of it then you're doing it right, however you might actually be using the materials here.



BASIC CONCEPTS

This system uses only a very few statistics to track kingdoms and organizations: Might, Troubles, and Treasure. At their most basic these three scores are used to provide quick resolution to events and guide you with the specifics you need to make adventure seeds.

Might is a score from 1 to 5 representing the general population, organization, and wealth of a state. Conflicts between states are resolved with a Might contest. A Might contest is simply an opposed roll of 1d6+Might from each, with the higher winning. Ties go to the state with the highest Might. A roll of 1 automatically loses, and the state gains a point of Trouble as described below. If both sides roll 1, the action that provoked the check fails and both sides gain Trouble.

Might represents the cumulative power and resources of a self-contained, independent polity.

For example, the kingdom of Lokossa is Might 4. It has provinces and market towns and villages, but these constituent parts don't normally get their own Might scores or other statistics- they're just

MIGHT RATINGS	
LEVEL	REALM SIZE
1	Village
2	City-state
3	Province
4	Kingdom
5	Vast Empire

part of Lokossa. A remote jungle village that pays no tribute and receives no aid from Lokossa might well be a Might 1 polity of its own simply by virtue of its de facto independence. In the same vein, you might assign scores to some towns in a kingdom just to mechanize a rivalry between them, or formalize the troubles that face each. Villages and towns founded by the PCs will quite probably be their own domains, as any hero impressive enough to found a community is likely able to resist the rule of the weak and quarreling kings of these sad days.

Trouble is a score which reflects the miseries or disasters that threaten a state's future. Each individual trouble has its own score, such as "Failed raid into Kirs: 1", "Popular uprising on the coast: 4", or "The lords of the Silent City have united and are marching against our nation: 15". The state's total Trouble score is equal to all of these added together. A country can intentionally create Troubles to add points to a Might contest before rolling the die, representing desperate expenditures, short-term compromises, and the occasional bloody atrocity. If the Troubles reach a certain cap based on the state's Might, the state will collapse from the strain.

By default, each of the Five Kingdoms starts with 1d6+6 points of Trouble, though the specific role of the kingdom may change this. Smaller states will start with smaller amounts of trouble, from about a third to half of their maximum allowed. Split up the state's troubles between various sources, deciding what problems are most pressing for the domain. About three or four different Troubles are a good average.

Some actions call for a Trouble check. To make such a check, you simply roll a die; if it comes up higher than the kingdom's total amount of Troubles, then the check is passed. Otherwise the check is failed, and the number rolled indicates the problem that caused the failure. The die rolled is based on the domain's Might score, so a Might 1 village rolls 1d6, a Might 2 town rolls 1d8, a Might 3 province rolls 1d12, and anything larger rolls 1d20. For instance, you might need to make a Trouble check for a village with "Poor Crops: 2", "Bandit Raids:1", and "Secret Witchcraft:1" as Troubles. You would thus roll 1d6: in a roll of 1-2, it was the poor crops that caused matters to fail, while 3 means a bandit raid hit the kraal a few days ago, and a 4 implies that someone vital to the action's success was badly sickened by the work of a secret sorcerer. A roll of 5 or 6 means that all such troubles were avoided and the check was a success.

Treasure represents not only a state's supply of trade ingots and jewels, but also its ability to mobilize peasants, its stocks of grain and timber, and the wealth in kind that makes up so much of the economy of the Three Lands. It is measured in points, and a state may spend them to add to a Might or Trouble check before it rolls the die. A state cannot spend more points of Treasure on a check than its Might rating- a village chieftain can accomplish only so much no matter how many sacks of golden ingots he might have

hidden, while a king can exert as much might as he has the wealth to fund. Some actions cost Treasure to perform at all, like the Correct action. Such expenditures do not count as a bonus to the dice.

Treasure isn't usually meant to translate directly to and from ingots, as much of it involves corvee labor, bulk commodities, the efficiency of local administration, and other non-portable or intangible qualities. Still, sometimes PCs will try to help a small domain by donating money or goods, or will seek to tax the lands under their control for portable wealth. In that case, one Treasure point equals 100 si for a Might 1 village, 1,000 si for a Might 2 town, 10,000 si for a Might 3 province, and 100,000 si for a Might 4 kingdom. You should feel free to limit the amount of money the PCs can effectively put into or take out of a domain. Aside from a simple lack of available specie and the threat of inflation, the perils of corruption, waste, and other friction will rapidly erode the benefits of repeated cash transfers.

KINGDOM ROLES

The first thing to do is to decide what roles each of the Five Kingdoms are going to play. While you might decide to layer multiple roles on the same kingdom, it's generally best for each of the Five Kingdoms to have one specific role, as that is generally simplest to track in play and characterize in descriptions. The exception is the Traitor role, which should be randomly assigned to one of the Five Kingdoms after the other roles are parceled out. Any kingdom might be the Traitor, and the players in your campaign will have to find out the truth of matters as best they can.

One kingdom is *Ascendant*. Maybe it's because it has an unusually competent monarch, or a lucky strike of some valuable resource, or its neighbors have exhausted themselves in fighting and it alone remains strong and united. This kingdom is going to be ambitious, outgoing, and hopeful for the future. This kingdom will start with 10 points of Treasure, while others will start with only 5, and will have only 1d6 points of Troubles instead of 1d6+6 points.

One kingdom is *Declining*. The king might be mad, the nobles might be hopelessly corrupt, the kingdom might have been savagely bled by a recent war, a plague could have struck... whatever the cause, this kingdom is in trouble, and runs the distinct risk of collapsing in a welter of anarchy and desperate city-states. This kingdom starts with no Treasure, and 1d6+12 points of Troubles, at least 6 of which are related to whatever event or circumstances are beating it down so badly.

One kingdom is *Hostile*. Either due to the violent disposition of its rulers, the ambition of its leaders, or hostile treatment from its neighbors, this kingdom has a bitter enmity toward at least one other neighbor. This hatred may or may not be reciprocated based on past events, but the kingdom will obsessively prioritize actions to hurt and destabilize their enemies, even if it comes at a cost to their own well-being.

One kingdom is *Fractured*. Some powerful faction within the kingdom wants the current rulership overthrown, either to obtain their own independence or replace the ruler with one more to their liking. Such palace coups are a common threat to any monarch, but the forces in this kingdom are so strong as to qualify as a

TROUBLE MAXIMUMS	
MIGHT	COLLAPSE AT
1	6
2	8
3	12
4	20
5	20

RANDOM ROLES	
1d10	KINGDOM
1-2	Kirsi
3-4	Lokossa
5-6	Meru
7-8	Nyala
9-10	Sokone

One kingdom is *Exhausted*. These people are tired of the outside world, of war and of endless struggle against the Eternal and their own neighbors. They have turned inward on themselves, tolerating outside visitors but seeking no ties and no entanglements with other nations. They will not Trade, Attack, Subvert, or otherwise perform any action which involves dealing with another state. If assaulted by a neighbor, they may match hostile action for hostile action, but may not press the struggle after the aggressor ceases.

One kingdom is a *Traitor*. The king or ruling oligarchy has turned to the Eternal in hopes of immortality and earthly power. They may be desperate, seeking these unholy powers to preserve a crumbling kingdom, or they may be ambitious souls who imagine sweeping over an exhausted land as the Sixth Kingdom once tried to do. This treachery will be well-concealed, as the prospect of a reborn Eternal scourge would certainly be enough to unite all their neighbors against them.

Aside from the usual interests of a state, this kingdom also has a special interest in attacking and plundering Sixth Kingdom strongholds in order to secretly obtain the lore they need for their dark rites. If the Traitor ever manages to acquire a total of 25 points of Treasure earned from Purify actions, even if it spends this treasure as it goes along, it will unlock the secrets of commanding the Eternal. They will immediately gain control of the Sixth Kingdom, determining who it raids and gaining the benefits of a Support action each round, with the Sixth Kingdom counting as a Might 3 ally. Their treacherous nature will become obvious as soon as they invoke their new authority.

The Sixth Kingdom plays a special role in the game. Bereft of coherent leadership, surviving only in stubborn, undying pockets of cruelty and eldritch power, the Sixth Kingdom remains a threat to the realm even in death. Every turn, it may make a Subvert or Raid action against a single kingdom representing its ceaseless malice, using an effective Might of 3. If an attempt fails, the Sixth Kingdom may not trouble that kingdom next turn. If the kingdom launches a successful Purify action, it may not trouble that kingdom for as many turns as the points of treasure won in the action.

The Sixth Kingdom cannot be permanently shattered without the efforts of heroes and mighty alliances. The ending of their threat might be a worthy focus for an entire campaign, as the Silent City must be cleansed, the strongholds of the Black Land must be toppled, and the Eternal King himself must be destroyed before the powers of darkness are finally broken- for a time.

true rebellion, even as their leaders might maintain a facade of loyalty. Every turn, the kingdom needs to make a Trouble check before acting. If it fails, it cannot act that turn and gains another point of Trouble related to the schism. The fracture cannot end until all the Troubles related to it are remedied.



ACTIONS AND THE KINGDOM TURN

The doings of mighty domains are divided up by *kingdom turns*. One kingdom turn is usually run at the end of each session, unless the PCs' adventures have taken up very little time. In other circumstances, one kingdom turn per game month is a good average, with turns coming more often in times of crisis.

During a kingdom turn, each domain may take one of the actions on the following list. The list covers only the most likely activities for one of the Five Kingdoms. If you need to adjudicate something a little more free-form, just make a Trouble check if the state is trying to accomplish some internal effort, or a Might contest if it's contending with an external power.

PCs may well become involved in events and try to exert their own will upon the outcomes. The consequences of PC choices and adventures always trump those of the dice. If the PCs are guarding a vital trade caravan through the Meru savannahs and are able to successfully fend off the sinister nganga who is trying to plunder it, then the Trade action that dispatched it is successful, with no dice required.

PC actions may also stand in for kingdom actions, providing additional benefits or afflictions to the recipients. If the PCs start a rebel movement in the Kirsi hills, they might add a new Trouble to the Dia's sufferings. Conversely, if they offer the wealth of a long-dead Eternal priest-lord to the Ahonsu of Lokossa, that sorcerous realm might gain a point or two of Treasure in exchange for tendering the PCs a few small favors.

ACTION LIST

Administer: The local leaders try to keep a firm hand on corruption and malfeasance. The state makes a Trouble check. If successful, it gains 1 point of Treasure as it tends to home affairs.

Attack: The state wages war upon a rival or an upstart community. The attacker and defender make a Might check. If the attacker wins, they gain 2 Treasure in plunder and inflict Trouble on the defender equal to the attacker's Might. If the defender wins, the attacker is driven back without success and suffers Trouble equal to the defender's Might. If both roll a 1 on the check, both suffer Troubles accordingly. A state cannot effectively plunder Treasure from a community more than 2 Might points smaller than it- the amounts just don't make enough of a difference.

Correct: The state attempts to resolve its problems. It must spend 1 point of Treasure and make a Trouble check. If successful, it can decrease a Trouble by one point, possibly removing it entirely.

Expand: Through long seasons of prosperity and success, the state is expanding, assuming that such a course is plausible. The state must spend Treasure equal to three times the Might level it is trying to attain, and must then make a Trouble check- if it fails, the attempt botches because of that Trouble. Otherwise, it will grow into the new Might point over the next reasonable period of time. If the state must Correct or Retrench before it finishes growing, the process fails due to overreach.

Purify: Strike at the remnants of the Sixth Kingdom, cleansing cults and purging pockets of Eternal control. This action is rolled as an Attack, with the opposing roll's Might based on the size and danger of the Eternal forces being confronted. Purging a minor cult would be a Might 1 opponent, a city-based secret society would be Might 2, a cult stronghold would be 3, an incursion into the Silent City would be 4, and an attempt to drive directly into the Black Land itself would count for a Might 5 enemy. If the kingdom wins, it gains Treasure equal to 1 plus the Might it opposed, whereas if it loses, it gains an equal amount of Trouble.

Raid: The attacker makes a quick, deniable raid on the defender, perhaps blaming it on "bandits" or "rebel lords". This is rolled as per the Attack action, but any Treasure gained or Trouble inflicted is limited to 1 point.

Retrench: The state decides to abandon troubled communities and give up points of contention. Their power shrinks, but what remains is more stable. The state gives up a point of Might and may eliminate twice as many points of Trouble. Thus, a province that stops trying to control anything outside the market town at its heart goes from Might 3 to Might 2 and may drop 6 points worth of Troubles.

Subvert: The attacker seeks to secretly corrupt their rival from within, buying traitors, sowing dissent, and poisoning the goodwill of the people. Both attacker and defender participate in a Might check. If the attacker wins, the defender suffers 1 point of Trouble, or 2 points if the attacker chooses to spend 1 point of Treasure in bribes and brigand-hiring. If the defender wins, no Trouble is incurred, and the state is given evidence to suggest that the attacker was behind the attempted intrigue.

Support: The kingdom lends its aid to an ally for a particular action, doing nothing for its turn. When its ally acts, however, both states may roll any Might or Trouble checks required, and if either of their rolls are successful then the check is successful. Checks are rolled with the ally's own Might and Troubles- the help of a powerful and united kingdom is more useful than the friendship of a tottering city-state. If multiple kingdoms work in an alliance, they may each roll; the great alliance of the Five Kingdoms was unstoppable even by the awful might of the Sixth Kingdom. Sadly, such united power made it all the more difficult to maintain agreement on the direction in which it was to be used.

Trade: A state can only trade with other nations that are also taking the Trading action. Both states must make Trouble checks. If both are successful, each of them gains 2 points of Treasure, while a failure for either produces nothing. A state can Trade with only one other state per turn, and a state cannot meaningfully Trade with a partner more than 1 point different in Might rating.

FOUNDING A DOMAIN

It's the way of PCs to occasionally desire a more tangible expression of their glory than the songs of griots allow. Some of these aspiring dynasts will seek to found their own domain or take command of one less securely ruled. Such desires are an excellent way to funnel excess wealth out of a campaign and give the PCs concerns that extend beyond their next tomb-house raid or skirmish with monstrous foes.

As a general rule only warriors and marabouts will be easily accepted as rulers by the common folk. Griots are expected to stand outside the direct lines of power to praise, condemn, and remember what is done. Ngangas are respected for their power, but they are too fearsome and uncanny for common men to feel comfortable with them as lords or chieftains. Still, even those unlikely sorts might come to rule if they work hard enough to overcome their disadvantages.

Most 7th level warriors or 9th level marabouts will be famous enough to draw enough peasants and common folk to establish a Might 1 village or shrine community simply by indicating their wish to do so. Less accomplished PCs might earn the rule of a community by proving their worthiness to the inhabitants and convincing their existing lords that they would be better caretakers of their interests.

In this decaying age there is much wilderness with no real lord. Villages can be founded in the borderlands with few meaningful complaints from any existing chieftain, though there is likewise no help to be had against bandits or monstrous perils. Growth is accomplished through clearing the land of danger, attracting new citizens, and holding off the jealousies of neighbors who will eventually begin to fear the new power in the area.

However it is done, you should take care not to chain a PC to their domain. Forcing them to constantly defend it will frustrate other players who want to focus on different activities. Throw in threats when things get slow elsewhere, but let adventurers feel free to roam without risking all that they've worked to build.

ACTION AND TROUBLE EXAMPLES

An action's roll gives a good idea of the results of an effort and any troubles that might have foiled it, but it can be useful to have a few more specifics when using events for creating plot hooks. Some of the actions are self-explanatory- an Attack is always an open military assault- while others can use the tables below to flesh out their details. The Troubles table provides a few choices for fresh domains.

1d12	SUBVERSIONS
1	A royal wife is seduced and turned against her lord
2	An advisor is blackmailed to become pliant
3	A wave of poisonings strikes important officials
4	An agent provocateur stirs up disaffected peasants
5	A foreign agent supplies gold and weapons to rebels
6	A nganga casts a curse upon local officials
7	A general is induced to "lose" important supplies
8	A local priest is convinced of a convenient heresy
9	A seductive spy turns an important official
10	A teacher is recruited to find useful agents at school
11	A mole is set up to become a "hero" and gain power
12	Sensitive state secrets are stolen

1d12	RAIDS
1	Maize fields are burnt by troops
2	A community storehouse is struck by raiders
3	Hunters are driven in by troops in the bush
4	Farmers are systematically slaughtered in the fields
5	Troops on leave are attacked by "civilians"
6	Important wells or cisterns are poisoned
7	Tribute caravans are attacked
8	A high official's estate is assaulted by "bandits"
9	A local shrine is attacked by marauders
10	A local magistrate is attacked during a trial
11	An official's daughter or son is kidnapped by troops
12	Important resources or buildings are hit by arson

1d12	PURIFICATIONS
1	A band of Spears are sent against a tomb-house
2	A Sun Faith inquisitor hunts for Eternal cultists
3	Troops march on a ruin held by the Eternal
4	Priests fan out to preach against the Eternal cults
5	The state supports a famed Spear's school
6	Spies are sent to investigate secret noble doings
7	A nganga invokes wards against Eternal sorceries
8	Dangerous books of Deshrite magic are sought out
9	A raiding troop attacks Eternal-held territory
10	A nganga seeks to undo an ancient Eternal curse
11	Eternal agents are exposed among court servants
12	Spears seek to eliminate a mighty Eternal priest

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



CREATING ADVENTURES

Many of the people reading this chapter will need no particular help in coming up with interesting adventures for their group. These hardened veterans of the tabletop can simply flip through this section to the one-page templates, and then and the tools in the Resources chapter to help spice up their own schemes. If you already know what you want to do, you just use this chapter to ornament your plans and fill in any blank spots that need a little extra inspiration.

Other readers will be new to the whole idea of adventure creation, or new to the kinds of adventures that suit sandbox games. For those of you who want a little more structure in plotting out occasions of fearless derring-do, the following pages will walk you through the adventure creation process and explain how to actually run things at the table.

WHAT IS AN ADVENTURE?

In its simplest sense, an adventure is exactly what it sounds like- an occasion of excitement, danger, conflict, and discovery. Plumbing an ancient shrine, scavenging the ruins of a broken city, seeking a long-lost jungle temple, defending a village from bloodthirsty raiders, and uncovering the treachery of a vicious vizier are all examples of adventures. PCs might spend time relaxing in town, spending money, and building social relationships with NPCs, but such “downtime” isn’t usually why people play a game like *Spears of the Dawn*. Most people playing a game like this want to have thrilling battles with the forces of darkness, blood-curdling discoveries in ancient tombs, and knife-edge escapes from the clutches of monstrous foes.

This is important, because in a sandbox campaign adventures should not be something that are pushed onto a group. If they’ve done something foolish or consequential and must deal with the fallout from that decision, then that’s fine- they’re reaping the consequences of their choices. But a GM should never put them in a position where they have to engage in a particular adventure just because it’s what you brewed up for them. Instead, what you build for them should be guided by the goals they’ve set and the choices they’ve made. This is why it’s so important to talk to your players and get a clear idea about what it is they want to accomplish. If you know they want to dig through a tomb-house, then you can make them a tomb-house adventure. If they want to overthrow the local oba, you can make them an adventure that gives them several different hooks they can use to further their revolt.

This is not to say that every wish they have should be made easy, or even that every wish should be possible. A band of novice Spears might be united in their desire to purge the Silent City of evil, but that’s just not something they’re capable of doing. They’re going to need to spend a lot of time increasing their personal power and fame before they’re ready to attempt something like that, and so their immediate goal is apt to become a much more manageable “Gain more money and power so later we can cleanse the Silent City”.

The key to such situations is to give your players a path toward their ultimate goal, even if its potential achievement is far in the future. There’s almost always *something* they can do to get closer to their goal, and as the GM, it’s your job to let them attempt those things and deal with the consequences of their effort. With that principle in mind, here’s one way of making a fun adventure.

CHOOSE THE ADVENTURE’S TOPIC

First, you need to figure out what kind of adventure you need to make. The easiest way to do this is to simply ask the players. At the end of each session, just ask them, “Okay people, what are you going to try to do next time?” Be ready to prompt them with possibilities in line with the goals they’ve already established if they can’t easily come up with something.

In some cases, the next session’s adventure will be obvious. They might still be neck-deep in their current situation, or they might be facing some consequence that is going to absorb all their attention in surviving or evading it. Still, you should ask them just to keep a good idea of what they’d be doing if they weren’t otherwise occupied. This knowledge can be used to ease the transition into their next adventure and to stay alert for opportunities to work in their interests into the current situation.

Novice sandbox players will often freeze up at this point, as they’re not used to the kind of freedom that a sandbox model offers. They’re more accustomed to playing storyline adventures where the GM is largely responsible for moving the plot onward and hooking their PC into events. Becoming self-motivators of the campaign’s direction can be disorienting for these people, and they may have a hard time formulating a good answer for you. If your players are of this variety, just give them two or three different options that are in line with their interests and motivations. Soon they’ll start to suggest their own ideas, or point out alternatives that you didn’t mention. Encourage this. They need to be eased gently into this new model, but as long as they’re having fun with what you’re providing then you’re running the game correctly.

Asking the players what they want to do saves you a great deal of effort as a GM because it gives you the basic outline of the adventure. You’re not obligated to sit down and create a complex, multi-session story arc to run for them, or build some intricate megadungeon before the game begins. All you need to do is create enough adventure to keep them occupied for your next gaming session, after which they might choose to press on with events or turn about in a completely different direction. In both cases, they will simply tell you what they want to do, and you’ll brew up the content you need to facilitate their attempt.

Of course, the devil is in the details. “We want loot and glory, so we’re going to find the nearest ruin and plunder it,” is a simple sort of reply your group might give you. Thanks to their answer, you have the outline of your adventure- it’s going to involve exploring a ruin and plundering its lost wealth. That’s great as far as it goes, but how exactly are you going to make that ruin?

CREATING THE ADVENTURE

There are three parts to a sandbox adventure- the set, the actors, and the props. You need to make each part in greater or lesser detail before the session starts. Once you've got them all ready, you'll be properly equipped to run the adventure.

The **set** of the adventure is the physical place in which events occur. Sometimes the set is extremely important to the adventure, such as when the group is exploring unknown territory or delving a forgotten ruin. For adventures like that, much of the excitement lies in uncovering the details of this mysterious place and finding out just what secrets it holds. These adventures need a very well-developed and interesting set, one that can hold player interest.

Other adventures allow for a much less developed set. If you're running an adventure revolving around political intrigue in the court of the Mai of Nyala, the specific details of palaces and seedy back-alley drinking houses may not be terribly important. A palace is a palace and a dive is a dive, and both just serve as backdrops to the real action involving bargaining, diplomacy, and manipulation. They may become important if the group decides to sneak into someone's manor to steal evidence, or if assassins suddenly ambush the group in some slum tavern, but most of the time such adventures require only flavor from their sets rather than details.

The **actors** of an adventure are the local inhabitants or denizens of importance. They have their own goals and their own motivations, and they will rarely just be sitting there waiting for the PCs to do something to them. Still, there's a limit to how many independent actors a GM can actually keep track of at one time, and so it's best to keep the number of really active actors down to two or three at most. More than that, and it can be hard to keep them all operating while also tracking the PCs' actions.

Actors might be rival courtiers in a political intrigue adventure, or they might be the sinister nganga who rules the ruins of Lost Bediye, or they might be the pair of squabbling bandit chieftains in an uneasy alliance to loot the PCs' home village. Whoever they are, they are the people who are doing things independent of the PCs' actions, and most of the time the PCs will need to deal with them in some way. Depending on the context of the adventure, this might be an exercise in diplomacy or it might be a test of sharp steel.

Props are simply those things or objects that are important in the adventure. They range from the caches of gold and precious jewels that adventurers love to intangibles such as the ownership rights for a familial compound. Props are things for the actors to fight over, and PCs to discover and covet.

The kind of props you'll need to make will depend on the context of the adventure. You won't need to plant too many hidden caches of ancient gold in a noble's jungle estate, but the jeweled family shrine he keeps might well be important. Conversely, a lost ruin is hardly worth the name if it doesn't have numerous abandoned treasures, often guarded by terrible creatures or lethal environmental dangers. Props are particularly important when creating exploratory adventures, because players will be focusing much more on their environment and interacting with it than they will on dealing with actors and other social activities.



BUILDING THE SET

While it's natural to create all the three parts of an adventure together, you usually won't go astray if you focus first on building the set. The nature of the players' interests will largely dictate what kind of set you need to build- a slum neighborhood, a tomb-house, a war-ravaged city, or so forth. The tricky part comes in defining the details of that place, and making it interesting enough to satisfy your needs at the table.

How detailed your set needs to be will depend on how much you expect your players to interact with it. For a traditional dungeon crawl, almost all your players' time is going to be spent rifling rooms, poking crumbling statuary, digging under refuse piles, twisting odd ironmongery, and otherwise examining the area. You need to make a clearly mapped, detailed, and interesting set for an adventure like that unless you want to ad-lib a lot of the answers you can expect to need.

Conversely, if the adventure is going to be about political intrigue, you can expect your players to be spending most of their time focusing on the actors and in interacting with them and their related characters. You'll still want a clear idea about the places they're occupying, but it's not so important to have all the details down or to try and make the sets themselves all that fascinating.

FEATURES OF INTEREST

When you have thirty tomb-house rooms to decorate or an entire plundered market town to flesh out, normal creativity can flag. In those cases, you can consult the tables below to generate some random features of interest to flesh out your locations and give your players something more interesting to interact with than an unbroken string of dusty rooms. Roll on some or all as your need suggests.

1d12	TYPE	EXAMPLES OF SUCH A FEATURE
1	Trap	From recent occupants, ancient still-functional trap, danger because of the area's decay, etc.
2	Written material	Books, scrolls, wall scrawlings- some kind of writing relevant to the location or set
3	Characteristic art	Statues, paintings, crude graffiti, bas-reliefs, or other art related to the place
4	Environment danger	Weak floor, bad roof, toxic fumes, torch-flammable gas, insidious curse, extreme temperatures
5	Sign of activity	Signs of a recent battle, campsite, heavy traffic, beast spoor, recent construction, or other work
6	Useful furnishing	Torture rack, alchemist's table, or some other furnishing that the occupant needs for their work
7	Mortal remains	An intruder's corpse, a dead animal, trophy remains, or other once-living decor
8	Hidden space	Loose stone, space behind a hanging, secret door, false chest bottom, or other hidden space
9	Religious material	Altar, shrine, nkisi, dishes for food sacrifices, wall paintings, or other religious matter
10	Occult matter	Nganga mask, witchcraft components, amulets, remnants of a ritual spell, discarded nkisi
11	Storage	Ordinary cabinets, baskets, calabashes, or locked chests and closets.
12	Pillaged feature	Roll again- that feature has been destroyed, broken open, or otherwise ravaged by someone

1d12	THE PHYSICAL OBJECT IS...
1	Ancient but still-intact from its original creation
2	A recent addition to the area by new occupants
3	Extremely fragile and prone to collapse
4	Very important to a nearby resident
5	Yet-undiscovered by the other local dwellers
6	Fashioned by means of inexplicable magic
7	Actually disguised as something else entirely
8	Made of something unusually valuable
9	Guarded by a spirit, curse, or mortal watchman
10	Magical and creates a strange or area-relevant effect
11	Actually the trigger for a trap
12	The key to gaining entrance to somewhere else

1d12	THE TRAP IS...
1	Pit trap, 1d3 x 10 feet deep
2	Poisoned needles dart from a piece of furniture
3	Arrows shoot from behind an awning
4	A stone block falls from the ceiling
5	Blade drops from above or swings out from wall
6	Walls that compress the luckless intruder
7	Alarm that summons nearby foes
8	Door closes and locks 1d6 minutes after entering
9	Footsteps press down on a bellows of poison gas
10	Valuable object is the pin that sets off the trap
11	Crude tripwire that releases spiked branch
12	Magical effect triggered by simple touch

1d12	THE ART IS...
1	Crude work from a local amateur
2	Related to a local denizen's faith
3	Lewd adornment for the enjoyment of past owner
4	Memorial of some great deed
5	Monument to a great ancestor
6	Praise to some current ruler or group leader
7	Apotropaic, intended to drive off bad luck
8	Martial, depicting bloodshed and death
9	Descriptive, meant to capture a person or truth
10	Gaudily overdone and tasteless in some way
11	Scarred and pillaged or defaced
12	Darkly unsettling because of topic or materials

1d12	THE WRITING IS...
1	Notes about recent activities from literate local
2	Encrypted- Int/Security checks to crack the code
3	In a foreign language
4	Lengthy meditation of no practical value at all
5	Very fragile, partially-burnt, part-eaten, or the like
6	Pornographic in its drawings or written content
7	Diary of a local resident or long-dead inhabitant
8	Clad in precious bindings or scroll tube
9	Censored, with certain passages cut out
10	Deeply incriminating in some crime or blasphemy
11	Account of local wealth or hidden cache
12	Badly faded and only partially legible



When building a high-detail set it's often good to start with a map. Sample maps can be pulled from the Resources chapter at the back of the book, or you can plunder them online from one of countless maps made by other gaming enthusiasts. You can even use maps of real-world structures and ruins to give yourself clues or inspiration.

Once you have the map, you need to key it. Look at the structure and think about the function it fulfilled. What sort of places would such a structure have, and where would they be located? If it was an ancient temple, it's got to have an altar in there somewhere, and sleeping space for the priests, and probably storerooms for precious relics. Crumbled fortresses must have had an armory, and a barracks-room, and maybe stables for the scouts' horses. Sketch out where these important places should be on the map. If you have some idea about where important actors should be, you can put them in now, but don't worry too much about adding monsters or other foes just yet.

Don't fear empty or uninteresting areas, but keep them fairly sparse. At most a quarter of the places might be devoid of anything notable. Everything else should have an actor, a prop, or some feature of the area that provokes PC curiosity, preferably related to the setting. A library with a few books still on the shelves will attract player interest and give them something to characterize the room by, and might give clues as to their goals. Conversely, a room full of dust and some pieces of moldering rubbish is of little interest to anyone and won't absorb much time in play. Not every

area or room should be interesting, but there's not a whole lot of exploratory pleasure in empty chamber after empty chamber.

Many GMs get frustrated at this point when trying to think of ways to make a place interesting. Not every room can have a monstrous foe or precious treasure lodged within, and the pleasure of exploring the unknown isn't likely to be had from a ruin that's as dull as dishwater. You can use the Features of Interest table to help spark your inspiration.

For low-detail sets, you can take the above guidelines and then dial them all back substantially. You'll need some idea of the set's physical layout, but you won't need a detailed map. You'll want an idea of the location of important actors or props, but the answers you want are "He's at his country villa" or "The vial of poison that killed the oba's daughter is in the vizier's pocket" rather than specific room numbers and location keys. You may need high-detail answers if the players suddenly start interacting intensely with the set, such as attempted stealthy home invasions or brute-force attacks on a rival, but you can usually use generic, less-detailed resources to handle those actions since they play a much smaller role in the adventure.

CASTING THE ACTORS

Some adventures can get along without any actors at all. If the PCs are delving into an ancient ruin that lacks any commanding leader or active plotter, there may be no actors worth mentioning. There are monsters and foes and perils within, of course, but these enemies are concerned with things that have nothing to do with the adventure. As far as the players are concerned, they're just mobile and dangerous obstacles to be evaded or dispatched.

Actors are different. They have a motivation or goal that is likely to intersect with the players, and they aren't simply reactive denizens that respond only after being provoked. The witch-lord of Lost Badiye doesn't just sit on his royal stool and wait for heroes to come stab him, he's trying to whip the unruly denizens of the ruined jungle city into a military force capable of breaking the Lokossan border guards and opening the way for his Night Man allies. He's going to be taking actions appropriate to that goal, and if the PCs start slaughtering his potential cannon fodder, he's going to be inclined to do something about it.

Exploration-based adventures are demanding about their sets, but they tend to be much easier in their actor requirements. Some tomb-houses or remote ruins might not have any actors worth the name at all, while even the more socially-approachable exploration sites probably don't have more than one or two self-purposed locals. The main selling point of such an adventure is the exploration, and the people they meet are just one more facet of that process of discovery.

For exploration adventures, you'll also need to populate the place with a suitable collection of foes. These enemies may not have motivations or goals sufficiently interesting to make them full actors, but you're going to need them if the party is to have a suitably interesting time investigating the set. The Bestiary chapter includes creatures of various kinds, and you can plant them in your area according to its nature and past history.

Intrigue-based adventures are another thing entirely. If your adventure isn't about exploring something or killing something, it's probably about negotiating something, and that means you're going to need detailed, highly-motivated actors. As a general rule, you're going to need at least two, and at least one major conflict between them. For such intrigue-based games it's necessary to have some kind of social conflict going on in order to give the PCs something to work with- approaching a monolithically-united court for a favor is dry stuff, but if you've got three or four high officials all trying to ruin each other, their mutual hates can give players the kind of leverage they need to get things done- at the cost of certain dubious favors or deftly-applied blackmail.

Remember, actors act even when the PCs aren't around. Some plans or goals may be so long-term that there will be no real differences if the players return to the set months later, but most plans eventually come to fruition- or bitter failure. Old conflicts resolve, new conflicts arise, and new actors arrive on the scene. Whenever returning to an adventure set that's been sitting unused for a while, you'll want to take a moment to update the actors.

PLACING THE PROPS

Whether a pure plot macguffin or a traditional sack of golden trade ingots, props are important to any adventure. Heroes delving in ancient ruins expect to find gold and jewels, and court quarrels between noblemen are often over the possession of some relic, right, land, or other consequential thing. Props are the things that are important or attractive to the PCs and the resolution of the adventure.

For adventures based on intrigue and politics, the props you need to worry about are the macguffins that drive the local conflicts and the payment that the various sides are able to offer their champions. In most cases, the nature of the conflict will make the macguffin obvious. To find out how much each of the participants can offer, just go to the Treasure chapter and roll up their wealth on the appropriate table. How much of that they're willing to pay will depend on the importance of the conflict. In the case of some PC doing a little breaking-and-entering, the entries can also be used to indicate the kind of loot they might find in an actor's dwelling.

For exploration adventures, the total amount of treasure located in a set should be logical for the kind of place it is, and so the tables in the Treasure chapter are broken up by types of locations and owners. You should pick a location type that fits and add in the troves of any special inhabitants. Once you have a full list of the treasure to be placed, you should break it up into appropriate bundles- one large bundle for the most powerful being in the area, a few smaller bundles for other major finds, and the rest in small parcels to be found in hiding-places or with minor foes.

For traditional exploration adventures, you'll need to put some fairly careful thought into prop placement. It's a common pitfall in adventure design to put all the good stuff in an adventure behind some suitably-calibrated challenge. To an extent, this is entirely reasonable- powerful foes will have possessions appropriate to their might, and after smiting an Eternal priest-lord the adventurers are going to expect him to own more than a rotting cotton kilt. Even so, a good portion of the loot in an exploration site

should be accessible without the need for combat. If every treasure must be won with blood, you're going to teach your players that the only way to get loot is to kill somebody for it- and they're likely to get their PCs killed on a regular basis trying to overcome foes that are too much for them.

Instead, put treasure where it would logically be found. Much of it will already have been gathered by intelligent inhabitants and put under their guard, but other troves will still be hidden, or lost behind environmental dangers, or gathered by creatures who have since died or been driven away. Even those troves owned by intelligent beings should often be accessible through guile or stealth. At least a third of your troves should be accessible without violence.

FINAL TOUCHES

Now that you have the set, actors, and props all in order, you need to take a final pass through the adventure and answer a few questions.

Is this adventure accessible? Every adventure needs some kind of hook or signal that will make it clear to your players that there's actually something interesting here. If this adventure is intended as the session's main entertainment, it should fit in neatly with the party's current trajectory, while an adventure built as a side job or emergency content should have some clear flags to catch the group's interest. Especially with mystery-based adventures, it can be all too easy to conceal that there is even an adventure there at all. You don't want to leave your players in doubt, so make it clear.

Is this adventure a railroad? You need to think about the consequences should the party suddenly decide to abort the adventure or reject its basic premise. They may get halfway through the session and decide that this whole situation is just a bad deal. They might look at your centerpiece conflict and decide that they want both sides to lose. How does your adventure deal with them suddenly hitting the eject button? At the least, you want to be sure you have some kind of backup content available just to keep them occupied. A tomb-house or other small ruin works well for such cases, as you can plop them down just about anywhere necessary.

Is this adventure taking into account their prior actions? After the first few sessions, the party is going to have a history and some kind of reputation. They've done things, and these things should be showing up in the game as time goes on. Even if it's just a brief callback to their prior deeds in the form of a grateful local or an actor mentioning a past heroism, you want to give your players a sense of continuity and logical effect. They should feel as if their actions actually make a difference on future events, and one of the best ways to do this is to make sure you reference them.

Once you've got these factors settled, you're ready to run the adventure. Once you've gotten use out of it, keep it on hand for salvage. Parts that your players never saw or foes they never encountered can be easily cut and pasted into new content later. A GM's creative energy is a limited resource, and you should never let a perfectly good piece of adventure go to waste. Over time, these bits and pieces can be deployed as fast content when you need something on short notice, or as seeds of future adventures built for their connection with past heroism.

AWARDING EXPERIENCE

Adventurers expect to be duly rewarded for their daring, and even on those occasions when monetary satisfactions are limited they at least get the benefit of their experience. At the end of each session, you should award each PC a certain number of *experience points*. Once a character has accumulated enough total experience to reach the next level, they will advance in abilities and gain all the benefits noted in the Systems chapter.

How many experience points should you give a PC? Different GMs and campaigns have different guidelines on this point, but the system provided here is a simple and effective way to meter the progress of your PCs.

A REWARD TO FIT THE CHALLENGE

Experience points are awarded to reflect the characters progress toward their goals and the harsh lessons they may have learned while struggling to accomplish their aims. It's not necessary that they *succeed* at their efforts, as failure can be even more educational than success, but the PCs need to at least *try* to accomplish something meaningful.

This goal should reflect the motivations and ambitions of at least one of the PCs, even if it's a motivation that has only come up on the spur of the moment. If a merchant-prince betrays them at the start of the session and the PCs suddenly conceive a burning desire to avenge their suffering, then a session spent working to punish the traitor would qualify perfectly well as a session of productive effort. The characters want to accomplish something meaningful and they are trying to do so; those are the only qualifications that are necessary to earn experience.

Conversely, if the PCs are simply wasting time back at the village, planning out their opulent palaces and stocking their harems with aspiring talent, then they're not really accomplishing anything meaningful. The character might certainly have a long-running ambition to possess the finest seraglio in the west, but if there's no challenge or conflict involved in its accomplishment it's not the sort of thing that's going to earn her experience points.

You should alert the group if they start to wander down this time-wasting alley, and let them realize that they're not doing anything that's going to reward their ambitions by the session's end. A little of this is perfectly reasonable, of course, and players are going to need some time to enjoy the fruits of their success, but a session composed entirely of laurel-resting is not going to make them any more heroic.

In the same vein, some challenges are simply not worthy of their steel. A band of legendary warriors or sky-darkening ngangas who spend an afternoon methodically executing bandit scum are not learning much of consequence. The challenge is too petty for them, the ambition too small. If they happen to run across a bandit clan while pursuing some larger goal, and exterminate them in order to move a step closer to their higher ambition, then that's one thing, but intentionally aiming at low-hanging adventure fruit is not going to earn them much renown.

PC LEVEL	EXPERIENCE PER SESSION
1	1,000
2	1,000
3	2,000
4	4,000
5	8,000
6	16,000
7	32,000
8	64,000
9	64,000
10+	64,000

Ultimately, if they've put in a good effort in a session and have fairly tested their abilities and good judgment, you should award each PC the number of experience points listed on the chart above. Use the highest PC level in the group to determine the appropriate rewards, so that lower-level PCs catch up to their elders at an accelerated rate. Thus, if a consisting of a newly-leveled 5th, 4th, and 3rd level adventurer finish a productive session, each of them would get 8,000 experience points- enough to give a new experience level to the 3rd and 4th level PCs, and putting the third halfway to 6th.

ADJUSTING REWARDS

The experience points listed for a session assume that you want PCs to level about once every two sessions, assuming they're facing level-appropriate challenges. This is a good pace for a relatively modest campaign of no more than ten or twenty sessions. Advancement slows down notably at ninth and tenth level, as characters of that prowess often have a difficult time finding challenges appropriate to their legendary might.

Some GMs prefer to spend more time at the middle levels. In those cases, you can double the XP rewarded for first and second level, and then halve the XP rewarded after fifth. Other such mathematical tweaks can be applied to speed up leveling at some stages or slow it down at others.

Other GMs prefer to attach experience rewards to specific goals. The PCs determine a particular end they wish to pursue, and if they accomplish it the GM gives them a slice of experience points. Failure means less or no reward. In this way a GM can more directly motivate the group and keep them focused on a particular goal, but it does risk locking the players into an purpose that may cease to be quite so important to them before it is accomplished.

Old-school GMs have also been known to prefer keying experience awards to equal the treasure gained- or even specifically to treasure *spent*. Such rewards are divided among the PCs who brought up the plunder, and it can focus the group very intently on the earning and spending of silver ingots and shining jewels. The GM will have to be ready to handle wild swings of remuneration, however, unless he hand-places his treasures carefully.

USING THE ONE-PAGE TEMPLATES

The following templates are meant to provide you with quick resources for generating content on short notice. You should print them out in company with the blank maps and summary enemy statistics provided in the Resource section of the book. When you suddenly have need of a tomb-house, merchant's palace, desolate farmhouse or other piece of content, just pull the appropriate template and blank map. If necessary, take a five-minute pause, though with time you'll become comfortable enough with the material to do much of this work on the fly.

Make a few rolls or choices from the locations table of the template and key out the blank map accordingly. In abandoned buildings, no more than a quarter of the rooms should be empty or otherwise devoid of obvious purpose, their original furnishings destroyed or stolen. You should also feel free to "cut up" maps you use, arbitrarily slicing away chunks to create new layouts out of the blank template. With a few judicious cuts and an extra doorway or two penciled in, your players are unlikely to ever notice you're recycling a map.

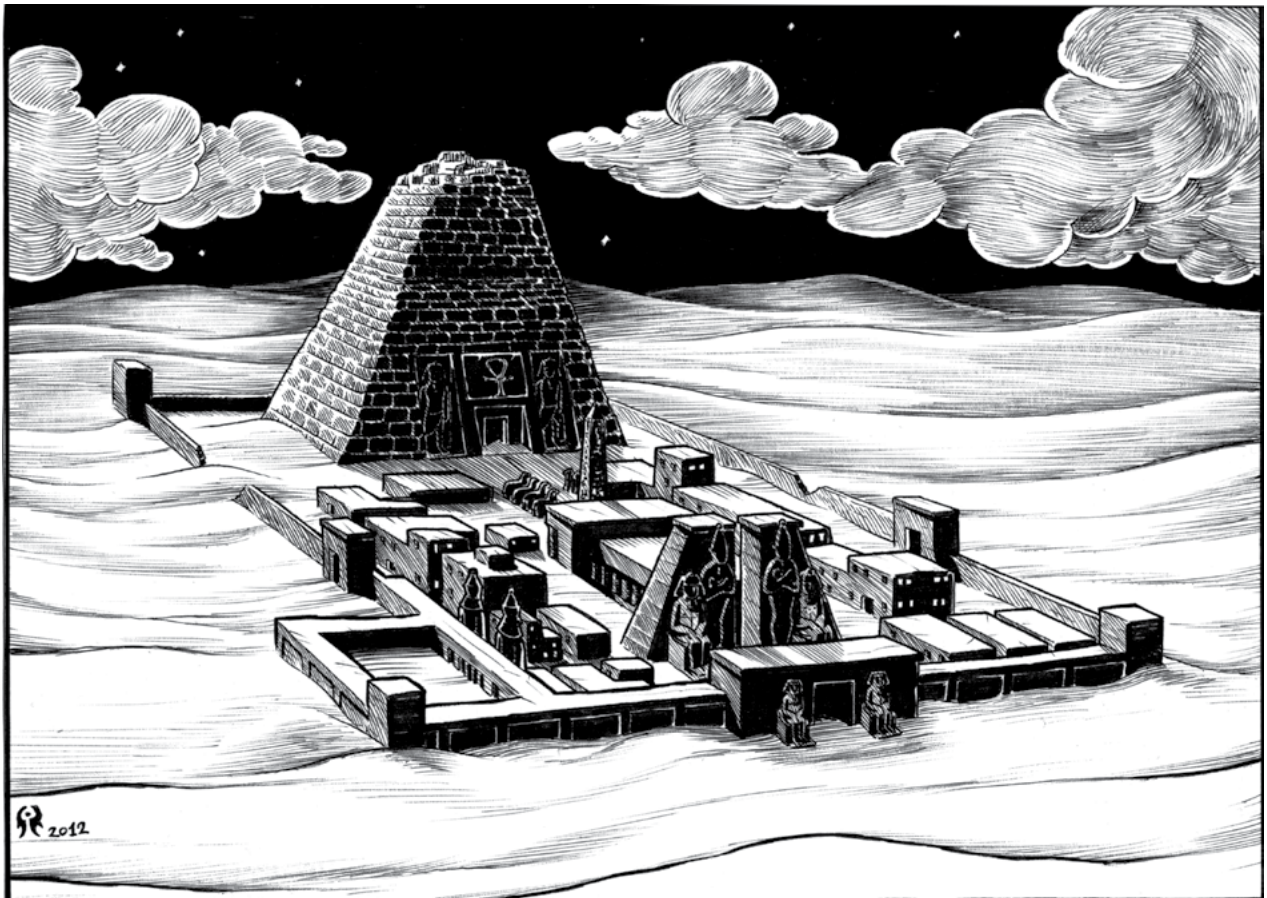
Once you've made a quick key, mark about a third of the rooms with threats rolled from the template and a third of them with treasures and other valuables. To determine the value of the loot, just reference the chart in the Treasure chapter and divide up the total value of the plunder among the treasures you place. If you decide that the entire ruin is worth 500 si and you have four rooms with treasure, you might give a 200 si value to the most precious object and 100 si to the other three relics of worth. The

tables in the Treasure chapter can give you more specific details about individual items.

Once you've rolled or picked the local guardians, take a brief moment to make sure the results make sense. Hideous abominations are not going to sit placidly next to a room full of ordinary servants- or if they do, there needs to be some good explanation for it. In play, just use the enemy quick reference sheet to provide statistics for foes.

Use the characteristic NPC table and the local flavor table to add spice to the location and identify important actors there. If the players decide to suddenly make a call on the local oba's palace, you might roll "a favorite concubine" as an actor present. Maybe she's the real mastermind of the household, having wrapped the oba around her finger and cowed his frightened wives. Troubles and location traits can also provide some unique characteristics to the location to help set it off from other places like it.

Some of the tables deal instead with generating social groups, such as noble families, criminal gangs, or Eternal cults. You can use these tables when you need inspiration for generating social groups, or you want a more developed idea of the kind of people who are dwelling in a particular one-page location. You can use the results as-is or take a moment to draw connections and relations between the actors you generate. As with all the tables, you should be ready to rely on your own sense of context and appropriateness, and adjust any results as suits your needs best.



RUINED DWELLING

A shattered country estate, a crumbling cursed house in a slum neighborhood, a dilapidated manor in a town destroyed long ago... adventurers have a habit of prodding the dwelling-places of those long dead and gone. This template can be used whenever the PCs investigate the broken remnants of a former habitation.

1d12	LOCATION	CHARACTERISTIC ELEMENTS
1	Bedroom	Torn bedding, broken furniture, cold braziers, shattered perfume vessels, torn hangings
2	Defiled shrine	Broken altar, implements stripped of gold overlay, defiled idols, scattered icons
3	Dining hall	Split and broken table, cabinets overturned, broken tableware, remains of an interrupted meal
4	Kitchen	Yellowed meat bones, wormy mealies, shattered clay pots, fire ashes, dangerous vermin/molds
5	Looted library	Tomes stripped of their jeweled covers, slashed parchments, overturned shelves, burnt papers
6	Massacre room	Bones of many slain here, broken weapons, gouged walls, cloven furnishings, dried stains
7	Overgrown garden	Bones hidden in the foliage, dangerous animals, broken statues, hindering plants
8	Parched bath	Dry bathing pool, mold growth, smashed tiles, broken clay vessels, ruined unguents
9	Plundered treasury	Broken door, gouged floor and walls, hole in wall, fire damage, collapsed floor
10	Ruined chamber	Tumbled roofbeams, slumped walls, shards of original furnishings buried under stones or clay
11	Servant quarters	Huddled human remains, torn-apart beds, broken chests, floor pierced in search of caches
12	Storeroom	Smashed baskets, scattered herb bundles, strewn and rotting foodstuffs, broken oil jars

1d12	COMMON GUARDIANS OR THREATS
1	Pack of toothy vermin burrowing in the rubble
2	Spirit of a furious former resident
3	Bandits plundering what little remains
4	Wild beasts lairing in a ruined chamber
5	Serpent hidden beneath fallen timbers
6	Hideous abomination hiding in a place of death
7	Band of outcasts seeking shelter
8	Animated corpses of those who died here
9	Unstable floor or ceiling giving way
10	Mold with toxic spores or exudate
11	Crude trap left to protect a hidden stash
12	Lingering curse awaiting intruders

1d12	APPROPRIATE TYPES OF TREASURE
1	Rubble-buried trove of trade ingots
2	Corpse with valuable jewelry
3	Stash hidden by one who never returned
4	Precious metal housewares battered by fallen stone
5	Gemstones on a rotted wooden idol or furnishing
6	Chest of trade ingots hidden by fallen timbers
7	Petty metal goods hidden by a thieving servant
8	Book covers inlaid with gold and jewels
9	Household ritual implements for the family shrine
10	Preserved ivory furniture or ornamentation
11	Precious medicinal plant or fungus growing here
12	Loot in a dead plunderer's sack

1d12	CHARACTERISTIC NPCs
1	Nganga seeking to ruthlessly enforce his privacy
2	Last bitter survivor of the former owning family
3	Plunderer bent on finding hidden treasure
4	Marabout wishing to exorcise the house's evil
5	Brooding spirit waiting for visitors
6	Eternal hiding here with its minions
7	Cult priest of some gory sect using it as a hideout
8	Possibly-innocent outlaw taking shelter here
9	Impostor pretending to rights to the place
10	Degenerate patriarch of the familial remnant
11	New owner seeking to clean out the place
12	Ambusher waiting to lure prey inside

1d12	REASONS FOR ITS RUINATION
1	Plague overwhelmed the inmates
2	Bandits plundered and torched it
3	Witchcraft or bad luck mantled it in a dire curse
4	An earthquake tumbled its upper floors
5	A great fire swept over it, natural or arson-set
6	Cruel taxes drove away the inhabitants
7	The former master displeased the local lord
8	Bloody familial fighting left it a charnel house
9	A horrible beast crept in to slay all who lived there
10	The occupants were executed for foul witchcraft
11	It was shattered during a war's bloody battles
12	Its master journeyed away and never returned

BUILDING A SOCIAL CONFLICT

Wherever there's a thing worth fighting over, people will be found to quarrel about it. These tables will help a GM come up with a suitably engaging social conflict for a community, squabbling clans, or fractious families. Conflicts should always be accessible to the PCs, however- make sure there's something the PCs can do about the dispute, or else they can risk becoming irrelevant bystanders.

1d12	Focus	SAMPLE DETAILS
1	Adultery	A wife or husband has been seduced and the culprit is widely known, Someone is madly jealous
2	Business	A new competitor has arisen, Old monopolies are challenged, A trade secret is stolen
3	Envy	An upstart prospers too greatly, A downtrodden group suddenly comes into "unseemly" wealth
4	Feuding	Their grandfathers hated each other so they hate each other, Each blames a crime on the other
5	Insult	A spurned husband, A disrupted funeral, An insult to their ancestors, A mistreated wife
6	Oppression	A group is treated as near-slaves, A group is forbidden community rights, A group is scorned
7	Prejudice	A religion's worshipers are dismissed as fools, Ethnic group is viewed as scum
8	Privilege	A group's ancient right to a thing is challenged, Documents give a right to an upstart group
9	Theft	A precious thing was stolen, Land rights were usurped, An "honest bargain" wasn't such
10	Thuggery	A group beats and intimidates others, A group threatens violence, A group has ties with thugs
11	Treachery	A group is in league with enemies, A group worships the Gods Below, A group is falsely accused
12	Usurpation	A prince seizes the throne, An oba is deposed by rivals, A clan patriarch is deemed senile

1d12	A MAJOR PARTICIPANT
1	An oba or village chieftain
2	A secret witch of substantial power
3	A notorious local nganga
4	A marabout of a suspect local deity
5	Head of a criminal society in the community
6	The most beautiful young woman in the town
7	A dissipated and rakish young noble
8	A sinister slaver
9	A disinherited and outcast member of the family
10	The most promising young hero in the village
11	A fading clan patriarch
12	A widely-respected elder

1d12	THINGS TO QUARREL OVER
1	A beautiful young woman's love
2	A rich heir's inheritance rights
3	Proof of land ownership
4	Ancestral sinecure at a temple or palace
5	Important role in community religious rites
6	Ownership of recently-discovered treasure
7	Blame in a collapsed mutual project
8	Whether or not to join a new religion
9	Responsibility for paying for a community need
10	A runaway wife who has been mistreated
11	Monopoly on certain goods or services in the area
12	Share of taxes or tribute due the community's lord

1d12	THE TWIST
1	A "Romeo and Juliet" situation for two youths
2	The offended party is actually the guilty one
3	One side is actually completely justified in all ways
4	Both sides are actually equally and greatly culpable
5	A third party provoked the quarrel for its ends
6	Neither side actually wants this quarrel
7	The real focus of dispute is something shameful
8	The dispute has recently become far more serious
9	The dispute must end soon or both will be ruined
10	One side is willing to ruin itself to destroy the foe
11	One side is right, but direly oppressed by others
12	The prize would actually be ruinous to the winner

1d12	INTENDED MEANS OF HARM
1	Hire assassins or thugs to slay the culprit
2	Acquire shameful secrets to ruin their reputes
3	Use dark witchcraft to torment the offender
4	Seduce and betray one of their loved ones
5	Crush their businesses or economic supports
6	Burn down or destroy their property
7	Beat or kill their relatives and friends
8	Bribe magistrates or chieftains to afflict them
9	Spread foul rumors and gossip about them
10	Manufacture a crime and frame them for it
11	Rob them of their most prized possessions
12	Have their loved ones kidnapped by slavers

TOMB-HOUSE

Tomb-houses provide excellent rationales for quick dungeon-crawling in almost any location. Nearly any place might host the long-hidden entrance to one of these ancient strongholds of the Eternal, and there's almost certain to be loot to be had for those daring enough to beard their undying occupants and the ancient curses that guard them.

1d12	LOCATION	CHARACTERISTIC ELEMENTS
1	Armory	Desiccated wooden racks, guard bunks, corroded armor, martial engravings on the walls
2	Barracks	Stacked beds for slaves and cultists, firepit, vent shafts, soot-smearred walls, buried treasures
3	Bathing pool	Underground springs, decadent bas reliefs, silent attendants, dried unguents, thick mold
4	Bone garden	Dead mimicry of a garden, glass flowers, bone plants, lifeless sand, corroded metal trees
5	Feasting hall	Gruesome wall carvings, low stone tables, corroded lamps, fragments of human bone
6	Moon chamber	Ceiling painted as a night sky, walls painted as outdoors, inset lamps, hidden fans, sand founts
7	Rest chamber	Sarcophagus-beds, rotting bedding, Eternal slaves, decaying cosmetics, mummified pets
8	Ruined chamber	Fallen ceiling, treacherous floor, crumbled pillars, slumped walls, sand fill, water pools
9	Shrine	Sacrificial altar, brass braziers, idols of the Gods Below, brass ritual tools, blood drains
10	Torture chamber	Implements of rotting wood and verdigrised bronze, decayed ropes, forgotten bones
11	Vault	Bronze doors, trapped chests, secret true vault, fine wall carvings, portals locking after entrance
12	Workroom	Tools of living trades, half-fashioned products, wall images of work, tools worn down to dust

1d12	COMMON GUARDIANS OR THREATS
1	Near-mindless Eternal guards
2	Wrathful Eternal slaves
3	Cult zealots defending their masters
4	Burrowing beasts lairing in the ruin
5	Hideous sorcerous abominations from long ago
6	Tormented spirits trapped in this place
7	Rapacious tomb-house robbers who won't share
8	Cruel Eternal sorcerer or priest of darkness
9	Arcane trap laid down by ancient sorcery
10	Sliding stones, sand, or water trap
11	Disturbing a treasure disturbs a guardian
12	Dismembered Eternal parts flail violently

1d12	APPROPRIATE TYPES OF TREASURE
1	Jewel-crusted sacrificial weaponry
2	Tribute taken from long-dead subjects
3	Golden shroud-ornaments and grave goods
4	Vessels of ancient extracts and precious unguents
5	Tomes of forbidden lore
6	Gemstones hewn from the Weeping Mountains
7	Deshrite icons of precious metals
8	The belongings of former intruders
9	The sad possessions of those eaten or converted
10	Treasures stolen and presented by cultists
11	Sacks of trade ingots gathered by the Eternal
12	Ritual implements of gemstones and gold

1d12	CHARACTERISTIC NPCs
1	Kidnapped local meant for food or conversion
2	Lone survivor of the last party of adventurers
3	Eternal chamberlain, lost in the past
4	Imperfectly-preserved Eternal concubine
5	Brooding Eternal priest of the Gods Below
6	Former adventurer trapped and converted
7	Bodiless ghost bewailing its fate
8	Sinister cultist come to revere the Eternal
9	Curious scholar seeking lore in the house
10	Bandit or exile making a home in the tomb
11	Plotter against a local ruler using it as a base
12	Thief using the tomb as a den for secret meetings

1d12	NOVEL TRAITS OF THE TOMB
1	The Eternal within wish only to be left alone
2	A local lord has struck a bargain with the tomb
3	The tomb has been forgotten until this moment
4	The tomb is structurally unstable
5	The tomb is built under a locally important place
6	The real tomb is hidden beneath a false one
7	The inhabitants fake Eternal signs for privacy
8	The inhabitants are actually a <i>different</i> vile cult
9	It was the headquarters of noble-minded rebels
10	Something unusually awful is trapped inside
11	Even older ruins connect to the tomb
12	The Eternal within are actually sympathetic

BUILDING AN ETERNAL CULT

Eternal cults are found most often at the edges of human communities, deep enough into the bush or underground tunnels to escape easy notice, but close enough to allow cultists to maintain their normal lives. Men and women join them for the promises of eternal life and earthly power they offer, and all know that discovery is sure to result in their swift and exemplary executions.

1d12	CULT MEMBER	CHARACTERISTIC TRAITS OR MOTIVATIONS
1	Ambitious heir	Wants to create an empty throne, Believes his rule is his due, Plans to control the cult
2	Amoral nganga	Will do anything for magic, Has wretched apprentice, Always masked, Strangely twisted
3	Blood-mad warrior	Border war veteran, Last survivor of his unit, Spirit-possessed warrior, Sinister assassin
4	Cruel Eternal sorcerer-priest	Contemptuous of living cultists, Obsessed with converting humans, Prone to madness
5	Depraved noble	Unspeakable urges, Blackmail on half the city, Has people to fight for him, Low cunning
6	Embittered wife	Wants revenge on husband, Wants revenge on another wife, Accomplished poisoner
7	Grasping merchant	Slave trader, Usurer of the wretched, Wants to ruin a rival, Owes someone too much
8	Heretical priest	Thought to be orthodox, Burning conviction of righteousness, Strange magical gifts
9	Jaded seducer	Afflicted with a social disease, Has a harem of paramours, "Persuades" problematic types
10	Marabout of dark powers	Unholy good fortune, Marked by the Gods Below, Believed to be a goodly holy man
11	Miserable beggar or outcast	Half-decayed leper, "Harmless" urchin, Disinherited noble scion, Animated by envy
12	Wilfully-blind pawn	Dabbling noble scion, Self-deluded scholar, Desperate petitioner, Utter moron

1d12	REASON FOR JOINING
1	Desperate poverty goaded them on
2	Bitterness toward the gods inspired their malice
3	A towering ego admits no moral limits
4	Their parents were members and inducted them
5	Fell in love with another cultist and was seduced in
6	A lust for power regardless of the price
7	The cult promises revenge against a bitter enemy
8	Delusional imagination that it wasn't that bad
9	The cult acquired crushing blackmail on them
10	An investigator who was turned by the cult
11	Joined in fear for their life from cultist knives
12	Terrible thirst for forbidden lore

1d12	A TERRIBLE THING THEY'VE DONE
1	Acquired an awful hunger for human flesh
2	Betrayed a family member to their death
3	Procured human sacrifices for the cult
4	Poisoned or otherwise murdered a foe of the cult
5	Acquired victims for the cult's enjoyment
6	Seduced and betrayed a foe of the cult
7	Devised occult means of strengthening the cult
8	Made an unholy pact with dark powers
9	Brought ruin to a group that trusted them
10	Framed an innocent to throw off a foe of the cult
11	Recruited innocents into cult membership
12	Profaned an important ritual site or implement

1d12	AID THEY GIVE THE CULT
1	Provide monetary support to the cult
2	Has contacts with local officials they use
3	Have numerous helpful family members
4	Menial and debauched service to other cultists
5	Tends and guards the cult victims until sacrifice
6	Studies dark occult lore for use during cult rituals
7	Seduces outsiders and manipulates them for the cult
8	Has an important official or social position
9	Physically powerful and willing to do violence
10	Keen-eared spy and gatherer of information
11	Travels far and keeps the cult in contact with others
12	Brews poisons or fashions goods for the cult

1d12	AID GIVEN THEM BY THE CULT
1	Bailed out their ruinous gambling debts
2	Murdered a hated enemy
3	Enslaved a person they had lusted after in vain
4	Elevated them socially through dark machinations
5	Saved a child or spouse from catastrophe
6	Provided unholy healing of some dire sickness
7	Provided tomes of dark lore and occult power
8	Gave them a helpful magical item
9	Made them wealthy through business connections
10	Got them exonerated for some grave crime
11	Won them a noble title with their manipulations
12	Nothing yet- but they promise one of the above

URBAN PALACE

This template can serve for a lord's palace, a merchant's urban luxury, or a remote country estate. Use it when the PCs burst into a habitation likely to be occupied by nonplussed residents. A quick roll on the characteristic NPC table can tell you who the first resident they meet might be, and a roll for the troubles in the house can give them motivation to do more than simply yell for the guards.

1d12	LOCATION	CHARACTERISTIC ELEMENTS
1	Audience chamber	Ornate stool of office, woven hangings, bas-reliefs, thick rugs, impressive art objects
2	Bath chamber	Stove for heating water, inset pool, cabinets, jars of unguents and soaps, benches and mats
3	Clerk's workroom	Scraped parchments, quill pens, bound ledgers, good windows, long tables, books and scrolls
4	Dining room	Low tables, wall hangings, niches for servants, artwork to impress, cushions for seating
5	Kitchen	Open flame, knives, cassava-soaking tubs, iron cauldrons, bundles of herbs hanging down
6	Library	Carefully-kept parchment books and scrolls, good lighting, hanging maps, low tables
7	Master's bedroom	Luxuriant cushions, fine weaving, chests for belongings, brass lamps, adjoining room for guards
8	Open walk	Balcony, verandah, covered walk between buildings, garden area, courtyard
9	Servant quarters	Humble bedding, pegs for meagre possessions, belongings hidden in walls, stolen goods
10	Shrine	Family altar, statues of ancestors, ritual implements, vestments for family head, ritual books
11	Storeroom	Sacks of grain, bundles of dried herbs, hanging meats, clay jars of oil, chests of cloth goods
12	Treasury	Iron-bound chests, heavy doors, interior placement in the building, adjoining guard posts

1d12	COMMON GUARDIANS OR THREATS
1	Vicious watchdogs
2	A family member, martially trained and armed
3	Guard patrol, singular or several
4	Family member trained as a nganga
5	Ancestral guardian spirit
6	"Pet" exotic beast
7	Burglars who broke in at the same time
8	Loyal servant who will shriek an alarm
9	Protective curse against intruders
10	Small 20-inch carpet viper has crept into the room
11	Precarious furniture will topple with a crash
12	Two surprised servants having a liaison

1d12	APPROPRIATE TYPES OF TREASURE
1	Sack of trade ingots
2	Tableware of precious metal
3	Family members' jewelry
4	Jeweled ritual statuettes or other implements
5	Exquisite cloth and woven goods
6	Ledger proving debt owed by a local merchant
7	Secret cache of forbidden witchcraft ingredients
8	Jeweled and ornamented clothing
9	Cache of servant-pilfered valuables
10	Ceremonial weapons of precious metals
11	Exquisite artwork sculpted of ivory or metal
12	Pouch of loose jewels to be set later by an artisan

1d12	CHARACTERISTIC NPCs
1	Master or mistress of the house
2	The chamberlain, overseer of the house's operation
3	Owner's favorite concubine
4	Mistreated servant or cruelly-abused slave
5	Thief working under cover as a servant
6	Keen-eyed guard captain
7	Touchy and impatient cook
8	Venal maidservant
9	Laconic gardener or farm overseer
10	Spoiled son or brattish daughter
11	Wearied clerk or business worker
12	Important official over for a visit

1d12	TROUBLES IN THE HOUSE
1	The master or mistress is dying of a slow disease
2	The chamberlain plots treachery
3	A servant has stolen a priceless treasure
4	The eldest son is a vicious and unrestrained rake
5	Someone in the house has bewitched another
6	The owner is desperate from near-penury
7	The owner or their spouse is adulterous
8	The eldest daughter despises her destined husband
9	The local lord suspects the owner of treachery
10	Someone is secretly an Eternal cultist
11	A servant is working with burglars and thieves
12	A servant is secretly an assassin

BUILDING A NOBLE CLAN

Almost all the Five Kingdoms have certain families of fame and wealth, nobles esteemed for their glorious past and present power. These clans range from the calcified lineages of Nyala to the tacitly-understood nobility of Meru's preeminent clans. While the details of these clans vary between kingdoms, they share a common interest in power, influence, and the ruthless demands made by their maintenance.

1d12	FAMILY MEMBER	EXAMPLE COMPLICATIONS OF THE ROLE
1	Almost-disowned rascal	Secret Eternal cultist, Secretly a notorious criminal, Actually the patriarch's hitman
2	Ambitious young scion	Freshly-blooded soldier, Aspiring businessman, Elder's undeserving favorite
3	Distantly-related parasite	Resents slave-like treatment, Struggles to prove his worth, Savagely protective of status
4	Family historian or scholar	Forcibly ensures secrets stay secret, Benign old blackmailer, Keeper of occult relics
5	Favorite concubine	Socially-unacceptable secret, Brains behind the patron, Secret catspaw of another clan
6	Grizzled old warrior	Given to excess drink, Paranoid of assassins, Willing to train PC warriors if impressed
7	Manager of a clan asset	Actually embezzling from it, Actually running it into the ground, Scorns actual work
8	Neglected wife	Husband has no interest in women, Twenty-third wife, Resents marrying down into clan
9	Patriarch/Matriarch	Exhausted elder, Fumbling patriarch-by-default, Ruthless manipulator, Senile figurehead
10	Scruffy common "arranger"	Seems to be a mere house servant, Secretly a spy of the local lord, Spy of local crime boss
11	Sourly discontented kinsman	Slighted for the patriarch's favorite, Incompetent but unaware of it, Incapable of content
12	Talented daughter	Despises her husband-to-be, Secretly studies war or magic, Desired by several rivals

1d12	POWER SOURCE IN THE FAMILY
1	Sorcerous powers or hidden witchcraft
2	Reputed to be favored by the spirits
3	A healthy library of blackmail
4	Saved the family by some past deed of daring
5	Universally loved by their fellow family members
6	Has legal control of an important clan asset
7	Has the best bloodline in the clan
8	Personally terrifying or martially capable
9	Arranges things too dirty or criminal for others
10	Favorite of the local ruler
11	Remarkable powers of seduction
12	In line to be the next patriarch of the family

1d12	DIRE WEAKNESS OR DARK SECRET
1	Critically bad judgment about important things
2	Has secretly taken bribes from clan enemies
3	Has stolen clan assets for private use
4	Responsible for the death of a family member
5	Burning, overweening ambition
6	Infertile or otherwise unmarriageable
7	Has had contacts with Eternal cultists
8	Strongly disliked by the local ruler
9	Has a terrible temper and unreasoning wrath
10	Crippled or very physically unimpressive
11	Bad with money and a profligate spender
12	Paranoid and convinced of secret enemies

1d12	WITH A REPUTATION FOR...
1	Excessive and indiscriminate venery
2	Unusual fair-mindedness and justice
3	Refined aesthetic sensibilities and artistic skill
4	Stern devotion to duty and family interests
5	Devout loyalty to the local ruler
6	Zealous faith in the dominant local religion
7	Cursing and bewitching those who offend
8	Capricious and dangerous whimsicality
9	Prior deeds of glory and great renown
10	Ties to every plot and scheme in the city
11	Natural and reflexive deceitfulness in their dealings
12	Superb financial skills and personal wealth

1d12	AND A FIERCE DESIRE FOR...
1	Control of the clan as its patriarch/matriarch
2	Seizing rule of the city or domain
3	An important family member's spouse
4	Revenge against a person or clan of importance
5	Dark occult secrets of power and longevity
6	Material wealth and tangible possessions
7	Elevation of the clan in power and importance
8	Freedom from their burdensome duties
9	A man or woman belonging to a rival noble clan
10	The downfall of the local ruler
11	Excitement and personal glory
12	Humiliation of someone who has wronged them

CITY STREETS

Few GMs have the time or energy to map out entire cities or key their important buildings. Still, there will be occasions when your PCs need to know what the nearest buildings are or are suddenly beset by urban trouble. When directions are needed, just roll 1d12 and treat it like a clock face. For a simpler set of possible directions, roll 1d4 and treat the result as north, south, east, or west.

1d12	LOCATION	CHARACTERISTIC ELEMENTS
1	Artisan's workshop	Roll 1d10 for tanner, butcher, smith, baker, brewer, weaver, jeweler, sculptor, carpenter, or scribe
2	Brothel or drug den	Painted courtesans, worn-out jades, unconscious revelers, display balconies, acrid fumes
3	Carter's yard	Maze of carts in the yard, sullen oxen, nervous horses, drunken carters, stolen goods
4	Defensive wall	Guards standing atop it, bribery-operated postern gates, forgotten hidden holes, broken areas
5	Drinking house	Palm-wine calabashes, beer jars, harlots, workmen, mercenaries, watchful thieves, clay cups
6	Empty house	Buried treasure, crumbling flooring, abandoned trifles, dangerous vermin, criminal lairs
7	House of an official	Guards at the entrance, splendid facings, haughty servants, obstructive minions
8	Market stall	1d8: Fruit, fish, meat, leather goods, clothing, cheap jewelry, small ironwork, divination
9	Merchant's shop	1d8: Foods, armory, household wares, medicines, fine jewelry, servants, perfumes, books
10	Poor man's dwelling	Single room, smoky cookfires, cramped bedding, vermin, stench, empty cabinets
11	Rich person's house	Guards, spoilt offspring, pleading debtors, gaudy ornaments, tall construction, garden wall
12	Shrine	Sun Teachers, Spirit Way priests, spirit altars, songs, ritual dances, sacrifices, incense, worshipers

1d12	COMMON STREET ANNOYANCES
1	Too-aggressive harlot, possibly a robber's partner
2	Drunken bully with massive thews
3	Haughty noble looking for a reason to take offense
4	Venal official demanding a bribe
5	Beggar child looking to get or steal something
6	"Holy man" "asking" for alms for a local spirit
7	Local with a strong dislike for all outsiders
8	Pretty girl with a ridiculously jealous lover
9	Pickpocket causing a distraction
10	Bawd seeking to lead strangers into trouble
11	Leper persistently pleading for charity
12	Person who merely <i>seems</i> to be a pickpocket

1d12	NEARBY STREET LAYOUTS
1	It's a dead end
2	Four-way intersection
3	Street curves from one direction to another
4	Straight street cluttered by carts and pedestrians
5	Street climbs sharply, roll again for layout
6	Street forks from one direction into two others
7	Street doubles back on itself around a building
8	Straight street with 1d4 smaller side-streets
9	Straight street with 1d4 narrow alleyways
10	Street circles, with 1d4 avenues stretching outward
11	Street ends at a closed gate
12	Street slopes sharply, roll again for layout

1d12	THE NPC WHOSE AID THEY NEED IS...
1	Right where they're expected and quite helpful
2	Away on a trip, but their less-helpful aide is here
3	Very sick, and in need of costly medical care
4	Bigoted against one of the PC's origins
5	In deep debt, and desperate for money
6	Someone recently declared guilty of a serious crime
7	An obnoxious, greedy, amoral cur of a person
8	Fair and reasonable, but with reasons not to help
9	Employed by someone who dislikes the PCs
10	An old acquaintance or relative, possibly an outcast
11	From some PC's home village or city
12	Secretly serving a power inimical to the PCs

1d12	TRAITS OF THIS NEIGHBORHOOD
1	Noble quarter with vigilant guards in houses
2	Slum structures of makeshift construction
3	Stinking quarter of tanners, butchers, and soapers
4	Quarter of criminals, witches, and black marketeers
5	Poor but dignified common quarter
6	Decaying gentry quarter with slumping homes
7	Pleasure quarter with drinking houses and brothels
8	Raucous working neighborhood of laborers
9	Merchant quarter with many stalls and shops
10	Artisan quarter with many workers laboring
11	Shrine quarter with numerous temples
12	Foreign quarter with strange outsiders

BUILDING A CRIMINAL GROUP

Where there is wealth, there are those willing to acquire it by less than legal means. Many criminal groups bind their members together by shared rituals of belonging and fraternity, and some go so far as to dabble in dark supernatural powers to aid their acts. “Thieves Guilds” do not generally exist in the Three Lands, but these secret organizations can become institutions every bit as cunning.

1d12	GROUP MEMBER	FAVORITE TECHNIQUES OR SPECIAL TRAITS
1	Hardened assassin	Poisoner, Frames victims for capital crimes, Crossbowman, Offers victims as cult sacrifice
2	Petty thug or ruffian	Desperate country boy, Hardened scum, Works with prostitute lure, Picks on outcasts
3	Expensive courtesan	Offers forbidden fare, Expert blackmailer, Powerful and gullible patron, Innocent look
4	Corrupt local official	Collects nonexistent taxes, Requires bribes to avoid arrest, Drug addict, Gambling fiend
5	Common pickpocket	Pitiful but sturdy beggar, “Helpful” local guide, Works with crowd of beggar children
6	Cheating merchant	Cheats foreigners, Sells shoddy goods, Clerk in a richer merchant’s house
7	Bush-roving bandit	Has ruffian minions, Hires on as fake guard, Subsidized by rival prince, “Robin Hood”
8	Secret fence of stolen goods	Public face as jeweler/goldsmith/merchant, Sells to amoral nobles, Deep in debt to group
9	Smiling con man	Woe-struck girl, “Easily-gulled bumpkin”, Long-con artisan, Likes to kill his marks
10	Adorable urchin	Group-raised orphan, Lookout, Bait to lure in victims, Abused slave to the group
11	Bought-off guard	Cynical indifference to all but silver, Drunkard needing coin, Blackmail victim
12	Agile cat burglar	Acrobatic virtuoso, Innocent-looking girl, Cases the house as a servant, Works with lover

1d12	UNIQUE SKILL OR ADVANTAGE
1	Has magical gifts or mastery of dark witchcraft
2	Astonishingly comely and charming
3	Familial ties with local officials
4	Has a magic item that aids their thefts
5	Controls an excellent hideout location
6	The favor of a spirit aids their thievery
7	Knows everybody in the local criminal circles
8	Has blackmail on local officials
9	Their family is very large and very protective
10	Remarkable physical prowess
11	Extremely nondescript and talented at stealth
12	Has inside contacts with merchants and officials

1d12	HOW THEY BECAME A MEMBER
1	Parent was a member of the group
2	Was “invited” to join after being found stealing
3	Greed and ambition goaded them
4	Criminal outcast from family, joined in desperation
5	Seduced in by a lover in the group
6	Promised revenge by the group against a hated foe
7	Joined but secretly desired to destroy the group
8	Joined to gain protection from their thefts
9	Group aided them in a moment of need
10	Envious and hateful toward all who have wealth
11	Born natural at criminal pastimes
12	Given to group as a child to pay off a debt

1d12	WORST NPC FLAW OR MISTAKE
1	Local official has blackmail on them
2	Spills group secrets when drunk
3	Secretly murdered another member of the group
4	Prone to badly overestimating their skills
5	Spendthrift constantly in need of more money
6	Too flashy and overt, certain to be caught soon
7	Made dark pact with a sorcerer for occult aid
8	Former member of a very hostile rival group
9	Has secretly lost their nerve for the work
10	Group’s leadership took a strong dislike to them
11	Unprovably let down a teammate very badly
12	Too quick to resort to violence to solve problems

1d12	WORST NPC ENEMY OR RIVAL
1	Privately slated for death by the group’s leader
2	The former group virtuoso now outshone by them
3	Driven city official determined to prove his crimes
4	Spouse of someone dead due to their actions
5	Ambitious young upstart seeking to show them up
6	Former victim nursing schemes for revenge
7	Ex-group member with a bitter grudge
8	Former lover they betrayed for the group
9	Their former master, jealous of their raw talent
10	Their former pupil, impatient to push them aside
11	Clan relative enraged at their shameful deeds
12	Former employer, robbed and betrayed

LOST SHRINE

The chaos of the Long War buried many old shrines under the weight of battle. The Eternal nursed a special grudge against the Spirit Way and the Sun Faith, tolerating only their own foul faith in the lands under their rule. The wilderness is dotted with many such forgotten shrines- some to noble faiths now abandoned, and others that remain sworn to the Gods Below.

1d12	LOCATION	CHARACTERISTIC ELEMENTS
1	Altar chamber	Desecrated altar, looming statue, lines of wooden icons, elaborate bas-reliefs, sacrificial remains
2	Clerical cell	Simple furnishings, wooden icons, ritual vestments, washbasins, personal shrines
3	High Priest's chambers	Decaying splendor, servant nook, personal altar, balcony view, concubine's bones, splendid robe
4	Infirmery	Rows of grass cots, cold hearth, stained bedding, corroded metal surgical tools, medicines
5	Kitchen	Baskets, calabashes, sacks, iron cauldrons, great firepits, sharp objects, decaying foodstuffs
6	Prayer room	Wall paintings or bas-reliefs, grass mats, wooden icons, scriptural texts
7	Relic vault	Corroded bronze door, lethal traps, guardian spirit, coffers of iron-bound hardwood
8	Ritual chamber	Pots of strange materials, charcoal marks on floor, braziers, knives, drums, flutes, masks
9	Ritual item storage	Rows of shelving, bundles hanging from ceiling, mummified animals, bottles of strange fluids
10	Scriptorium	Raw papyrus, ink vials, tooled leather, carved boards, corroded tools, gold leaf, writing brushes
11	Shrine workshop	Hand tools, raw materials for necessary manufactures, pots, precious components
12	Storeroom	Stacks of baskets, wooden chests, ceiling bundles, piles of goods, vermin, trapped thief's bones

1d12	SHRINE GUARDIANS OR PERILS
1	Furious undead High Priest
2	Heresiarch who has claimed the temple for his sect
3	Loosed "god"-beast that prowls the ruin
4	Bandit chief who uses the shrine for a base
5	Angry spirit who dwells in the shrine
6	Degenerate heirs of the last priests
7	Remnants of those who destroyed the shrine
8	Restless shades of the slain clergy
9	A grim curse upon intruders
10	A mad spirit demanding sacrifice from interlopers
11	Animated idol that seeks to smash invaders
12	Divine disease that smites looters

1d12	VALUABLES FOUND IN A SHRINE
1	Jeweled spirit altar idol
2	Ceremonial spear or dagger in precious metal
3	Gem-studded ritual regalia
4	Holy relic of a great marabout
5	Sack of trade ingots offered in tribute
6	Gemmed statuette offered by grateful devotee
7	Splendid armor for the god's champion
8	Rich plunder seized from enemies of the god
9	Furnishings inlaid with gems and precious metal
10	Golden finery of the High Priest's wives
11	Mystical key to a warded vault, perhaps far away
12	Altar cups, blades, or plates in precious metal

1d12	INTERESTING SHRINE INHABITANTS
1	Beleaguered caretaker struggling in vain
2	Determined reclamer of the shrine
3	Priest seeking salvage of important relics
4	Last survivor of the last adventuring party
5	Runaway slave seeking refuge
6	Ragged exile who is paranoid about assassins
7	Nganga seeking to use the ruin for dark rites
8	Beneficent spirit trying to protect what remains
9	Scholar seeking lost knowledge of the faith
10	Griot who wishes to memorialize the faith
11	Treasure-hunter obsessed with a buried trove
12	Degenerate "god" that is now more a monster

1d12	TRAITS OF THE SHRINE'S FAITH
1	An affection for human sacrifice
2	Burial of precious relics with the honored dead
3	Creation of monstrous guard-abominations
4	Ruthless oppression of surrounding peasants
5	Famously beautiful architecture and furnishings
6	Refuge for numerous unwanted noble scions
7	Dabbling in dark and sinister sorceries
8	Jailers of some horror kept beneath the shrine
9	Was the last remnant of a once-widespread faith
10	The priests were said to be not-entirely human
11	It demanded enormous tribute from devotees
12	It kept a dangerous and powerful magic item

CAVERN COMPLEX

Something about a series of subterranean passages and twisting tunnels just naturally attracts adventurers, and it's likely that you'll have need of a quick set of caverns at some point. The tables below assume that the caverns are occupied by some manner of inhabitants or bear signs of former occupation. Multiple rolls might be used to discern the original inhabitants and those who then displaced them.

1d12	LOCATION	CHARACTERISTIC ELEMENTS
1	Blister cave	Rounded bubble formed by escaping volcanic gas, basalt walls, vent in ceiling
2	Chimney	Sunlight far above, fresh air, climbable walls, pit leading down to darkness, charnel stench
3	Crawlway	Too tight to stand, water-cut passage walls, vermin biting in the dark, way narrows suddenly
4	Horizontal crack	Stone layer fallen downward, too low to stand, unstable surfaces, sudden narrowing
5	Lava tube	Smooth basalt walls, puddled stone formations, volcanic activity, sloping floors
6	Pillar room	Stalactites and stalagmites everywhere, wetness, glistening colors, mazy path, ambushes
7	Pitched passage	Steep drop or wall requiring special care to climb, foes lurking at top
8	Ridge cave	Triangular ceiling formed by buckling hot stone plates, smooth surfaces, perpendicular to tubes
9	Shaped chamber	Squared walls, signs of stonework, prehuman proportions, eldritch signs
10	Sloped cave	Water flow cutting a downward channel, stone slab fallen inward, lava tube forced upward
11	Underground stream	Eyeless fish in pools, lime-crusted objects, mirror-black water, deep flow cut in the floor
12	Vertical crack	Extremely narrow passage, crack formed between separating walls, ceiling lost in darkness

1d12	CAVERN COMPLEX INHABITANTS
1	A pack of savage beasts
2	A monstrous abomination from a long-past age
3	Ragged bandits lying in wait
4	Sinister nganga with his creations and minions
5	Degenerate humans driven out of their societies
6	Followers of a demented priest or mad prophet
7	A cell of Eternal concealing their presence
8	Desperate refugees terrified of all outsiders
9	Angry spirits of people massacred in the caves
10	Wildcat miners who will silence any interlopers
11	Thieves favoring the caves as a rendezvous
12	Spies or military raiders from a neighboring land

1d12	VALUABLES FOUND IN A CAVE
1	Uncut gemstones that may appear mere pebbles
2	Veins of pure gold trace across the cavern wall
3	Rare crystals of value to sages and ngangas
4	The moldering belongings of a former spelunker
5	An ancient chest, long since abandoned
6	Belongings covered in a thin layer of limestone
7	Prehuman artifacts of precious metal
8	A former resident's stash of coins and rough gems
9	Minerals with strange and useful properties
10	Waters infused by the stones with magical effects
11	Precious idols of a cult that once worshiped here
12	Exquisitely beautiful mineral formations

1d12	THOSE WHO WOULD LIVE IN A CAVE
1	The bestial "god" of a sinister local cult
2	A nganga seeking emphatic and guarded privacy
3	An exiled prince, hiding from assassins
4	A runaway bride pursued by a brutal husband
5	A holy marabout seeking silent contemplation
6	The last heir of the prehuman cave-sculptors
7	The savage guardian of a bandit chief's trove
8	An Eternal who actually seeks only to be left alone
9	Guardian of the cave, as it is holy to a local cult
10	Artist obsessed with the water-shaped rock pillars
11	Crazed hermit who pretends to supernatural gifts
12	Kidnapping victim being held for ransom

1d12	DANGEROUS GEOLOGY
1	Hot springs that gout with gusts of live steam
2	Rotten stalactites that threaten to fall and impale
3	Limestone crust over dried-up watercourse cut
4	Odorless fumes that stifle and confuse
5	Cursed, maddening jewels from the Gods Below
6	Unstable crust over boiling mudpits
7	Loose footing on a slope near a crevasse
8	Blinding sunlight reflected through crystal seams
9	Ancient still-burning coal fire
10	Fast-flowing underground watercourse
11	Formations of caustic minerals that burn skin
12	A maze of twisty little passages, all alike



A BESTIARY OF THE THREE LANDS

Heroes require appropriately mighty foes, and it is up to the GM to ensure that sufficient challenges are to hand. When arranging these foes the GM needs to ensure that the enemies are appropriate for the setting and the circumstances. The Dia of Kirsi is not going to be guarded by a brace of peasant spearmen, and the black cities of the east are inevitably going to be teeming with powerful Eternal nobles. Adventurers who insist on thrusting themselves into the very heart of great dangers should find those dangers, whether or not they're ready to deal with them. If they're wise, they might come to understand this in time to flee for their lives.

Most of the time, however, a GM is going to be needing foes more appropriate to their PCs' prowess. This chapter includes a wide variety of potential enemies, along with those that might well serve as allies to a group sufficiently persuasive and diplomatic. In its pages a GM will also find guidelines for creating new creatures to spice up the game, and tips on placing and running these fearsome creatures.

REACTION ROLLS

Some creatures are going to be hostile toward the party regardless of circumstances. A man-eating leopard is not going to be inclined to pause for parley with humans, and a mob of bandits lying in wait for victims is not going to stop and talk before launching their arrows. In these situations there is no question about the likely reaction.

In other situations things are less certain. Many intelligent beings will be willing to talk with the party before deciding to fight or flee, and even an enemy who was struggling to kill the PCs a moment ago might be moved to reconsider his position after half his friends are down with assegais in their bellies. If a creature's response to the PCs is uncertain, a *reaction roll* is useful.

A reaction roll is very simple: the GM rolls 2d6, and the higher the result, the better the reaction from the subject. For results of 12+, the best plausible outcome is obtained- cheerful friendship, grudging tolerance, or even a willingness to be bribed instead of attacking as their master wishes them to do. For results of 2 or less, the worst plausible outcome results- outraged attacks, screamed curses in a merchant's stall, an oba's murderous fury, or sudden violence in a chance meeting in the bush. The reaction roll is modified by the PC negotiator's Charisma modifier and whatever relevant skill they are using to persuade their interlocutor, assuming they share a language. Some situations will likewise cant the roll, with very negative situations applying up to a -4 penalty to the roll, and very good reasons for cooperation providing up to a +4 bonus.

Reaction rolls can be used whenever a quick sense of an NPC's attitude is required. As a general rule, if you need to decide whether or not an NPC will cooperate with a suggestion, make a fast reaction roll, and if the suggestion is reasonable an 8+ result will mean agreement.

Reaction rolls are not magical. Even the most charming griot is not going to be able to convince a band of cannibal cultists to repent of their hunger unless actual supernatural suasion is used. By the same token, sometimes the best plausible reaction is none too good; the Ahonsu's jailer might be persuaded to smuggle out a letter from the dungeons, but there's no way he's going to risk the sorcerer-king's anger by releasing his prisoners.

MORALE CHECKS

Cowards don't last long in the wilds of the Three Lands, but neither do those who scorn the value of their own lives. NPCs under severe strain or faced with dire peril to their lives may be forced to make a *morale check* in order to continue fighting. PCs never need to make morale checks, and may continue fighting for as long as they think prudent.

To make a morale check, the GM rolls 2d6. If the total is greater than the subject's morale score, they immediately break. For some, this might mean fleeing for their lives, while others might pull back from the fight and bunker down in a defensible position. Whatever the particular expression, they no longer want to fight and are interested largely in saving their own lives.

Morale checks are usually made in the following situations:

- The first time an ally is killed.
- The first time the enemy uses flashy and destructive magic.
- When more than half of their allies are killed or incapacitated.

Other situations might likewise prompt a morale check, and the check may be modified by the situation. For instance, a swarm of forty bandits is not going to flee from a lone hero after the first casualty. Likewise, a dozen peasant conscripts faced with a legendary warrior might require a morale check simply to attempt any resistance at all.

In all cases, the GM should be reasonable about morale and its consequences. Most warriors are not unflinching death-dealers who continue to lay about them with undimmed ferocity even when all of their comrades have varnished the walls with their brains. Most soldiers will prefer to retreat after being overcome, and wild beasts will not linger for honor's sake if being battered by flame and steel. If the PCs offer only death for surrender, however, even the most craven peasant might well fight to the death simply out of the courage of despair.

TREASURE AND POSSESSIONS

Most intelligent creatures find it wisest to cache their belongings in safety rather than carry them around on their backs. Bandits and other wandering reprobates might have significant valuables with them, but most random encounters will have nothing worth plundering.

More sedentary creatures might well have a cache of valuable belongings, depending on the GM's choices when creating the adventure. Intelligent creatures will always make sensible use of any magic items or useful implements they might possess, and adventurers will often be obliged to take possession of the best plunder from the cold hands of its latest wielder.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

The wilderness is a dangerous place, as are the depths of a lost tomb-house or the pillared courts of some ruined palace. Aside from the dangers the GM has placed in specific locations, there is often the risk of running into wandering monsters or local inhabitants on patrol. To determine whether or not a pleasant tour of the ruins is interrupted by some man-eating monstrosity, the GM makes a *random encounter check*.

The frequency of random encounter checks will depend on the setting. For an overland journey through the wilderness, the check might be made once a day. If the bush is particularly dangerous, two checks might be made each day. If the PCs are skulking through an ancient temple now inhabited by a vicious band of leopard cultists, the check might be due every ten minutes. Stealthy sneaking might decrease the odds of discovery, while loud combat or door-breaking might automatically draw unwanted attention from nearby.

The standard random encounter check is 1d6. On a 1, something unpleasant has crossed the PCs' path. Some GMs find it most convenient to make up specific random tables for an area listing likely encounters, while others will just pick a probable interrupter and drop them on the PCs.

Some GMs ignore random encounters entirely, finding them an unnecessary distraction. Still, random encounters encourage PCs to remain focused on their goals and to avoid wasting time in arguments or tedious fine-toothed combing of their surroundings. The more time the PCs spend dawdling in the tomb-house, the more likely they're going to get rushed by an Eternal patrol- and since such foes are wandering monsters, they probably don't even have any belongings worth stealing.

RECORDING COMBAT STATISTICS

The average short-form statistics line for *Spears of the Dawn* looks something like this:

1 Eloko: AC 6, Move 20', HD 3, Atk +5/1d6x2 claws, Save 14+, Morale 8, Skill +2, bells chime as a *Nkisi of the Deadened Mind*

AC is the armor class of the foe, with normal unarmored humans qualifying as AC 9. **Move** indicates the number of feet the creature can move each round while still being able to act. **HD** gives the creature's hit dice, which are always 1d8 to compensate for their inability to reroll their hit points as they rise in power. An individual creature's hit points are based on their hit dice- the GM would roll 3d8 to find out an individual eloko's hit points. **Atk** gives the attack bonus and damage for the creature's attacks. In the eloko's case, it gets two claw attacks at a +5 hit bonus, each of them doing 1d6 damage.

Save gives the creature's saving throw. Rather than having multiple saving throws like a PC, a creature has only one saving throw target, one equal to 15 minus half the creature's hit dice, rounded up. Thus, the 3 HD eloko has a saving throw of 14 or better. **Morale** provides the creature's morale score, with 6 being the average frightened peasant, 8 being a trained warrior, 10 for an elite veteran, and 12 for creatures that know no mortal fear.

Skill gives the skill check bonus the creature applies to all activities it ought to be skilled at- in the eloko's case, that would involve stealth, music, and tracking prey. Other skill checks would gain no bonus, because they have nothing to do with an eloko's expected talents. Finally, any special abilities are noted in shorthand at the end of the statline, such as the magical chimes the eloko uses to daze and subdue their human prey.

When creating your own adventures or making notes for encounters, this short statline is usually all a GM needs to run a fight. The quick enemy stat sheet in the Resources section can also be useful for some of the more common foes a band of heroes might face.

ENEMY TYPES AND POWERS

Some PC abilities only affect certain types of enemies, such as spirits, undead, or Eternal. The monster description will specifically note whether or not a creature is one of these types.

Some creatures also have unique abilities. One particularly fearsome power possessed by some spirits and undead is that of life draining. If a creature with life draining strikes a victim, the target immediately loses one level or hit die, dying instantly if reduced to zero hit dice or levels. Powerful nganga magic can be used to restore this loss, but until it is mended the victim is immediately dropped to the minimum experience points required for their prior level. If the blight is corrected, the PC regains any lost experience points along with the missing level. A character who loses a level immediately rolls one hit die and subtracts it from their maximum hit points, to a minimum of 1 HP.

Other special abilities include poisons, curses, unique magical gifts, or multiple attacks per action. As in all things, the GM is the final arbiter of how these powers work in the case of disagreement.

CREATING NEW CREATURES

The following tables provide guidelines for creating new types of enemies based on the sort of role you need them to fill. NPCs and other creatures need not be bound by the same rules that apply to PCs, and a GM should always feel free to create whatever sort of creatures he or she finds appropriate to their needs.

GMs should also feel free to simply take an existing set of statistics and "reskin" them as whatever sort of creature they need. Most creature statistics are sufficiently abstract that the real flavor of a monster lies in how it's played and what it does rather than fine graduations of attack bonuses or movement rates. The exact same set of stats can turn into two drastically different creatures if the GM plays one as a berserk thorn-spirit and the other as a skulking devil of the savannah grass.

CREATING NEW CREATURES

The first step is to decide the kind of role the creature should fulfill. Exceptionally weak versions of one of these roles should halve the attack bonus and hit dice, while stronger varieties might add half again their attack and hit die totals. For attack damage, either use the listed example or swap out the entry provided for weapons or natural attack modes appropriate to the creature.

ROLE	AC	MOVE	HD	ATK	SAVE	MORALE	SKILL
TRIVIAL VERMIN	7	30'	1/2	+1/1d4 bite	15+	7	+1
ORDINARY WARRIOR	7	30'	1	+2/by weapon	15+	8	+1
FRAGILE STALKER	6	30'	2	+4/1d6 x 2 claws	14+	8	+2
BRUTISH MEAT SLAB	6	20'	7	+8/by weapon	12+	9	+1
SORCEROUS CASTER	6	30'	4	+4/by weapon, plus spells	13+	8	+2
LETHAL WARRIOR	4	30'	7	+9/by weapon damage +2	11+	10	+3
FAST CHASER	4	60'	4	+7/1d6 x 2 claws	13+	8	+2
GLASS CANNON	5	30'	3	+9/2d6 weapon or special power	14+	8	+2
SUPERLATIVE WARLORD	1	30'	10	+12/double normal weapon damage	10+	11	+4
MONSTROUS TITAN	3	40'	12	+9/1d10 x 2 claws, 1d10 bite	9+	10	+3

Next, roll or choose the flavor of its combat behavior. Some creatures might have their basic nature established by the role you need them to play, but a “hesitant ambusher” stalker isn’t going to act the same way as a “sadistic killer” stalker.

COMBAT BEHAVIOR			
1d20	BEHAVIOR	1d20	BEHAVIOR
1	Calculated- never strikes without an advantage.	11	Loves to take prisoners, possibly to eat later
2	Always goes after most insulting or annoying foe	12	Sadistic beast that toys with its victims before killing them
3	Reckless, charging in at the biggest enemy	13	Always attacks the least-visibly-armored target
4	Treacherous, feigning harmlessness until it strikes	14	Prefers ranged combat if it has a missile weapon
5	Always lets allies engage first before it risks itself	15	Easily panicked by magic, or by fire if a simple beast
6	Hesitant to engage, and always prefers ambushes	16	Builds elaborate ambush zones to trap prey
7	Loves false retreats to lure foes into traps	17	Ruthlessly utilitarian about sacrificing allies for own survival
8	Focuses its attacks on one target relentlessly	18	Fights enemies almost randomly, heedless of single targets
9	Cowardly, and always pulls back after being hurt	19	Always shies away from the last enemy to hit it
10	Always attacks the last foe to injure it	20	Will never attack without allies, even at an advantage

Finally, roll or choose any special abilities the creature might have. Powerful spirits are often immune to non-magical weaponry, and even mundane beasts or men might know a special trick or two that can surprise an unwary party.

SPECIAL ABILITIES			
1d20	ABILITY	1d20	ABILITY
1	Tough hide, good armor, or nimble: -2 AC bonus	11	Mimic: Can disguise itself as something harmless
2	Sharp teeth or weapon: +2 damage bonus	12	Regenerates: Regains 4 lost HP per round
3	Sorcerous hide: immune to non-magical weapons	13	Toxic: Inflicts a poison or disease on a hit
4	Sneaky: Skill bonus applies to stealth, +1 on checks	14	Magical: Has a power equivalent to a spell or miracle
5	Tough: Creature always has maximum HP for HD	15	Skillful: Gain +2 to attack bonus
6	Fast: Add +10' to creature's Move rate	16	Fearless: Gain +2 to morale score
7	Brings Friends: Never encountered alone	17	Berserk: Gain +2 to morale, hit roll, and dmg when hurt
8	Lucky Stars: -2 bonus to Save score	18	Diehard: Fights for one round after hitting zero hit points
9	Fireproof: Immune to an elemental damage type	19	Leader: Gives a +2 hit and morale bonus to allied creatures
10	Vampiric: Gains half damage done as healing	20	Taboo: Killing it inflicts a -2 hit roll Lesser Curse on slayer

CREATURES OF THE THREE LANDS

The wilds of the Three Lands teem with creatures both natural and otherwise, and it is a distressing likelihood that bands of young heroes might find themselves in bloody conflict with them. The following list of creatures includes some of the more likely foes that the Spears of the Dawn might face, along with a leavening of more mundane creatures that can still prove dangerous to an inexperienced or unprepared group. The entries follow the usual form for monster statistics, with "No. Enc." listing both the number found wandering and the total number within a lair of the things.

BUFFALO

No. Enc.	2d6 (1d10+10)
MOVEMENT	60'
ARMOR CLASS	7
HIT DICE	3
ATTACKS	+4/gore
DAMAGE	1d8
SAVE	14+
MORALE	9
SKILL BONUS	+1

A lion might rend a warrior who draws its ire, but a buffalo will murder a man for the sheer pleasure of it. As naturally vicious as a hippopotamus, a buffalo is one of the most dangerous creatures to be found in the Yellow Lands, roaming both the savannahs and the forests. Average specimens stand about five feet tall at the shoulder and have horns roughly three feet from point to point. They are most often found in small herds in the Three Lands, though rogue bulls are sometimes found alone, and some herds combine into exceptionally large groups.

Buffalo work together with an unusual degree of intelligence, and will fight to rescue downed or captured herdmates. Wounded buffalo will sometimes go so far as to ambush pursuers. Any reaction rolls related to buffalo suffer an automatic -4 penalty, given their natural aggression.

CROCODILE

No. Enc.	1d6 (2d6)
ARMOR CLASS	6
MOVEMENT	40'
HIT DICE	4
ATTACKS	+5/bite
DAMAGE	1d10
SAVE	13+
MORALE	8
SKILL BONUS	+1

Pebble-skinned denizens of most rivers in the Three Lands, crocodiles are found both as lone hunters and in small groups. They rarely work together to bring down prey, but a group agitated by an attack on one of their number may join in fighting back.



ELOKO, THE CANNIBAL DWARVES

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

Deep in the forest, these waist-high little men are a mortal threat both to unwary hunters and any woman unfortunate enough to cross their paths. The Eloko have a marrow-deep hatred for humanity, and especially love to devour the flesh of women. They ring little chimes that daze and deaden the mind of their enemies, acting as a *Nkisi of the Deadened Mind* upon the victim, save that they will make no resistance as the eloko devours them alive. A target who resists the peal of the bells will be immune to their effect for a day afterwards. When discovered, the eloko appear much like little men, save that grass grows from their heads instead of hair, and they wear mantles of leaves instead of clothing. Their fingers are long and nailed with sharp, hooked talons.

ETERNAL

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

The Eternal come in several different varieties depending on the nature of the rites used to animate them. Those who receive only the simplest and most cursory rituals rise as dreamers, men and women locked into a half-dreaming existence that leaves them only dimly aware of their surroundings. They instinctively attempt to labor and act as they did in life, but can be dragooned into other service by more powerful varieties of Eternal. Like all Eternal, they have a profound disgust of all living creatures and running water, though this loathing can be reined in by an attentive master. Dreamers usually have sufficient intelligence to carry out their duties or respond to unexpected events, but they lack cunning or the ability to make long-term plans.

Those who receive better rites become nobles, reborn with their full intellect and a clear understanding of their new estate. These nobles can exert control over lesser Eternal. If no rival intervenes, they can dominate an unlimited number of inferiors, but most nobles find themselves balked by other Eternal who have no intention of allowing a rival to seize control of all available servants. If two Eternal dispute control over an inferior, both make skill checks and the highest roll wins mastery for at least the next week. Nobles can easily discern whether or not an inferior is obedient to their will. Eternal nobles retain all the skills they possessed in life, and many acquire the talents of a nganga or marabout in the long dark years of their reign.

Those who receive the finest and most glorious rituals of translation will rise as lords, mighty beyond the dreams of ordinary men and gifted with great sorcerous powers. All lords are at least fifth-level ngangas or marabouts of the Gods Below, and many are more skilled still. They may command nobles just as nobles command Sleepers.

All Eternal gradually desiccate without the restoring nourishment of human flesh and blood, and they cannot heal injuries without such food. An adult human male will provide enough sustenance to heal any amount of injury, and will keep an Eternal perfectly lifelike in seeming for three months. Nobles and lords often demand such food, but few dreamers are allowed the luxury of such regular meals. The rituals of their creation require at least 1,000 si worth of obscene icons and hideous ritual tools, but once these implements are at hand any number of dreamers may be created with only fifteen minutes' work each by someone with at least Occult-1 skill and training in the rituals. Creating a noble requires 10,000 si worth of expended ingredients, while the revivification

of a lord demands ritual implements worth 25,000 si and ingredients worth 50,000 more. Very rarely, a ritual meant to create a lesser Eternal will somehow result in the creation of a greater variety, either through blind luck or the natural strength of will possessed by the victim. Eternal may be created by humans, but the new-made immortal is under no obligation to obey their creator, and will likely despise them for their hateful liveliness.

Eternal always take minimum damage from piercing weapons, as their unliving frames bleed only at their will and feel little pain. They are immune to all diseases and poisons as well, for their blood does not pump within their veins unless they will it so.

Eternal are found most often in small cells of a noble leading a collection of dreamers, or a lost band of dreamers pantomiming their old existence in some long-forgotten tomb-house. Their strongest citadel in the west is in the Silent City, where a half-dozen Eternal lords duel each other for control of its crumbling spires and the use of the human prisoners they seize from nearby villages.

Eternal are not inevitably condemned to evil, but it is extremely difficult for them to fight their new nature. Their instinctive hatred and disgust for living creatures can be tamed by nobles and lords, but it remains a gnawing presence in their mind. Their hunger for human flesh is harder to avoid, but some Eternals eat only those already dead, or resign themselves to appearing like withered corpses without the nourishment of fresh blood. The vast majority succumb to the impulses of their new life, however, and become the cannibalistic monsters that legend would make of them.



FANGED APE

No. Enc.	1d6 (3d6)
Movement	40'
Armor Class	7
Hit Dice	3
Attacks	+4/bite, smash, or weapon
Damage	1d6 bite/smash or by weapon
Save	14+
Morale	8
Skill Bonus	+1

The gorillas of the deep jungle are peaceful creatures, but the dreaded fanged ape is a different breed of primate. These hulking creatures live alone or in small bands, possessing an intelligence almost like that of a human. Some use crude clubs as weapons, and all can hurl stones with more force than a veteran slinger. They are aggressive, vicious creatures by nature and love to hunt men; at times they creep into villages to snatch away children to devour. They are found most often in the Lokossan jungles, but some troupes have been found in the forests of Nyala, and there is a mountain-dwelling breed infamous for its rockfalls and ambushes in the high passes of Kirsí.

GHOST

No. Enc.	1 (1d6)
Movement	30'
Armor Class	3
Hit Dice	5
Attacks	+6/chilling touch
Damage	1d8 plus level drain
Save	13+
Morale	12
Skill Bonus	+2

Both spirit and undead, the ghost is the disembodied shade of some poor, ill-buried wretch, or a victim so tied to the world by grief or need that they cannot pass on to the land of the spirits. They linger near their place of death, often becoming hateful and maddened by their vain desperation.

Ghosts cannot be harmed by non-magical weapons, as ordinary substance passes through their intangible forms. Their touch is icy, inflicting a killing chill and draining one experience level from the victim. If dispersed by violence or satisfied in their need, their souls are freed to attempt the long journey to the world beyond.

Ghosts are usually tethered to a limited area, and are usually restricted to an area no more than a few hundred feet from their place of death. Most are also unable to manifest in the daylight, with the cleansing radiance of the sun dispersing them harmlessly for a time. Some ghosts are more resilient, however, and can actually animate dead flesh or inanimate matter to form a physical body fit for punishing those who incur its unquenchable rage.

GIANT

No. Enc.	1 (1d6)
Movement	50'
Armor Class	6 or by armor
Hit Dice	10
Attacks	+11/fist or by weapon
Damage	1d8 fist or double normal weapon damage
Save	10+
Morale	11
Skill Bonus	+4

The towering lords of the Mountains of the Sun are figures of myth in Nyala. Every child knows the tales of the Old Kings and the pacts they made with the giants at the dawn of the empire, of the secrets the great ones taught to Nyala's first kings. These arts of exquisite smithing and superlative masonry helped Nyala's last Mai become Nyala's first emperor. Giantish craftsages dwelled in the cities of men, and even took concubines and consorts from among their human allies. But in time the alliance was broken, and the giants retreated to their great fastnesses amid the cold mountain peaks, leaving their human children behind. They no longer welcome the company of men, and those who go among their mountains do so at peril of their lives.

Giants have the look of massive humans, perfectly proportioned at heights ranging from nine to twelve feet. Their flesh is dark as polished basalt, but their eyes are colored in jewel-bright hues. Their hair is the color of fire, shades ranging from the incandescent white of a furnace to the smoky crimson of dying embers. Their features vary as they do in the kingdoms of men, though they are invariably handsome and well-proportioned in all ways. They dress in spectacularly elaborate robes, decadent lacings of jewelry, or fantastical armor of steel and stranger alloys. Plainness and simplicity are contemptible to them.

Sages say that the giants were fashioned in the dawn of the world, before the spirits devised the race of men. Every giant was an individual creation and a singular creature of its own kind, each made as an experiment by the gods as they sought to agree on the proper shape for humanity. The gods made many such models before they decided to make mankind a more fragile, transient thing, and hid away the sleeping giants within the mountains of the north. The flames of the mountain-hearts warmed them as they slept, however, and they began to wake and fashion houses amid the icy peaks. Even now, it is said that many giants lie sleeping beneath the mountains, awaiting the coming of a sufficient fire.

Giants do not grow old, nor do they hunger, nor are they harmed by frost or flame. They may give or bear children by humans, but the offspring are human rather than giantish, though they are often marked by hair or eyes like those of their giant parent. No new giants have been made since the dawn of the world, and their numbers inevitably dwindle as the ages progress. They are few in the mountains now, and some suppose that there can be no more than a few thousand remaining in all the north.

Giants are all remarkably talented at matters of war and artisan-ship, having inherited a deeper awareness of the substance of things as a consequence of their own divine construction. It is not uncommon for some of them to have mastered the arts of the nganga, and to have devised strange and terrible enchantments over their long years of life. Their bitterness toward the gods prevents them from ever gaining the blessings granted to a marabout.

Because each giant is its own species of creation, they are incorrigibly proud and willful beings. No giant will bow to another or accept anything more than a peace of convenience. Those that waken from the same mountain will sometimes deign to live together in their fortress-palaces, but even then they deal with each other as if they were a council of rival princes rather than kindred.

Giants sometimes gather together a retinue of lesser beings as servitors and guards, and a simple fear of loneliness often drives them to tolerate company that their pride might otherwise scorn. Those human interlopers that they do not slay, they take as slaves. They are unable to reproduce with their own kind, but with these slaves they conceive overseers and lieutenants for their minions, though they treat these scions hardly more kindly than other servants.

Most giants are cruel, brooding, bitter creatures. They hate the gods for discarding them and despise humans as unworthy heirs. Boredom and loneliness can drive them to strange excesses and exotic madness, and their fortress-palaces can become baroque lairs of terrible danger. Even when a giant is slain by his minions or perishes in battle with another of his kind, his empty house can remain perilous for intruders. In Nyala, there yet remain long-abandoned giant-palaces that take the lives of looters. High in the Mountains of the Sun, even grander lairs can be found.



HORSE

NO. ENC.	3d20 herd if found in the wild
MOVEMENT	80'
ARMOR CLASS	7
HIT DICE	2, 3 for hill barbs, 4 for Imperial zebras
ATTACKS	+3, +4 for hill barbs, +5 for Imperial zebras
DAMAGE	1d8 kick
SAVE	14+, 13+ for Imperial zebras
MORALE	7, or 9 for war-trained horses
SKILL BONUS	+2

While the southern lands of Lokossa and Meru are home to insect-borne diseases that cripple breeding stock, the more northern lands make great use of horsemen. Nyala has its heavy Imperial zebra cavalry and Sokone its tireless merchant-scouts, but Kirsi has the greatest fame for the quality of its horseflesh and the skill of its riders. The Kirsi lancers are renowned in song and story, and their tough hill-steeds are relentless in their sure-footed speed.

From this tradition of horsemanship, several different breeds of horses can be had in the Three Lands. While largely identical in game statistics, each breed has certain traits worth noting. Some of the breeds below are always trained for war, an education that doubles the cost of a horse. Untrained steeds will panic in the roil of battle and will flee unless their rider has the Ride-2 skill or better, while veteran warhorses can use their natural kick attacks alongside the blows of their rider.

Most horses can carry about two hundred pounds of weight without difficulty, or roughly a rider and his normal encumbrance. Riders do not usually travel much faster than foot traffic, given the need to rest horses and spend time tending them if they are to remain healthy. A rider who drives his horse can increase overland movement by 50%, but must make a Wis/Ride skill check at difficulty 9. On a failure, roll 1d8 and subtract the rider's Ride skill to find out how many days the horse is incapacitated. On 6+, the horse dies.

Common horses have no special virtues, and cost 100 si in the markets. Most horses are of this variety, particularly in the plaguey southern lands. **Hill Barbs** aren't unusually large or muscular, but they are remarkably sure-footed and tough, rolling twice for hit points and taking the better total, while also allowing their riders to ignore the movement speed penalty when crossing hill terrain. A good Barb fetches 250 si, or twice as much outside of Kirsi. **Pit ponies** are bred for work in the mines, standing no more than four feet at the shoulder. They do not panic underground and are remarkably nimble, able to go wherever a human can go. Even in combat, untrained ponies will freeze rather than fleeing. They cost 150 si, and few are ever trained for combat. **Imperial zebras** are the product of a half-successful breeding experiment conducted by the Nyalan Empire several centuries ago. The horses that resulted are zebra-striped, vicious, and powerful; all are natively war-trained and gain +2 hit points per hit die, and a +2 bonus to their attack rolls. They cost 1,000 si and more outside of Nyala.

HUMAN

	BANDIT	MERCHANT	NOBLE
No. ENC.	2d4 (4d10)	1d4 (2d6)	1 (1d4+1)
MOVEMENT	30'	30'	30'
ARMOR CLASS	By armor	By armor	By armor
HIT DICE	1	2	4
ATTACKS	+1/weapon	+2/weapon	+5/weapon
DAMAGE	By weapon	By weapon	By weapon
SAVE	15+	14+	13+
MORALE	7	8	9
SKILL BONUS	+1	+2	+2
	COMMONER	SOLDIER	ELITE SOLDIER
No. ENC.	1d8 (4d20)	1d6+1 (4d10)	1d6+1 (2d10)
MOVEMENT	30'	30'	30'
ARMOR CLASS	By armor	By armor	By armor
HIT DICE	1	1	2
ATTACKS	+0/weapon	+2/weapon	+3/weapon
DAMAGE	By weapon	By weapon	By weapon
SAVE	15+	15+	14+
MORALE	6	8	10
SKILL BONUS	+1	+1	+2

The men and women of the Three Lands come in all descriptions. The statistics provided here merely cover some of the people most likely to be of interest to a band of adventurers. Most denizens of the Five Kingdoms are simply normal humans, with no special talents and an adequate proficiency in their chosen profession.

Bandits represent the ordinary rabble that lurk between outposts of civilization. Ill-equipped, ill-disciplined, but still a danger to unwary travelers. **Soldiers** are usually better-equipped and given to more discipline in battle, while **elite soldiers** are often leaders of their less experienced brethren or guards of some important figure. **Nobles** include both the oba of a market town and the lofty courtiers of a great king's court. They usually have a certain amount of martial training as part of their upbringing, but most leave the fighting to their minions. **Merchants** are often encountered by adventurers, and these statistics represent an intrepid caravan-master leading his train of porters through dangerous terrain.

HYENA

	NORMAL	DIRE
No. ENC.	2d6 (2d6)	1d3+1 (1d3+1)
MOVEMENT	60'	50'
ARMOR CLASS	8	7
HIT DICE	1	4
ATTACKS	+2/bite	+5/bite
DAMAGE	1d6	2d6
SAVE	15+	13+
MORALE	7	9
SKILL BONUS	+1	+2

Relentless scavengers, hyena packs are known to steal kills from other large predators, particularly lions. Such behavior marks them as rebels against the natural order, and the sight of a hyena pack is counted an ill-omen by travelers. Dire hyenas are spirit-beasts with an unholy intellect, intentionally preferring the flesh of leaders and nobles and capable of luring them with subterfuges.



ILOMBA, THE WITCH-SNAKES

No. Enc.	1 (1)
MOVEMENT	30'
ARMOR CLASS	4
HIT DICE	5
ATTACKS	+6/bite
DAMAGE	1d8+1 caustic fangs
SAVE	13+
MORALE	10
SKILL BONUS	+2

This foul spirit-serpent is a servitor of the Gods Below, and seeks to spread their worship by allying itself with a suitable witch or cult leader. When such a bond is formed, the snake may adopt its "owner's" form, impersonating him so as to give him an alibi while he conducts cult rituals or performs wicked deeds.

The ilomba's life is entwined with the cult leader's; if either dies, both die. Yet their supernatural nature gifts the leader with an unholy spiritual vitality, making both of them immune to injuries from normal weapons and giving the cult leader the abilities of a third-level nganga if he does not already have such talents.

The bond between the two can only be broken at the ilomba's discretion, and such disentangling requires a day of effort before the snake can abandon an unsuitable partner.

KISHI, THE TWO-FACED ONES

No. Enc.	1 (1)
MOVEMENT	30'
ARMOR CLASS	6
HIT DICE	6
ATTACKS	+7/weapon and bite
DAMAGE	By weapon and 1d6
SAVE	12+
MORALE	10
SKILL BONUS	+3

A kishi is a malevolent spirit that takes the form of a strikingly handsome man or woman, always with a thick mane of braided hair. They act in a pleasing and seductive manner, persuading aspiring lovers to come away with them- whereupon their head twists about and the hyena-like maw beneath their braids opens wide to devour the wretched victim. They dislike open battle, and will avoid even groups that are unable to harm them unless forced to combat. The kishi cannot be injured by non-magical weapons.

Kishi are sometimes found in the wilderness, lying in wait until they can feign the role of a harmless wayfarer or bandit-attack survivor long enough to get close to an isolated hunter. The more intelligent and dangerous kishi inhabit the cities instead, where they feign a role as exotic foreign courtesans or mysterious young noblemen. They choose their victims with cold calculation, ensuring that they are men and women that others will not miss.

LEOPARD

	NORMAL	DIRE
No. Enc.	1d2 (1d4)	1d2 (1d2)
MOVEMENT	80'	70'
ARMOR CLASS	5	4
HIT DICE	4	8
ATTACKS	+5/bite, claw x 2	+9/bite, claw x 2
DAMAGE	1d6/1d4 x 2	1d8/1d6 x 2
SAVE	13+	11+
MORALE	7	10
SKILL BONUS	+2	+3

Leopards, and their larger and more terrible dire leopard cousins, are feared dwellers in almost every region of the Three Lands. A common leopard is roughly the same weight as a human, while the spirit-beast known as the dire leopard stands chest-high to a man at the shoulder. Both are relentless, cunning predators that will feed on anything they can catch. Common leopards are usually wary of humans, but the old or injured have a habit of mauling and can show a positively diabolical cunning in luring prey, ambushing the unsuspecting, and taking victims without alarming their neighbors. More than one peasant has awoken in the morning to find nothing but a bloody smear on the bed beside them and drag-marks where the leopard took their spouse. They are especially good climbers, and can take a man's corpse up into a tree with them to dine undisturbed. They will almost always attack from ambush and will break off when facing superior foes, the better to strike later.

The leopard is a symbol of power to many peoples of the Three Lands, and leopard-skin cloaks and mantles are prized by the nobility. The larger spot patterns of the dire leopard are particularly desired, but few have the courage to beard these fearsome spirit-beasts in the deep jungles where they can be found.

LEOPARD CULTIST

	CULTIST	WERE-LEOPARD
No. Enc.	1d6 (2d10)	1 (1d6)
MOVEMENT	30'	40'/80' shifted
ARMOR CLASS	By armor	4 or by armor
HIT DICE	1	6
ATTACKS	+2/weapon	+7/claws x2
DAMAGE	By weapon	1d8 x 2 or weapon
SAVE	15+	12+
MORALE	9	11
SKILL BONUS	+1	+2

From the dawn of the world, a certain type of man or woman has been enraptured by the ferocity of the wild. The power, the fearsomeness, the relentless strength of the bestial world bewitches these souls and leaves them yearning for the strength which they see in the great beasts of the wild. Guided by dark spirits, these men and women come together to form cults of murderous intent, making awful sacrifices to bestial gods for the power they

so crave. One of the most common conspiracies are those known as the “leopard cults”, by which men and women gain the power to become leopards in exchange for red sacrifice to their patron spirits.

Many of these devotees are mere human initiates, ruthless men and women who are willing to kill for the cult but have not yet earned the grim rituals that would give them true power. The adepts, however, are blessed by their patron and capable of transforming into leopards, or into a half-man shape in which they can terrorize their prey. While in leopard form, an adept gains a Move of 50’, may make two claw attacks at 1d6 damage each, and may climb at their full normal movement rate. Were-leopards cannot be harmed by non-magical weapons, even in human shape.

Leopard cults favor dagger-like hand blades that mimic the claws of a leopard, and they are known for their cannibalistic feasts. Membership in such a cabal is a capital offense in most lands, but there are always some souls willing to make such a sacrifice for the extraordinary powers they may gain.

LION

	NORMAL	DIRE
NO. ENC.	1d4 (1d8)	1 (1)
MOVEMENT	50’	60’
ARMOR CLASS	6	3
HIT DICE	5	8
ATTACKS	+6/bite & claws x2	+10/bite &claws x2
DAMAGE	1d6/1d4 x 2	1d8/1d6 x 2
SAVE	13+	11+
MORALE	9	11
SKILL BONUS	+2	+3

Kingly beasts revered for their strength and majesty, lions rule the savannahs and arid lands much as an oba rules his town- he takes what others gather. Lion prides hunt wildebeests and zebras in the main, but gladly seize prey from leopards, cheetahs, and hyenas. They will even attempt to rob crocodiles at times, though such efforts sometimes end in misfortune for the lion. They do not usually make a habit of hunting men, but lone travelers are at risk, as is any victim when a lion is too hungry or crippled to hunt elsewhere.

Dire lions, like all dire beasts, are a form of spirit and are found in the most forbidding and desolate terrain. Unlike most other dire beasts, however, they act with human intellect and a cruel, regal ambition. A dire lion will seek dominion over the natural beasts of its range, compelling them into obedience by its strange aura of rule and fashioning them into dutiful servants to its will.

It will tolerate no other lord within its realm, and any human settlements will be compelled to either worship the dire lion or face swift extinction under the teeth and claws of its minions. As such worship often involves the human sacrifice of toothsome maidens and healthy young men, many villages merely trade quick death for a lingering slaughter.



MOATIA, THE DWARF SORCERERS

NO. ENC.	1 (1)
MOVEMENT	20'
ARMOR CLASS	4
HIT DICE	7
ATTACKS	+8/blistering curse or spells
DAMAGE	1d10 curse
SAVE	12+
MORALE	9
SKILL BONUS	+3

The moatia are wizened little figures, half the height of a man, with hooked noses, yellow skin, and twisted feet that give them a perpetual limp. They are a sour and unwelcoming sort, resentful of intrusions upon their privacy and prone to hurling curses at those who offend them- and they are easily offended. All of them are accomplished ngangas of at least the fifth level of experience, and they are famous for their intimate knowledge of herbal arts and secret medicines. A moatia can cure any disease in an instant with the right herbs from its satchel. They will never give aid without suitable service, and the services they demand are sometimes bloody and wicked. A moatia most often dwells in a hut deep within the forest, and leaves warning markers of vine-woven bones to discourage intruders. There is never more than one moatia found in any given place, for they hate each other even more than they hate other creatures.

NIGHT MAN

	WARRIOR	WARCHIEF	PRIEST-LORD
NO. ENC.	1d4 (6d20)	1 (1d4)	1 (1)
MOVEMENT	30'	30'	30'
ARMOR CLASS	By armor	By armor	By armor
HIT DICE	2	8	11
ATTACKS	+2/weapon	+6/weapon	+11/weapon
DAMAGE	By weapon	Weapon+4	By weapon
SAVE	14+	11+	10+
MORALE	8	9	10
SKILL BONUS	+1	+2	+3

The first Lokossans called these humanoids "night men", for they came across the Akpara river by night to burn Lokossan villages and kidnap all they could find. Not even the wisest griot can be certain when the Night Men first started crossing the river, but for centuries the Lokossans have been locked in a bitter struggle with these beings. They come in numberless waves, and only the sorcery of the Ahonsu and the courage of the warriors of Lokossa has preserved all the west from their obscene hungers.

Night Men have a vague resemblance to normal humans, but are knotted and twisted in shape, and are always grotesquely deformed. Some have piebald patches on their skin, or excess limbs, or even wilder afflictions. They are always hairless, and so the cripples of Lokossa make a point of wearing long braids so as not to be taken for Night Men scouts.

They come most often in large, ill-organized warbands led by a powerful chieftain or sorcerer-priest, the latter functioning as marabouts or ngangas of 7th-9th level. Lokossan scouts usually pick up on these bands in time for military detachments to meet them, but sometimes they slip the net and make it across the river without being noticed. Smaller detachments of Night Men often creep over to scout and commit what evils they dare. They are rarely found outside of the Lokossan jungles. Sometimes a band strikes into the southern Meru lands, but these make poor raiding for them, for the nomadic Meru can easily outrun any warband large enough to threaten a clan. The small market villages are sometimes plundered, however, though the inhabitants usually have enough warning to flee with their herds.

The Night Men come for plunder and prisoners, carrying men and women back over the river to perform slow, hideous acts upon them. Scarred Lokossan war-sorcerers tremble at the thought of being taken prisoner by the Night Men, and all agree that swift death is a better mercy. Sometimes important men or women are taken by Night Men raiders, and small groups of heroes are dispatched to either save them or make certain they will not suffer. Such missions are often suicidal, but those who live to complete them earn great glory.

The Night Men live in the crumbled jungle-cities south of the Akpara river, their stone buildings strangely-fashioned and unlike any of the other architecture of the Five Kingdoms. There they raise strange, foul crops, though they do not build structures of their own. Each band seems to be led by its own chieftain, and they sometimes quarrel and fight with each other when not hungering for human prey.

Night Men are consumed by their hideous urges. Some are capable of clearer thought and better plans for the future, but the overwhelming force of their unclean passions soon crushes any altruistic or peaceful wishes. Had they the ability to cooperate more perfectly with each other they would likely have long ago crushed Lokossa, but whenever more than a hundred or so warriors gather together they inevitably fragment into three or four smaller bands of bloodied survivors.

Once every three or four generations, however, a particularly mighty priest-lord is able to forge an alliance of sullen warchiefs, driving their horde onward in a consuming wave that embroils all Lokossa in desperate jungle warfare. The forest shrines run red with the blood of sacrifices as the sick and aged are given to empower the Ahonsu and his nobles, and every adult capable of holding a knife is enlisted in the struggle for bare survival. It has been eighty years since the last such swarm, and some murmur that the black sorceries of the Night Men priests are beginning to rise to a crescendo once more.

Some exceptionally degenerate lords outside of Lokossa employ Night Man torturers or executioners, but few of their kind are capable of dealing with humans in any peaceful way. Rumors persist of certain amoral traders running a secret commerce with the Night Men, however, bartering metal weapons for the relics of lost cities.

NINGIRI, THE LONG EATERS

No. Enc.	1 (1)
MOVEMENT	50'
ARMOR CLASS	4
HIT DICE	8
ATTACKS	+9/bite
DAMAGE	1d10+2
SAVE	11+
MORALE	9
SKILL BONUS	+2

The ningiri are beasts, but they are terrible beasts, dwelling within the deep jungles or in the gorges of rocky hills. They have a body like that of a crocodile, but their necks are ten feet long and sinuous. Most hide their bodies behind cover while concealing their heads to await prey. Their full length is as much as thirty feet long for an adult.

Ningiri are animals, but they possess an ugly sort of cunning and are skilled at laying ambushes for the unwary.

OBIA, THE THIEVES OF WOMEN

No. Enc.	1 (1d4)
MOVEMENT	50'
ARMOR CLASS	6
HIT DICE	5
ATTACKS	+6/bite or grab
DAMAGE	1d8 bite, none for grabs
SAVE	13+
MORALE	9
SKILL BONUS	+2

No respectable man would consider giving his daughter as a wife to a witch, and so these foul sorcerers employ the obia to steal away women for their bitter houses. The spirit-beast is huge, half again as tall as a man, and resembles a slouching humanoid jackal or leopard with massively oversized paws. It moves with catlike quietness despite its size, and when it seizes the woman it has been sent to steal it flees back into the bush with impossible swiftness. Only an expert hunter can hope to track its path.

Witches sometimes use obias for household guards as well, rewarding them in hideous and shameful ways for their services. Obias are never found far from witches, and some say that they are created by the force of a witch's frustrated longing.

Obias may snatch a target by rolling two successive and successful hit rolls, neither doing any damage. If the woman they are trying to grapple succeeds in an attack before their grip is sure, the obia's grapple is broken and they must start their attempt over. If they get a good grip, they may flee with a victim, doubling their movement rate and adding a -2 penalty to any attempt to track them. A grappled victim may not fight back until the obia puts them down.

RHINO

	NORMAL	DIRE
No. Enc.	1 (1d12)	1 (1d6)
MOVEMENT	40'	40'
ARMOR CLASS	5	3
HIT DICE	6	9
ATTACKS	+7/crush	+10/crush
DAMAGE	2d6	2d10
SAVE	12+	11+
MORALE	9	11
SKILL BONUS	+2	+3

Bad-tempered natives of the savannahs and grasslands, rhinos charge anything they consider a threat- and they consider a great many things to be threatening. A sick or injured bull rhino can become a torment to a village, viciously attacking everything that moves around it until it either dies or is brought down by hunters.

ROMPO, THE SINGING JACKALS

No. Enc.	1 (2d20)
MOVEMENT	30'
ARMOR CLASS	7
HIT DICE	1, or 4 for chieftains
ATTACKS	+2/claw, or +5/claw for chieftains
DAMAGE	1d6 claws or by weapon
SAVE	15+, 13+ for chieftains
MORALE	8 or 10 for chieftains
SKILL BONUS	+1 or +2 for chieftains

Men call the rompo the "singing jackal", but in truth it bears little resemblance to the beast. It is as big as a man but of skeletal thinness, with an emaciated, rodent-like head with human ears, badger-clawed forearms, and broad-pawed hind legs.

It sings softly and sweetly as it hunts for its food, which is the rotting flesh of men. It haunts tombs, both to devour the corpses within and to murder those who come to perform rites for the dead. Once it slays a human, it hides the body away until it is sufficiently decayed to eat. While bestial in seeming, the rompo is as clever as a man. It cannot speak normally, but relishes tricking victims into its clutches with its dulcet songs.

Rompo are most often found alone, though the necropoli of cities and the sites of terrible battles can bring swarms of the foul creatures to haunt the land. When they gather in such profusion they sometimes begin to ape the ways of men, gathering weapons from the dead and dressing in the ragged cerements of the grave. These rompo clans sometimes form choirs of doleful song, the power of their united voices sometimes sufficient to daze and bewitch an unlucky listener. When five or more rompo sing together they may cast the equivalent of a *Nkisi of the Deadened Mind* on anyone listening within fifty feet. Those who resist their song are immune to such blandishments until the following dusk.

SASABONSAM, THE WINGED MEN

No. Enc.	1d6 (2d20)
MOVEMENT	30', or 50' flight
ARMOR CLASS	9
HIT DICE	1
ATTACKS	+2/claws x2
DAMAGE	1d4 x 2
SAVE	15+
MORALE	8
SKILL BONUS	+1

Dwelling in the deep jungle or high peaks, the leather-winged sasabonsam are a vicious race of flying men, their arms webbed with leathery membranes and their joints sprouting clawed fingers. They work together with unnatural nimbleness, pairs of them darting down to snatch up men in their taloned feet and carry them off to their lairs, where they are sacrificed in hideous ways to bat-winged gods. All have fiery red hair, with the men wearing wild beards. Their bodies are lean and sinewy. Those few who have escaped their hidden cave aeries tell of seeing foul ngangas working with the winged men, and some say that certain flocks are led by the dwarfish moatia for purposes incomprehensible to men.

The sasabonsam can hold items in their wing-hands while they fly, but can attack only with their taloned feet when airborne. On the ground, they fight with light spears and daggers. They are led by the strongest male, a position susceptible to rapid turnover. They worship foul gods and evil spirits, and some among them learn the arts of the nganga or form the black alliances of an evil marabout. They view humans as mere prey, but powerful evildoers can sometimes compel them to listen to sufficiently promising plans for mutual advantage.

SNAKE

	GIANT VIPER	BLACK PYTHON	ASSASSIN SNAKE
No. Enc.	1d2 (1d8)	1 (1d3)	1 (1)
MOVEMENT	30'	30'	20'
ARMOR CLASS	7	6	4
HIT DICE	2	4	2
ATTACKS	+3/bite	+5/crush	+10/bite
DAMAGE	1d6+poison	1d8	1d4+poison
SAVE	14+	13+	14+
MORALE	7	7	10
SKILL BONUS	+2	+2	+4

The Three Lands have countless varieties of serpents, many of which are poisonous. These serpents, however, are among those most dangerous to adventurers. *Giant vipers* can grow as big as a man, trusting in their lethal poison to bring down prey as large as a buffalo. The *black python* is a relative of the equally large but more docile rock python, growing as much as twenty feet in length and possessed of a malicious disposition and almost human intelligence. It kills by constriction; each successful attack on a



victim does the listed damage in exhaustion as the victim struggles to avoid the beast's coils. If the target is reduced to zero hit points, it has been caught and slain in the beast's black-scaled coils. The *assassin snake* is a strange serpent possessed of an alien sort of intellect. Those who worship the Gods Below can often gain its favor, paying it in blood sacrifices to creep in and slay an enemy of the cult with its venom. It is found in many different appearances, but all of them are roughly four feet in length and as thick around as a man's wrist.

The poison of vipers is Toxicity 9, Interval 1 round, Virulence 1. Each interval inflicts 1d6 hit points of damage. Victims brought to 0 hit points fall unconscious and will die in an hour unless aided. That of the assassin snake is even stronger, at Toxicity 11, Virulence 2, and inflicting 2d6 points of damage per round with death coming in seconds at zero hit points.

UMTHALI, THE SNAKEMEN

	SNAKEMAN	SERPENT PRIEST
No. Enc.	1d8 (3d10)	1 (1d6)
MOVEMENT	30'	30'
ARMOR CLASS	7 or by armor	7 or by armor
HIT DICE	1	6
ATTACKS	+2/bite or weapon	+7/bite or weapon
DAMAGE	1d4 or by weapon	1d4 or by weapon
SAVE	15+	12+
MORALE	8	10
SKILL BONUS	+1	+3

In the first days, before even the Old Kings, there were certain tribes who listened to the blandishments of serpents and their promises of hidden lore. These snakes had burrowed deep in the earth and discovered the Gods Below there, and had come to worship them in their cold-blooded and heartless way. They offered favors and strength if the humans would worship them too, and some among the new-made men agreed. Their blood was mingled with that of the snakes, and they build great cities that were terrible in their magnificence and awful in their wonders.

The altars of the Gods Below smoked with the flames of grim sacrifice, and it was only with the help of the angered gods that other

humans were able to break these cities and drive these “Umthali” into the darkness. In the days of recorded history only one city of the serpent-people remained, the city called Umthalu, which was purged with fire by the ancestors of the Sokone and made their capital Chakari in the days of the Old Kings. Even then, men feared to go into the old passages below the streets, and they covered with plaster and lime the signs that the Umthali had scribed on their stone walls. Now the Eternal rule in Chakari, and men call it the Silent City where no good thing lives.

The snakemen are found in many shapes, from those with such strong serpentine blood that they seem no more than giant vipers to those who seem entirely human save for strange-colored eyes, or hairless bodies, or subtle scale-patterns on hidden skin. Many Umthali of the weakest blood are not even aware of their true nature, and die ignorant of their true lineage. Yet some of these unfortunates awake to terrible urges and dark cravings when first exposed to the relics of their ancestors. The strong-willed among them can defy their tainted blood and resist the whispers of the Gods Below, but others fall as helpless prey to these needs. All find it well to hide it, especially in Sokone they are viewed with especial horror and blamed for many sudden disasters. Some snakemen are gifted with the special favor of the Gods Below, or are possessed by the restless spirits of their long-dead ancestors. These “serpent priests” have all the abilities of a marabout of 5th to 9th level.

Secret cells of Umthali dwell in hidden places, worshiping the Gods Below and scheming to restore their rightful rule over the world. Most are wretched and degenerate, little more than beasts, but a few still preserve the forbidden arts taught them by their ancestors, and have devices of awful wonder to scourge their foes. Their leaders often have the arts of a nganga or marabout. Those who are most cunning and passable as humans sometimes seek to beguile a lord with their counsel, and manipulate human communities into worship of their sinister gods.

WALKING CORPSE

No. Enc.	1d6 (2d8)
MOVEMENT	20'
ARMOR CLASS	7 or by armor
HIT DICE	2
ATTACKS	+3/bash or by weapon
DAMAGE	1d6 bash or weapon+1
SAVE	14+
MORALE	12
SKILL BONUS	+0

Born of an unsanctified death, a walking corpse is an undead body possessed by its furious soul, one baffled in its attempts to reach the spirit world. Those who die without the help of proper funerary rites risk arising as a walking corpse, to haunt the living as a decaying abomination of noisome flesh. Walking corpses are immune to diseases and poisons, and never take more than minimum damage from piercing weapons. They often linger around their place of death, and are possessed of only a blind, burning envy toward the living. If the corpse is “slain”, the spirit is scattered and may require years to reform somewhere else.

WITCH

	MINOR	CABAL LEADER
No. Enc.	1 (2d4)	1 (1d4)
MOVEMENT	30'	30'
ARMOR CLASS	By armor	By armor
HIT DICE	2	7
ATTACKS	+3/by weapon	+8/by weapon
DAMAGE	By weapon	By weapon
SAVE	14+	12+
MORALE	8	9
SKILL BONUS	+1	+2

Some sorcerers are the product of study and discipline, of the stern tutelage of a nganga master and the labor of long hours. Others are cursed with it by birth and chance, tainted by the Gods Below with gifts to blight the innocent. Witches are both male and female and are found in any community of consequential size. Many witches are completely oblivious to their true nature, and would react with horror at any such accusation. Others gladly embrace their dark powers and use them gleefully to spread suffering.

Witches may use the nganga spell *Nkisi of the Evil Eye* three times per day, and unwitting witches will do so without even realizing it. Once per month they may use the equivalent of the nkisi ritual sorceries *Rite of the Twisted Limb* or *Burden the Accursed House* with nothing more than an occult connection and a night's evil dreaming. More powerful witches can use their dreams to inflict even more terrible suffering, and some with sufficient talent acquire the skills of a nganga to broaden the range of their power. Some witches gather together in secret cabals, meeting in each others' dreams to eat the souls of those they blight with their curses. The greatest of these witches are fearsome sorcerers, instinctively wielding magic of a dire and terrible bent.

Identifying a witch is very difficult, requiring a close inspection of the suspect by a skilled occultist. A Wis/Occult check against difficulty 10 will reveal the truth, while a failure means that the investigator is uncertain, and may not try again until they gain another experience level. This difficulty is widely dismissed by more mercenary “witch-finders”, many of whom will find suitable proof on any luckless wretch who cannot bribe them away.

Once identified, a witch may be stripped of their powers by any spell or effect that can lift a Greater Curse. The witch must honestly desire to be free of their abilities, however, or they will return within days or weeks. Many communities lack the skilled nganga necessary for the work, and take recourse to more permanent means of eliminating a danger from their midst.

Witches are not compelled to wickedness by their powers, but it requires a very virtuous and upright soul to resist the temptations of their curse. It takes only a moment's wrath to cast an evil eye on a neighbor, and once they discover their abilities many witches quietly resolve to get such use of them as they can to protect their secret. This caution often blossoms into more self-interested use of their power.

SPIRITS AND SPIRIT-BEASTS

The wilderness between cities is a home to stranger things than men, and hidden glades shelter beasts that have no place in the mundane world. These entities sometimes slip over from the spirit world to seek pleasures and strange purposes in the human world. Peaceful and benevolent spirits rarely have reason to leave the world beyond. Most of those who choose to enter this realm are cruel and casually malicious, treating humans as mere toys. They roles below provide basic statistics for the different common types.

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

Spirits tend to vary wildly in specific details. Humanoid spirits are often the shades of restless humans who have returned from the spirit world for their own varied purpose, and qualify as undead for the purposes of certain spells and powers. Spirit-beasts may be escaped fauna from the far realms or they might be human spirits who have returned in a form to fit their natural savagery. A GM can use the following table to flesh out more of their appearance should they not already have those details in mind.

TRAITS			
1d10	HUMANOID SPIRIT TRAITS	1d10	SPIRIT-BEAST TRAITS
1	Bears bestial traits or animalistic parts	1	Insectile qualities- giant beetle, fly, spider, scorpion, etc.
2	Impossibly handsome or beautiful	2	Serpentine, perhaps with poisonous fangs
3	Body fashioned of wood, stone, or other matter	3	Ape-like, possessed of cruel cunning
4	Has floral components- flowered hair, bark skin, etc.	4	Bat-like shape, or bat-winged animal form
5	Always floating several inches above the ground	5	Reptilian, jawed like a crocodile, jeweled scales, etc.
6	Dressed in lordly regalia and haughty manner	6	Emaciated shape, feeding hungrily on the souls of the slain
7	Hideously misshapen, perhaps with extra limbs	7	Ant- or termite-like body, perhaps appearing in swarms
8	Invisible save in reflections or in human shadows	8	Birdlike, bronze talons, obsidian claws, manlike head, etc.
9	Mantled in flames, stinking miasma, shadows, etc.	9	Feline, as a cheetah, leopard, lion, large mane, huge claws
10	A cloud of strong emotion surrounds them	10	Canid, hyena jaws, metallic fur, pack animal

Finally, roll or choose any special qualities the spirit might have. Powerful spirits are often immune to non-magical weaponry, and you might choose to add that trait to whatever you select or roll from the table below. The strength of the ability should be adjusted to fit the magnitude of the spirit- stat adjustments should be +1 for minor spirits, +2 for dangerous ones, and +3 for fearsome sendings.

SPECIAL QUALITIES			
1d20	QUALITY	1d20	QUALITY
1	Can pass through walls and other barriers	11	Can unfailingly track anyone it has ever seen
2	Invisible when not injured	12	Can raise the ill-buried dead as Walking Corpses
3	Has a retinue of 2d6 foolish cultists worshipping it	13	Poisonous or disease-spreading touch or spittle
4	Burrows through the ground at full move rate	14	Immune to one particular class of weapon
5	Can teleport from plant to plant at will	15	Breathes fire or noxious substance; Evasion save or 2d6 dmg
6	Able to fly, whether or not their form supports it	16	Can climb sheer surfaces at its full movement rate
7	Fearsome blows; add bonus to damage roll	17	Can bewitch a subject as per <i>Nkisi of the Deadened Mind</i>
8	Nimble or tough form; subtract bonus from AC	18	Regenerates 1d6 lost hit points each round
9	Served by 1d4 pliant witches	19	Invincible in certain locations or times of day
10	Can discern a human's worst crimes by scent	20	Can reflect magical spells on a successful saving throw



TREASURES AND THEIR USES

Every red-blooded adventurer expects an appropriate trove of shining gems and lustrous golden ingots at the end of their travails, and this chapter will help the GM provide such fitting recompense. Aside from the satisfactions of mounds of trade ingots and fist-sized rubies, details are also provided on the mysterious magical relics and potent artifacts of the ancients, the fruit of their long wisdom and mighty deeds. A GM will also find a number of details on purchasing property, hiring minions, and sustaining communities with the gold of those who have succeeded in attaining wealth beyond measure.

ASSIGNING TREASURE

A GM developing an adventure will usually want some guidance on an appropriate amount of loot to sprinkle through a ruin or put in the pockets of an aspiring patron. Adding too much plunder to an adventure can rob its acquisition of excitement, while too little gold might leave the adventurers wondering why they even bother to risk their lives. More selfless or noble-minded characters might well be willing to dare the dens of evil for no recompense, but even they need to support themselves and their allies if they are to be any use to the Three Lands.

The first step to assigning treasure is to determine its owner. Who owns this loot? Are you determining the fungible wealth of a merchant prince, so as to know how much gold he can offer the PCs for their aid? Are you finding out what fruits of pillage are in the bandit chieftain's camp? Do you need some idea of the portable wealth that might belong in a modest tomb-house? Note that not every inhabitant of a ruin or inmate in a house needs to have a separate determination of treasure. Only the important figures and significant groups need to have their belongings pinned down, and that's only if you anticipate the characters might decide to liberate the loot from them.

Once you know what kind of owners you're dealing with, you can turn to the Treasure table that follows and find the closest match. Run down the line and roll for each entry, and at the end you'll have a total number of ingots, gems, pieces of jewelry, objects of value, and potential magic items. For particularly powerful or expansive examples of a type, you might go as far as to double the total, while puny or hard-pressed sorts might have as little as half. As always, you should adjust the amount of treasure to what seems rational and logical to you.

Note that some entries exist for locations as well as types of owners. These totals assume that not everything in the location has been plundered by its inhabitants, or that a wealthy owner has naturally accumulated a certain amount of excess decor and cached wealth. In a ruin, this wealth would be hidden or secreted away by its finders, and would be in addition to whatever treasure was rolled for its major inhabitants. Some might have already been found and gathered by the more intelligent occupants of the place.

With a total amount of treasure in hand, the next step is to break it up into appropriate troves. A rich merchant is not going to be

walking around town with the entirety of his liquid assets slung on his back, and a bandit chief's plunder is going to be judiciously distributed among his most important lieutenants as well as the share he's taken for his own. A good general rule is to put a third of it in a large trove, another third of it in two smaller troves, and the last third spread around in however many small dribs and drabs as seems appropriate.

Once you've done this, you've done all you strictly need to do. If you need more color and flavor for objects of value, jewelry, or gemstones you can use the Plunder Generator to be more specific about it. For looters, bandits, and other thieves the breadth of their prized belongings will be very wide and have little logical connection. For obas, rich merchants, and other sorts their belongings will be of the sort one might expect them to have, and they will be placed accordingly. A stool of jeweled bronze will be in the oba's audience chamber, his precious golden cups will be locked away in his quarters, and so forth.

Do take care, however, to equip owners with any belongings they might sensibly be carrying with them. If a bandit chief has discovered a magical spear, he's going to be keeping it close to hand and certainly will use it in a fight. An evil nganga with a potent magical mask is going to be wearing it when the players encounter him. In this way some expendable treasures might well be used up in the very battle that would otherwise claim them.

CHOOSING MAGICAL ITEMS

The tables provide chances for any particular trove to contain lesser or greater magical items. If you roll these out in strictly random fashion, it's quite possible that at some point you're going to find a trove contains an item much more powerful than anything else the PCs have available to them. There are two main ways of dealing with this.

First, you can simply edit the item to something less dramatically powerful. This approach simply acknowledges the fact that if the owner really did have an item that powerful he'd almost certainly be killed by someone of such might as to more appropriately possess such a prize. This is the "safe" way of doing things, and will prevent any really disruptive magical items from entering your campaign.

The other way is to just let the dice fall where they may. If it turns out that this minor bandit chief is the proud possessor of a *Flaming Great Razor of Aganyu* +3, then the PCs will just have to take that blazing two-handed blade from his corpse. Maybe his possession of the blade is the reason he's the bandit chief. Maybe it was a prize plundered from a nearby jungle tomb, and its original owner is even now rising from the grave to reclaim her lost sword. This approach is willing to accept the potential disruption in the campaign in order to see what fallout might come from such a potent acquisition- assuming the PCs can actually manage to take the item away from its owner.

TROVE TYPES

The following list of trove types offers some idea of what an appropriate amount of plunder might be for particular groups, places, and types of foes. You can use this table directly in conjunction with the Object Worth table opposite to generate large amounts of random plunder for your adventures.

You should use this table as a general guideline rather than fitting everything rigidly into its parameters. If you decide that the bandit chief is a scruffy thug with nothing more than a few pieces of cheap jewelry on his arms and a nearly-empty purse, then you

can simply put that in as his earthly treasure and call it fair. The key point to remember is that the treasure to be had from a foe or situation should be reasonable and fitting to the circumstances.

The trove types for families, nobles, and merchants are provided largely to give an idea of their current wealth available to hire adventurers. They doubtless have more in non-fungible possessions.

Ingot totals are given in silver ingots, but may well appear as mounds of copper or as smaller amounts of gold.

TROVE TYPES	
TROVE TYPE	LOOT
<i>Peasant Family Savings</i>	1d6 x 10 si worth of copper and a few silver ingots, 1d6 Cheap Clothes, 1d3 Cheap Jewelry from the wife's bride-price
<i>Prosperous Peasant Clan</i>	1d6 x 100 si worth of silver, 1d6 Cheap Jewelry, 1 Costly Jewelry, 1d3 Costly Clothes, 1d3 Cheap Furnishings
<i>Merchant Family Funds</i>	1d6+4 x 100 si, 1d6 Cheap Gems, 1d3 Costly Gems, 1d6 Costly Jewelry, 25% chance of 1 Costly Furnishing
<i>Village Shrine Possessions</i>	1d6 x 10 si in ingots, 1d6 Costly Clothes, 1d6 Costly Furnishings, 1 Lesser Magic Item
<i>Village Tax Treasury</i>	1d6 x 100 si, 1d6 Cheap Gems, 1d6 Cheap Jewelry, 1d3 Costly Gems, 1d3 Costly Jewelry
<i>Minor Noble Liquid Funds</i>	1d6 x 1,000 si, 1d10 Costly Jewelry, 1d6 Precious Jewelry, 1d6+2 Precious Clothes, 1d6 Precious Furniture, 1d3 Lesser Magic Items
<i>Merchant Prince Funds</i>	2d6+8 x 2,000 si, 1d10 Precious Jewelry, 1d10 Precious Gems, 1d4 Priceless Gems, 1d4 Priceless Furniture, 1d6 Lesser Magic Items
<i>Great Temple Funds</i>	1d6+4 x 1,000 si, 1d6+4 Priceless Clothes, 2d6 Precious Furniture, 1d6 Priceless Furniture, 2d6 Lesser and 1d3 Greater Magic Items
<i>Major Noble Liquid Funds</i>	1d6+4 x 2,000 si, 1d6 Priceless Jewelry, 1d10 Priceless Furniture, 3d4 Priceless Clothes, 1d3 Greater Magic Items
<i>Royal Treasury</i>	1d10+10 x 10,000 si, 1d10+10 Priceless Jewelry, 1d10+10 Priceless Gems, 1d10+10 Priceless Furniture, 1d6 Greater Magic Items
<i>Minor Hidden Treasure</i>	1d6 x 10 si, 50% chance of 1d6 Cheap Gems, 50% chance of 1d6 Cheap Jewelry, 10% chance of 1d6 Costly Gems or Jewelry
<i>Witch's Concealed Cache</i>	1d6 Lesser Magic Items of the potion or spirit token type, 10% chance of a fetish stick, 10% chance of a Greater Magic Item
<i>Overlooked Trifle</i>	50% chance of 1d6x10 si, 50% chance of Cheap Jewelry, 5% chance of Costly Gem or Jewelry
<i>Minor Ruin's Wealth</i>	1d6+4 x 100 si, 1d6+4 Cheap Jewelry, 1d4 Costly Jewelry, 25% for 1 Precious Jewelry, 1d3 Lesser and 25% for 1 Greater Magic Item
<i>Major Ruin's Wealth</i>	1d6+4 x 1,000 si, 1d6+4 Precious Jewelry, 1d6+4 Precious Gems, 1 Priceless Jewelry, 1d6 Lesser and 1d3 Greater Magic Items
<i>Powerful Nganga's Lair</i>	1d6 x 100 si, 1d6 Priceless Clothes, 1d4+2 Precious Furniture, 1d6+4 Precious Jewelry, 2d4 Lesser and 1d6 Greater Magic Items
<i>Small Tomb-House</i>	1d6 x 500 si, 1d6 Precious Furniture, 1d6 Costly Gems, 1d6 Costly Jewelry, 1d4 Lesser and 25% for one Greater Magic Item
<i>Large Tomb-House</i>	1d6 x 1,000 si, 1d6 Priceless Furniture, 1d6+4 Precious Jewelry, 1d4 Priceless Jewelry, 1d10 Lesser and 1d4 Greater Magic Items
<i>Giant's Ruined Palace</i>	1d6 x 2,000 si, 1d6 Priceless Jewelry, 1d8 Precious Jewelry, 1d10 Precious Gems, 1d6 Lesser and 1 Greater Magic Item
<i>Shiny-loving Beast Nest</i>	1d6 x 5 si among the bones, 1d6 Cheap Jewelry, 50% of 1 Costly Jewelry, 5% of 1 Precious Jewelry, 5% for 1 Lesser Magic Item
<i>Scruffy Bandit's Purse</i>	1d6 si, 25% of 1 Cheap Jewelry, 5% of 1 Costly Jewelry
<i>Minor Intelligent Monster</i>	1d6 x 10 si, 1d6 Cheap Jewelry, 1 Costly Jewelry
<i>Major Intelligent Monster</i>	1d6 x 1,000 si, 1d6 Precious Jewelry, 1d6 Precious Gems, 1d4 Priceless Gems, 1 Lesser and 25% for 1 Greater Magic Item
<i>Petty Bandit Chieftain</i>	1d6 x 100 si, 1d6 Costly Jewelry, 1d10 Cheap Gems, 1d6 Costly Gems, 1d6 Costly Clothing, 1 Lesser and 5% 1 Greater Magic Item
<i>Strong Bandit Chieftain</i>	1d6 x 1,000 si, 1d10 Precious Gems, 1d6 Precious Jewelry, 1 Priceless Gem, 1d4 Priceless Clothing, 1d4 Lesser and 50% Greater MI
<i>Powerful Cult Leader</i>	1d6 x 1,000 si, 1d6 Priceless Clothing, 1d6 Precious Jewelry, 1d6 Priceless Furniture, 1d4 Lesser and 1 Greater Magic Item
<i>Eternal Priest-Lord</i>	1d6 x 2,000 si, 1d6 Precious Jewelry, 1d6 Priceless Furniture, 1d6 Lesser and 1d4 Greater Magic Items
<i>Major Crime Boss Stash</i>	1d6 x 1,000 si, 1d10 Precious Gems, 1d10 Precious Jewelry, 1d6 Priceless Gems, 1d4 Lesser and 1 Greater Magic Item
<i>Umthali Leader's Relics</i>	1d6 Precious Jewelry, 1d10 Precious Gems, 2d6 Lesser Magic Items, 1d4 Greater Magic Items
<i>Giant's Private Purse</i>	1d6 x 100 si, 1d4 Precious Jewelry, 1d10 Precious Gems, 1d6 Priceless Clothing, 1d4 Lesser and 1 Greater Magic Item
<i>Petty Cash Amount</i>	1d6 x 10 si
<i>Substantial Cash Amount</i>	2d4 x 100 si
<i>A Splendid Treasure Trove</i>	1d6 x 1,000 si
<i>A King's Ransom</i>	2d4 x 10,000 si

PLUNDER GENERATION

To use these generation tables, start with the type of item you want to create- a cheap piece of furniture, for example, or a precious gem. Roll on the Object Worth table to find out the base value of the item in silver ingots, though few buyers will pay more than a quarter of half of that if the item is to be sold on short notice. If you have a clear idea of what the item should be, that's all you need to do. If

you want additional inspiration about the item, you can roll or pick from the tables below to flesh out the specifics of the object you've just created. The results of the tables can be mixed and matched to produce works of art or precious relics that fit the need at hand.

OBJECT WORTH				
VALUE	FURNITURE	CLOTHING	JEWELRY	GEM
<i>Cheap</i>	1d6 x 10 si	2d6 si	1d10 x 10 si	1d6 x 10 si
<i>Costly</i>	1d4 x 100 si	1d10 x 10 si	1d6 x 100 si	1d6 x 50 si
<i>Precious</i>	3d6 x 100 si	2d10 x 20 si	1d6 x 1,000 si	1d6 x 500 si
<i>Priceless</i>	2d4 x 1,000 si	2d6 x 100 si	1d4 x 10,000 si	1d4 x 5,000 si

TYPES OF OBJECTS				GEMSTONE VARIETIES				
1d12	FURNITURE	CLOTHING	JEWELRY	1d12	CHEAP	COSTLY	PRECIOUS	PRICELESS
1	Basin	Boots	Amulet	1	Agate	Amber	Alexandrite	Black Sapphire
2	Bed	Cloak	Anklet	2	Blue Topaz	Amethyst	Aquamarine	Blue Diamond
3	Cabinet	Gloves	Armlet	3	Carnelian	Bloodstone	Black Opal	Imperial Topaz
4	Chair	Hat	Bangle	4	Citrine	Chalcedony	Black Pearl	Jacinth
5	Hanging	Loincloth	Belly chain	5	Clear Quartz	Coral	Emerald	Pink Diamond
6	Headrest	Robe	Bracelet	6	Jasper	Green Garnet	Fire Opal	Purple Topaz
7	Lamp	Sandals	Brooch	7	Lapis Lazuli	Onyx	Jadeite	Ruby
8	Mirror	Shirt	Earring	8	Malachite	Orange Topaz	Jet	Star Emerald
9	Screen	Shoes	Finger ring	9	Obsidian	Rose Quartz	Peridot	Star Ruby
10	Statuette	Skirt	Necklace	10	Red Garnet	Spinel	Pink Topaz	Star Sapphire
11	Stool	Trousers	Nose ring	11	Sardonyx	Tourmaline	Purple Garnet	White Diamond
12	Table	Wrap	Toe ring	12	Turquoise	White Pearl	Sapphire	Yellow Diamond

CLOTHING AND FABRIC ART MATERIAL				
1d6	CHEAP	COSTLY	PRECIOUS	PRICELESS
1-2	Dyed Cotton	Brocaded Cotton	Silk	Brocaded Silk
3-4	Leaf Fiber	Leaf Fiber Chiffon	Noble-patterned cotton	Noble-patterned silk
5-6	Worn Fur	Fine Fur	Great Cat Fur	Dire Cat Fur

FURNITURE MATERIAL				
1d4	CHEAP	COSTLY	PRECIOUS	PRICELESS
1	Lacquered Bamboo	Inlaid Wood	Polished Ivory	Jeweled Ivory
2	Enameled Clay	Carved Marble	Colored Marble	Rock Crystal
3	Wrought Iron	Wrought Bronze	Inlaid Bronze	Jeweled Bronze
4	Carved Hardwood	Carved Mahogany	Carved Ebony	Jeweled Rare Wood

THE ITEM IS...	
1d4	ADORNMENT
1	Studded with...
2	Jeweled with...
3	Inlaid with...
4	Plated with...

VALUABLE METALS	
1d6	MATERIAL
1	Pewter
2	Copper
3	Bronze
4	Silver
5	Electrum
6	Gold

RARE WOODS	
1d6	MATERIAL
1	Bubinga
2	Ebony
3	Mahogany
4	Pink Ivorywood
5	Rosewood
6	Sandalwood

MAGIC ITEM TABLES

The following tables provide quick tools for generating magical finds. The costs listed are for creating the item; greater magic items are never found for sale, and even lesser ones can come dear in the market, when they can be found at all.

LESSER MAGIC ITEM TABLE

1d20	ITEM
1-12	Potion
13-15	Spirit Token of a Nganga spell
16-17	Spirit Token of a Marabout spell
18-19	Fetish Stick
20	Roll on the Greater Item Table

POTIONS

1d20	POTION	COST
1-2	<i>Potion of Bestial Shape</i>	400
3	<i>Blade Venom</i>	200
4-5	<i>Potion of Cure Sickness</i>	500
6	<i>Potion of Death's Mask</i>	400
7-8	<i>Potion of Ease Sickness</i>	100
9-13	<i>Potion of Healing</i>	200
14-15	<i>Potion of Heroic Might</i>	200
16	<i>Lotus Extract</i>	500
17	<i>Potion of Lungs of the Fish</i>	250
18	<i>Potion of Passion's Favor</i>	200
19	<i>Potion of Spirit's Wings</i>	600
20	<i>Potion of Unseen Presence</i>	600

SPIRIT TOKENS

1d20	TOKEN SPELL LEVEL	COST
1-8	First	200
9-13	Second	1,200
14-17	Third	3,000
18-19	Fourth	5,600
20	Fifth	9,000

FETISH STICKS

1d20	FETISH	COST
1-3	<i>Fetish of Commanding the Flock</i>	5,000
4-5	<i>Fetish of Shape Binding</i>	4,000
6-8	<i>Fetish of Solar Flame</i>	8,000
9-10	<i>Fetish of the Dancing Corpse</i>	6,000
11	<i>Fetish of the Eighty Nails</i>	20,000
12-14	<i>Fetish of the Green King</i>	6,000
15-17	<i>Fetish of the Shackled Beast</i>	10,000
18-20	<i>Fetish of Thirsting</i>	8,000

GREATER MAGIC ITEM TABLE

1d20	ITEM
1-8	Weapon
9-14	Armor
15	Mask
16-20	Miscellaneous magic item of the GM's choice

WEAPON AND ARMOR

1d20	WEAPON OR ARMOR	COST
1-8	+1	5,000
9-12	+1 of a Patron Spirit	10,000
13-16	+2	20,000
17-18	+2 of a Patron Spirit	40,000
19	+3	80,000
20	+3 of a Patron Spirit	160,000

PATRON SPIRIT OF ARMS OR ARMOR

1d20	SPIRIT'S PATRON
1-3	<i>Aganyu</i>
4-7	<i>Gu</i>
8-10	<i>Olokun</i>
11-12	<i>Oya</i>
13	<i>Sagbata</i>
14-16	<i>Oshun</i>
17-19	<i>The Sun</i>
20	<i>The Gods Below</i>

RANDOM WEAPON AND ARMOR TYPES

1d20	WEAPON CLASS	ARMOR TYPE
1-5	Blade weapon	Warding Amulet
6-7	Missile weapon	Leather Armor
8-11	Club weapon	Mail Armor
12-15	Axe weapon	Mail Armor
16	Fighting Bracelets	Royal Armor
17-20	Spear weapon	Banded Armor

MAGICAL MASKS

1d20	FETISH	COST
1-3	<i>Mask of the Apprentice</i>	10,000
4-5	<i>Mask of the Ancestor's Eyes</i>	10,000
6-8	<i>Mask of the Hero</i>	20,000
9-10	<i>Mask of the Sagacious Judge</i>	15,000
11	<i>Mask of the Second Face</i>	20,000
12-14	<i>Mask of the Sorcerer</i>	20,000
15-17	<i>Mask of the Spirits</i>	15,000
18-20	<i>Mask of the Witch-King</i>	40,000

MAGICAL ITEM DESCRIPTIONS

The tales of the Three Lands are abundant with objects of sorcerous power. Some of these items were fashioned by powerful ngangas or blessed marabouts, while others acquired their virtue through their importance to some spectacular deed or mighty hero. Use of these items is not always safe or easy, but the defenders of the crumbling Three Lands must be ready to put hands on whatever tools will serve them.

Lesser items consist of amulets fashioned by a nganga's rituals, magical potions brewed by healers and occultists, spirit tokens folded by sages, and other magical objects that are either consumable or of minor power. Their effects are usually subtle, often so subtle that only an expert eye can distinguish them from worthless trash. Some items produce more dramatic effects, but these objects are usually usable only once or a few times before they crumble into dust. The creation of such items is taxing and requires expertise, but even a humble savannah kraal might have an old woman wise enough to brew a healing potion or fashion a charm against evil fortune.

Greater items are a different matter. They are such things as magical spears that return to a hurler's hands, amulets that guard the wearer like a shirt of Kirsi mail, anklets that permit the wearer to run straight up a temple wall, and other artifacts with lasting utility. Only the work of a powerful nganga or the glory of a heroic deed can create such an artifact, and the process always involves imbuing some measure of independent spirit into the item. These spirits are usually only half-aware of their surroundings, keen enough to despise insults but otherwise indifferent as to their wielder's actions.

Greater items must almost always be created, found, gifted, or taken by force from a former possessor. Their spirits will rebel if an owner attempts to barter them for gold or banal favors. As an example, a spear would consent to be passed on as a reward to a mighty warrior who slew a great beast to win it, and a talisman would be content to be part of a secretive bribe to win the treachery of a border lord. Offering the spear for twelve tons of unpolished rice or giving a discount on land purchases in exchange for the blade of a dead hero will result only in an infuriated spirit and an inert, potentially cursed item. These spirits are almost always utterly indifferent to the moral qualities of those who wield them; they care only that they should not be insulted or treated as mere trinkets. Angered spirits must be propitiated by ngangas before they will function once more, though the death of the insolent owner will suffice as well.

CREATING MAGIC ITEMS

Each type of item has its own requirements for creation, listed under the description of each classification. Additional facilities may also be necessary for fashioning the item. The creator must pay the creation cost of the object and labor for one day for every 500 gold pieces in materials cost. For particularly cheap lesser items the creator may be able to create more than one in a single day of work, but the process always requires at least one full day of labor.

Imbuing a greater item is exhausting, and a small fragment of the creator's spirit is always left embedded in the work. As a conse-

quence, no crafter can create more than five greater items over the course of their entire life. Certain occult tomes, exotic drugs, and ancient lore can be used to bypass this limit, but usually only in very restricted ways. For most crafters, five items is all they will ever be able to make, even if their earlier creations are destroyed.

Very rarely, some deed of remarkable heroism or blackest infamy might imbue a relevant item with a fragment of supernatural power. Such tools are most often weapons, armor, and other panoply of war, as it is in battle that blood and spirit are shed most freely and deeds of dauntless courage are most easily shown. These items have the same sort of powers as more intentionally-crafted objects, but their abilities usually reflect the situation in which they were used. These items almost always have a history of some sort, and a learned griot may be able to recognize them by use of his songs.

POTIONS

A mainstay of both village herbalists and skilled ngangas, magical potions brewed by country healers are usually stored in small calabashes stopped with clay, while city sages favor vials of cloudy glass or small metal bottles. Those crafters who dwell in cities must buy their ingredients from traders, and the cost of every potion is doubled. Brewers who live in the wilderness or in rural areas may gather many of their own herbs and ingredients from the surrounding land, and need pay only the listed price. Once per year, a crafter who lives in a rural area may pick rare-blooming flowers and plants to brew any potion of up to 1,000 si cost without paying for material fees. There are only enough ingredients to create one such free potion a year, and the crafter must be intimately familiar with the area. In the back country, poor herbalists rely on these rare extracts to create potions they would never be able to afford if they were forced to buy the usual ingredients.

Any nganga may brew a potion if he is of the requisite level listed in the description, whether or not he has the other listed skills. Other characters may also brew potions if they are of the listed minimum level and have the noted minimum skill levels.

Drinking a potion counts as a character's action for the round and the calabash must be a readied item. Users cannot be under the effects of multiple potions at once; if they have lasting effects, only the most recent applies.

Bestial Shape: This potion will transform the drinker and their possessions into a particular normal animal, the type of which is determined at the time of the potion's brewing. The user retains all their normal statistics, hit points, and abilities, and can even speak to invoke miracles or griot songs, but they cannot manipulate nkisi. The user gains all the normal movement abilities of the beast, such as flight or swimming. The potion lasts for 1d6 hours, or until the user wishes to transform back. *Requires:* Level 5, Survival-2, Occult-2

Blade Venom: This tarry poison must be applied to pointed or bladed weaponry, and will become inert an hour after its application. Until then, the first person struck by the weapon must save versus Physical Effect or suffer an additional 1d8 damage and -2 to their hit rolls from the pain of the venom, the suffering lasting for the remaining length of the fight. Once the weapon hits, the

venom is wiped off. There is enough of this venom in a calabash to coat one bladed weapon or five arrowheads. *Requires:* Level 2, Survival-1, Tactics-1

Cure Sickness: This powerful brew instantly banishes any one sickness from the user. Magical or exceedingly lethal mundane sicknesses may resist this potion. In such cases, the drinker must make a saving throw versus Physical Effect with a +4 bonus. If failed, this potion cannot cure the disease. *Requires:* Level 5, Medicine-2, Occult-1

Death's Mask: This grim extract gives the drinker the appearance of an Eternal. They do not breathe, eat, drink, or bleed, and if reduced to zero hit points they will simply be helpless until aided by an ally or the potion wears off. Lesser Eternal will not attack them unless ordered to do so, though more intelligent varieties will see through an imperfect ruse. *Requires:* Level 5, Occult-2, Medicine-2

Ease Sickness: This potion strengthens the user's body against an illness. The user is treated as if they had just made a successful Interval saving throw against the disease. If their total number of successful saves now equals the plague's Virulence, the disease is cured. This potion cannot aid the same instance of sickness more than once. *Requires:* Level 1, Medicine-1

Healing: This potion can revive those maimed by violence, mending wounds and curing injuries in an instant. It heals 1d6+1 hit points for conscious sufferers, and will revive a mortally wounded character with 1 hit point. It cannot repair lost limbs or organs. *Requires:* Level 2, Medicine-1, Occult-1

Heroic Might: This foul-tasting decoction is favored by warriors who wish to gain courage before battle, and many tribes have their own traditional recipe for it, brewed by the elders before a battle. It gives the drinker 1d8 extra hit points and it allows them to re-roll 1s on all weapon damage dice. The potion's benefits last until dusk, after which any hit points in excess of their maximum are lost. *Requires:* Level 3, Tactics-2, Medicine-1

Lotus Extract: This hallucinogenic brew greatly empowers the spells of ngangas, fueling their nkisi with arcane might. Any saving throws against the nganga's spells are at a -2 penalty, but at the start of every round there is a 10% chance that the nganga will be unable to move or act, caught in strange visions. The potion lasts for five minutes. *Requires:* Level 5, Survival-2, Occult-2

Lungs of the Fish: The one who drinks this spirit-blessed potion may breathe water as if it were fresh air, moving through liquid at their full normal movement rate and without damage to their possessions. The potion lasts for twelve hours once consumed. *Requires:* Level 3, Priestcraft-1, Occult-2

Passion's Favor: A classic love potion such as is sold in hidden bazaar-corners throughout the Three Lands, this philtre is unusual in that it actually works. If an occult connection such as those listed in the Magic chapter is put into the potion before it is drunk, the one who drinks it must save versus Mental Effect at a -2 penalty or become smitten with the person so connected, the passion being romantic or platonic as circumstances suggest. If no connection is added before the potion is drunk, the first person the subject sees

will be the focus of the passion. While bewitched, the subject will do anything for the beloved short of self-destruction. The duration of the potion's effects last for a variable time depending on the treatment of the drinker; gentle handling will make it last a month, while abusiveness will break it in a day's time. *Requires:* Level 3, Occult-2.

Spirit's Wings: The spirits of air are called to lift up the user of this potion, allowing them to fly at a movement rate of 60' for ten minutes or until the spirits are dismissed. The flight is somewhat unstable as the spirits must carry the user, and they cannot both move and attack or cast spells in the same round. *Requires:* Level 5, Priestcraft-2, Occult-2

Unseen Presence: The drinker of this potion turns invisible to common eyes, vanishing for ten minutes. Loud noises and violent motions such as running, combat, or intoned spellcasting will tear the veil over the user, though objects they manipulate carefully will not end the effect. *Requires:* Level 5, Stealth-2, Occult-2

SPIRIT TOKENS

These small amulets of inked leather or bundles of auspicious ingredients are used to represent a special appeal to a marabout's patron spirits or a carefully-prepared well of *ashe* for a nganga's sorceries. They hold a spell within their coils, and they can be expended to release the magic as if they were being cast by their original creator. Spirit tokens are indistinguishable from ordinary charms and amulets at first glance, but a careful inspection by anyone with at least level-0 expertise in Occult or Priestcraft will recognize the signs of arcane power about them.

Each spirit token may contain a single spell. Using a token is a full-round action that is disrupted by any damage suffered while the token is being invoked. Disruption ruins the token. On activation, the token releases the spell at the minimum caster level necessary to cast it. Any specifics of targeting or effect are determined by the user. Anyone may invoke a spirit token if they know its purpose and the invocation necessary to trigger it. For tokens found without such helpful information, it can be puzzled out by a scholar with an Int/Occult skill check at a difficulty of 5 plus the level of the spell it contains.

Ngangas may only store nkisi they know in spirit tokens, as rituals are too complex to be woven into such a small object. Marabouts may store any spell available to them. Creating a spirit token requires one day per spell level and costs 200 si times the spell level times the minimum caster level necessary to cast it. Only ngangas and marabouts may create spirit tokens.

FETISH STICKS

These lesser magic items are short rods roughly as long as a man's forearm and are adorned with intricate carvings, feathers, woven cords and bones. Those fashioned by urban sorcerers are often made of wrought bronze and are inset with gems and precious metals. As the fetish stick's power is expended the gems gradually darken and crack and the feathers and wrappings ravel away.

Fetish sticks can be used by ngangas to quickly invoke potent magical effects without the burdens of preparing a nkisi. Each



stick can be used fifty times when it is first created. Once the last charge is used, the stick crumbles away to dust. A randomly-found fetish stick will have 2d20 charges remaining to it. A user must know the correct words to invoke the fetish; if these words are not learned from the creator or inscribed on the stick, careful research or spells may be necessary to unearth them.

Only ngangas can create fetish sticks, and they must be at least fifth level to do so. A nganga of any level may use a stick. Using a fetish stick is an instant action and cannot normally be disrupted unless the attacker is holding his action to strike at just the right moment. In such a case damage will disrupt the activation and waste the charge.

Fetish of Commanding the Flock: The wielder who brandishes this fetish may seize control of any winged or flying creature. 2d8 hit dice worth of subjects within visual range may be affected; each must save versus Mental Effect or perceive the wielder as their rightful master for 1d4 turns. They will obey any command that is not clearly suicidal, and will instinctively understand the nganga's will without the need for speech.

Fetish of the Dancing Corpse: This skull-adorned fetish permits the wielder to command the slain. With a wave, 2d8 recently-dead human or animal corpses within 50 feet are made to rise in mindless obedience to the wielder. They will obey any command of the wielder, but have no independent mind, memory or cunning and cannot speak. Human and roughly human-sized animal reanimates all have the same effective statistics: AC 9, 6 hit points, +2 to hit/1d6 punch or bite, Move 20', Morale 12, and they always take minimum damage from piercing weapons. Destroyed corpses

cannot be re-animated and all such entities collapse to rotted fragments one hour after creation.

Fetish of the Eighty Nails: This fetish stick is studded with scores of small iron nails driven into the rod. When brandished at a foe within 100 feet, the victim must save versus Magic or be suddenly pierced with an equal number of wounds, suffering 6d6 damage.

Fetish of the Green King: Vine-patterns twine around this fetish, and its wielder may command living wood and plant life. With a wave of the fetish, all living wood and other flora within 60 feet gains the power of movement at 5' per round, and can uproot itself and otherwise rearrange its location. The plants move too slowly to make effective assailants. Plant-spirits affected by this fetish must save versus Mental Effect or become friendly and co-operative toward the wielder. The effect lasts for thirty minutes.

Fetish of the Shackled Beast: With a gesture, this fetish can transform a living target no larger than a man into any normal domestic animal no smaller than a cat. The curse has a range of 100' and the victim is allowed a saving throw versus Magic to resist the effect. The transformed subject retains their intelligence and hit points but in all other ways is treated as a normal animal of their type. The effect counts as a Lesser Curse for purposes of breaking it, and can also be dispelled by a tap of the fetish, which does not cost a charge. If not so lifted, the effect is permanent.

Fetish of Shape Binding: The wielder must strike the target with the fetish with a normal attack roll in order to use it, though this attack does no damage. If a were-creature or other shapeshifter is struck by the fetish, they must immediately save versus Magic or be forced into their true form, unable to alter it until the next dusk falls.

Fetish of Solar Flame: The fetish holds a fragment of sunlight within it and can hurl it in a blazing beam of light at foes. The beam extends 40 feet from the user and is 5 feet wide. Every subject within the beam must save versus Evasion or suffer 3d6 fire damage from its heat.

Fetish of Thirsting: Teeth adorn this fetish, and it hungers for the lives of men. When waved at a subject within 100 feet the target must save versus Magic or immediately suffer 2d6+2 damage. The wielder is healed by this damage, up to his usual hit point maximum.

MASKS OF POWER

Masks are components of many rituals, imbuing the wearer with the qualities of the powers they depict and endowing their users with strength borrowed from the spirits and the ancestors. Every mask is magical in that sense, but masks of power are something more. They bring down such a wealth of might and blessings that even one ignorant of the subtler rituals and deeper truths can gain advantage from their use. Ngangas in particular make use of them, for the additional strength they grant makes it easier to wield *ashe* and control supernal potencies.

Anyone may use a mask, though the benefits they grant may be of no use to some wearers. Only one mask may be worn at a time. Wearing a mask can be exhausting, as the bearer's soul supports

the presence of two beings- some masks can only be worn for a certain amount of time each day. If not specified otherwise, the mask may be worn indefinitely.

Only ngangas may fashion magical masks, and they must be at least seventh level to do so.

Mask of the Ancestors' Eyes: While worn, this mask allows the bearer to perceive magical items, effects, and curses. Details of the magic are not obvious, but the user can tell at a glance whether someone or something is bewitched. The mask's burden is light upon the wearer, and it may be worn for as long as desired.

Mask of the Apprentice: The nganga who wears this mask for at least six hours a day will strengthen his power to control *ashe*, gaining the ability to prepare an extra first or second level nkisi each day without overtaxing his powers.

Mask of the Hero: This heavy and fearsome mask imbues the wearer with great might in war, granting a +2 bonus to hit and damage rolls. This mask is burdened by bloodshed, and after the first fight of the day in which a victim is killed it must be removed until the following dawn.

Mask of the Sagacious Judge: While wearing this mask, the bearer's hearing becomes unusually sharp at sifting truth from spoken lies. The wearer may test any one statement made before the mask; the speaker may make a saving throw versus Magic, and on a success the mask-wearer learns nothing more, but if the save is failed then the wearer instantly discerns whether or not the statement was made to with an intent to deceive. Only one such test may be applied every hour.

Mask of the Second Face: This mask is an implement of trickery and deceit, allowing the wearer to adopt the form and clothing of any human they wish to impersonate. Upon the transformation, the mask vanishes and the bearer appears to be the impersonated subject to every test- touch, voice, and scent. The wearer even gets a save versus Magic to defy magical investigation. The mask is potent, but it can be worn only 23 hours a day, and if slain while wearing it the user reverts instantly to their natural shape.

Mask of the Sorcerer: A nganga wearing this mask may prepare one extra nkisi of first through fourth level each day without straining his abilities, provided the mask is worn for at least six waking hours.

Mask of the Spirits: While wearing this mask, the bearer becomes mystically attuned to the spirit world, and may harm spirits otherwise immune to non-magical weapons. The bearer is able to speak with and understand any visible spirit and gains a +2 bonus on reaction rolls when dealing with such creatures. The mask may be worn for no more than six hours a day.

Mask of the Witch-King: This mighty mask grants a nganga the ability to prepare one extra nkisi of any level each day, provided the mask is worn for at least six waking hours.

MAGICAL ARMS AND ARMOR

All magical weapons and armor are greater items, potent with the power to harm even supernatural creatures. If these honored objects are insulted by their owner or used as mere workman's tools, they may take offense and become cursed until appeased by a nganga's arts. Most such spirits are not overly sensitive to slights, but intentionally using a weapon as a work tool, selling it for gold or land, or plainly proclaiming its inferiority to some other blade is bound to incur its anger.

Sorcerous powers add a bonus to a weapon or armor, such as a "*runku* +2", or a "*warding amulet* +1". Magical weapons add their bonus to all hit and damage rolls, while magical armor subtracts its bonus from the wearer's armor class. Thrown magical weapons automatically return to the wielder's hand. Shields with "pluses" do not exist- there is no such thing as a "*shield* +1", for example, though magical bulwarks with other abilities might be found.

Some armaments have additional powers based upon the type and power of the spirit that inhabits it, though not all are so blessed. A spirit-servant of Gu might grant a weapon great accuracy and give strength to armor, while a spirit of Aganyu makes a blade strike flames with each blow or wards a suit of armor from heat and lightning. Sample powers are given on the following page. Some are applicable to weapons only while others might be found on armor as well.

Only ngangas or characters with at least Trade/Blacksmith-3 skill may create magical arms and armor, selecting both the level of bonus and the specific spirit power to imbue. At 4th level they may fashion +1 weapons and armor, at 7th level they may create +2 equipment, and at 10th level they may fashion legendary +3 tools of war. The process requires numerous rare ingredients and expensive consecrations and at least one month of effort, though no special facilities are required.

At the end of the process, the GM secretly rolls either an Int/Occult or Int/Blacksmith check at a difficulty of 8, or 10 for +2 items, or 12 for +3 items. This difficulty is reduced by 2 if the creator is not attempting to add any spiritual powers to the weapon, but is instead content with a simple magical bonus. No magic or blessing can allow a reroll of this skill check, though skill bonuses still apply. On a failure, the special benefit is determined randomly. On a roll of 2 or 3, a cursed weapon is created, though the item appears to have been successfully fashioned until it is first used in battle.

Some weapons may become cursed, either through anger at the wielder or through natural malice. Cursed weapons and armor cling to the wielder. Once used in true battle, their bonus becomes a penalty and they cannot be discarded or destroyed, reappearing with the wielder every time he tries to use a different weapon or wear different armor. This affliction counts as a Greater Curse for purposes of breaking the effect. Some weapons are forever cursed by their dark origins, but others can be transformed into helpful implements if their angry spirits are assuaged by suitable offerings or mighty deeds performed with them. Such offerings usually cost at least half the creation cost of a weapon with their level of bonus. Some wrathful implements can also be satisfied by the death of the offending wielder.

MAGICAL ARMS AND ARMOR POWERS

1d6	ARMS OF AGANYU
1	Smoke Ladder: Bearer can climb smoke at half normal movement
2	Fireproof: Bearer ignores the first 5 points of fire damage per round
3	Smoke Breath: Bearer can breathe and see through smoke
4	Glowing: Casts a 30' flickering red light when drawn
5	Flaming: Inflict +1d6 additional fire damage
6	Quenching: Each blow extinguishes a 10' cube of burning material

1d6	ARMS OF GU
1	Light: Item costs one fewer point of encumbrance
2	Unbreakable: Item is unbreakable by anything short of magic
3	Quick: Item grants the wielder +1 on initiative rolls
4	Thirsting: Wielder regains 1d4 HP after killing an intelligent victim. This effect can happen only 1/round.
5	Shattering: Weapon does +1d6 damage to inanimate objects and can be used against them with impunity.
6	Vigilant: Wielder cannot be surprised by an ambush

1d6	ARMS OF OLOKUN
1	Waterbreathing: Bearer can breathe water
2	Waterwalking: Bearer can walk on water as if it were dry land
3	Truthseeking: Bearer gains +1 to all skill checks to discover truth
4	Raining: Weapon can pour out 20 gallons of fresh, clean water per day
5	Parching: Weapon dries living victims for +3 additional damage
6	Stubborn: Weapon grants +2 bonus to Mental Effect saves when held

1d6	ARMS OF OYA
1	Slowfalling: Bearer takes no damage from falls
2	Still: Bearer and their attacks are unaffected by high winds
3	Skywarding: Bearer is immune to lightning
4	Foretelling: Wielder can foretell the next day's weather perfectly
5	Leaping: Wielder can jump next to any visible target once per day
6	Repelling: Wielder is mantled in winds that give -2 AC against missiles

1d6	ARMS OF SAGBATA
1	Vigorous: Bearer is immune to infection by disease
2	Humble: Bearer can appear as rag-clothed leper at will
3	Physician's: Bearer gains +2 on all skill checks and saves related to diseases
4	Decaying: The weapon add +4 damage against living foes as wounds fester
5	Cleansing: The weapon's touch can cure a disease once per day
6	Unseen: Weapon is invisible unless put down or used

1d6	ARMS OF OSHUN
1	Charming: Bearer gains +1 skill bonus to social skill checks
2	Immaculate: Bearer is always clean, perfumed and well-presented
3	Greedy: Bearer can sense whether or not gold or silver is within 20'
4	Merciful: Weapon does subdual damage; those "slain" awake in 5 minutes
5	Bewitching: Wielder can cast a <i>Nkisi of the Deadend Mind</i> once per day
6	Gaudy: Weapon can disguise itself as an ornament when carried

1d6	ARMS OF THE SUN
1	Shining: Item casts yellow radiance in a 30' radius on command
2	Clear: Bearer can see even in perfect darkness
3	Temperate: Bearer immune to exhaustion penalties from hot armor
4	Searing: Weapon inflicts +1d6 damage with brilliant flashes of light
5	Holy: Weapon inflicts +1d10 damage against Eternal
6	Keen-Eyed: It grants a +1 bonus to all Perception checks

1d6	ARMS OF THE GODS BELOW
1	Unsleeping: Bearer must rest as normal, but never sleeps
2	Guarding: Bearer gains +1 saving bonus versus hostile magical effects
3	Breathless: Bearer cannot be suffocated and need not breathe
4	Fearsome: Wielder gains +1 skill bonus to intimidation attempts
5	Devouring: Weapon inflicts +1d6 damage as it drinks its victim's blood
6	Silent: Weapon grants +1 skill bonus to Stealth checks

The tables on the following page give a selection of sample powers that might be imbued by a spirit dedicated to a particular god. The first three powers on the table are appropriate for either armor or weapons, while the last three are best suited for weaponry. Each one is given a particular prefix to distinguish it more easily- thus, a *Flaming Heavy Spear of Aganyu* +2 is a Heavy Spear +2 that does an additional 1d6 points of fire damage with each blow.

MISCELLANEOUS MAGIC ITEMS

This category covers all other items that fail to fit neatly in one of the other sections. As a general rule, only ngangas can fashion miscellaneous items, though the GM may permit marabouts to create ones appropriate to their patrons or superlative, level-3 skilled craftsmen to make items fitting for their art. Most of these items qualify as greater items, though those that are single-use items count only as lesser works.

Assuming a character qualifies to create such items, they must be at least third level to create items costing up to 5,000 si, sixth level to create items costing up to 25,000 si, and ninth level to create any marvel requiring expenditures greater than that.

Bracelets of Spirit Warding: Malicious spirits are frightened by the clanging of these etched iron bracelets, suffering a -2 Morale penalty and a -2 penalty to hit the wearer. The bearer is also immune to life draining while wearing the bracelets, though the rattling applies a -1 penalty to any Stealth checks.

Blunted Dagger: This miniature knife is fashioned as a single piece with its metal scabbard and cannot be drawn. If the bearer touches the dagger as he parleys with strangers, he gains a +2 reaction roll bonus for the purpose of avoiding combat. The dagger will function only once per day.

Broom of Clean Fortune: This small hand-broom is decorated with tokens of the gods, but its palm-fiber bristles are filthy. It gathers up misfortunes that befall the owner, allowing them to reroll a failed saving throw once per day.

Calabash of Caught Luck: This painted gourd catches fallen luck. Each time the bearer fails a consequential skill check or rolls a 1 on an attack roll, the calabash gains a point of luck. These points may be spent to add to an attack roll, or if enough points are gathered to equal a skill check's difficulty, they may be spent to automatically succeed at the check.

Child-Bringing Stew: This mix of vegetables, bush meat, and dozens of herbs is guaranteed to leave a woman fertile after she consumes it, provided her barrenness is not the result of sorcery. A man who consumes it must save versus Magic or perish on the spot. Its power is dangerous, however, and there is a 1 in 6 chance that the next pregnancy she experiences will not be a child of her lover, but a shape inhabited by of a vengeful spirit-child who died in infancy.

Golden Fruit: This fruit is shaped like an ordinary mango but bears a brilliant golden luster. If the fruit is cut or broken, however, a swarm of hideous vermin will burst forth and savage everything within 10 feet of the broken fruit, clinging to their victims

and inflicting 1d6 damage every round for 1d6 rounds before the insects die. This item counts as a lesser magic item.

Hidebound Blade: A miniature set of blacksmith's tools and a tiny metal weapon are enfolded in a bullhide wrapping no larger than a man's palm. So long as the item is carried, edged weapons of the type folded in the hide can do no more than 1 point of damage per blow against the possessor. Only one hidebound blade may be carried at a time. Most (1-3 on 1d6) are of spears, but some (4-5 on 1d6) are of swords and the remainder are of more exotic weapons.

Horn of the Bull's Strength: This hollowed buffalo-horn is stuffed with numerous herbs and tokens of power, and grants the bearer a +1 bonus to their Strength modifier, up to a maximum of +3.

Igbako of Plenty: This triangular wooden food scoop can magically create all manner of delicious stews and soups. The amount is sufficient to supply both food and drink for up to a dozen people daily. If the user seeks payment or favors in exchange for the food, however, the igbako will break and become useless.

Image-Catching Bowl: There are times when a nganga is hard-pressed to steal an occult connection with their desired target. The image-catching bowl concentrates and purifies small traces of connection into a serviceable link. If the bowl is filled with an object the target has touched within the past half-hour, it can render the item into an occult connection. The object must be kept in the bowl until it is ready to be used.

Mantle of the Oba: This leopard-skin cloak is fit for the regalia of a king or great lord. Its benefits apply only when the wearer is within the borders of a territory which has pledged loyalty to the possessor, and the benefit is lost if more than half the inhabitants openly reject their rule. While these conditions hold, any lawful subject of the wearer must save versus Mental Effect to disobey any non-self-destructive command the wearer personally utters to them. Confessions of treason or other malfeasance qualify as "self-destructive" under most circumstances. If a listener resists a command, the cloak has no hold on them for the following day.

Palm-Wine Calabash: This small calabash refills itself with palm wine at the start of each day. If a possessor drinks the entire gourd-full of wine, they will regain 1d10 hit points, but must save versus Physical Effect or become somewhat drunken, suffering a -2 penalty to hit rolls, -1 to skill checks, and a 10% chance of botching any spells they may cast for the following hour. A drinker can benefit from only one such calabash each day.

Plot-Revealing Whistle: This small bamboo whistle is painted with many charms and signs of Olokun, and is capable of uncovering schemes against the owner. By concentrating on a particular person, whether or not they are present, the sound that emerges from the whistle is that of the person's voice confessing the details of any schemes or plans they may be forming against the bearer. The person may resist this providing this revelation by making a saving throw versus Magic. Each time the whistle is blown, there is a 1 in 4 chance of it splitting to pieces after it is used.

Pot of Wisdom: This skull-sized clay pot is very heavy, counting as three encumbrance items. Within can be seen a swirling, multicol-

Miscellaneous Magic Items		
1d20	Item	Cost
1	<i>Bracelets of Spirit Warding</i>	5,000
2	<i>Blunted Dagger</i>	5,000
3	<i>Broom of Clean Fortune</i>	15,000
4	<i>Calabash of Caught Luck</i>	10,000
5	<i>Child-Bringing Stew</i>	2,500
6	<i>Golden Fruit</i>	1,000
7	<i>Hidebound Blade</i>	30,000
8	<i>Horn of the Bull's Strength</i>	20,000
9	<i>Igbako of Plenty</i>	10,000
10	<i>Image-Catching Bowl</i>	40,000
11	<i>Mantle of the Oba</i>	40,000
12	<i>Palm-Wine Calabash</i>	5,000
13	<i>Plot-Revealing Whistle</i>	20,000
14	<i>Pot of Wisdom</i>	60,000
15	<i>Sacred Divination Tray</i>	50,000
16	<i>Serpent-Warding Ring</i>	10,000
17	<i>Spirit-Binding Nail</i>	15,000
18	<i>Talisman of Virtue</i>	10,000
19	<i>Wooden Horse</i>	7,500
20	<i>Wrapped Arrowhead</i>	20,000

ored fluid that whispers words that cannot quite be understood. One who carries the pot may draw on it to automatically succeed on any Wisdom or Intelligence-based skill check. Each time the pot is used there is a 1 in 4 chance that it will shatter.

Sacred Divination Tray: This wooden tray is etched with signs that venerate the spirits of wisdom and understanding, and allows a sufficiently learned possessor to conduct rites to reveal hidden truths. For a general question about whether a choice is good or bad, the Int/Priestcraft check difficulty is 8. For a question requiring a yes or no answer it is 10, and for one requiring up to a sentence of explication the difficulty is 12. If the check is failed by 4 or more points a false reading is provided. The tray may be used only once per week.

Serpent-Warding Ring: This small brass or copper ring is fashioned in the shape of a serpent coiling in on itself and grants the wearer immunity to the venom of serpents and reptilian creatures.

Spirit-Binding Nail: This long iron nail is coated in a thick patina of what is either rust or dried blood. When driven into the chest of the corpse of a person who has died no more than five minutes ago, it pins the spirit of the victim into their corpse, allowing common healing magic to gradually stitch the spirit back into the repaired body. Once at least one hit point worth of healing magic has been applied to the remains, the dead person may make a saving throw versus Magic at a -2 penalty once per day at dusk to return to life. The nail is excruciatingly painful to the spirit, however, and each day it is in place permanently reduces by one point the Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma of the subject due to the deep spiritual scars it inflicts. The attribute to be lessened is at

the dead subject's discretion. After losing 1d4+3 such points of attributes, the spirit tears free of the nail and becomes a maddened, gibbering wraith bent on murdering their former friends.

Talisman of Virtue: This small charm is inscribed with praises of a particular virtue- chastity outside of marriage, never harming a friend, always speaking the truth, or some other quality admired in a person. The bearer of the talisman impresses others by their rectitude and gains a +1 bonus to their Charisma modifier, up to a maximum of +3. They also cannot be magically compelled to violate the virtue, and any spell that attempts to force them to do so is instantly broken. If they ever knowingly violate the virtue, however, the talisman vanishes to find a more worthy owner.

Wooden Horse: This palm-sized statuette of a horse appears of no great value at first. At the possessor's discretion, however, they may hurl the statuette at the ground, whereupon it transforms instantly into a trained warhorse with the statistics of a common horse as per the Bestiary chapter, albeit with maximum hit points. If slain or bade by the owner, it transforms back into the statuette until the following dawn. The horse is perfectly obedient to its owner and requires neither food nor drink, nor is it susceptible to disease or weariness.

Wrapped Arrowhead: This arrowhead is carefully enfolded in a complex wrapping of etched bullhide, and grants the wearer protection against the sting of non-magical arrows and quarrels. Such weapons can never do more than 1 point of damage to him. It does nothing to guard against other missiles.

DESIGNING NEW MAGIC ITEMS

More potent versions of the weapon and armor powers exist and can be added in at the GM's discretion. As a general guideline, damage boosts should be limited to +1d6, or +1d10 for the mightiest weapons or those that affect only a very limited range of targets. Armor class bonuses should also be strictly limited, as otherwise it can be too easy for a character to be all but untouchable by his enemies. Skill bonuses should be capped at +1, or +2 for the strongest artifacts unless the bonus is only applicable to an uncommon situation. Unique special powers that mimic existing spells are usually safe additions as once-per-day powers, and other novel abilities can be added on as the GM's campaign recommends.

Other objects, such as miscellaneous items or fetish sticks, should be added with some caution. Will the object be useful in most conflict situations? Does the object obviate a major type of challenge in your campaign? Does the item trivialize other advantages the PCs might get from planning or other sources? Consider these factors carefully when designing entirely new magic items.

PC crafters will sometimes wish to create a new magic item not listed in this section, and will usually have a clear idea of the power they want it to grant. The first thing to do in such cases is to look at the motivation behind the request. In some cases, they'll want to create an item that simply adds to the splendor of their PC or their holdings. A magic well to sustain a desert village, a bridle that lets a horse ride a nation's width in a day, or so forth. Such items are useful and powerful, but they don't usually change the

fundamental tenor of the game.. If they really want to spend one of their limited potential permanent item creation opportunities on such artifacts, you should be willing to consider it. Such implements are a good way to bleed money out of a campaign and get the PCs eager to go back and earn another pile of plunder.

In other cases, however, the player will coincidentally put before you an object that just happens to synergize perfectly with their character's abilities. Or else the unique magical power the item grants is such that it is coincidentally and perfectly suited to fix a big problem facing the party. In the former case, you should usually dismiss the proposal. A magic item that just makes certain numbers increment or turns a specialist into an unstoppable monster in a particular field isn't worth your time to balance. In the

latter case, you might actually consider allowing it, if the specific power of the item isn't all that generally useful. If you do allow it, however, make sure that the creation cost soaks up all- and maybe more- of the party's available cash. Let them choose between the problem of dealing with their current crisis or the problem of having no money.

In all cases, you should feel free to simply disallow the creation of custom magic items, or else compel the PCs to make a session's goal be the uncovering of those books and ancient artifacts that will show them how to create the device they desire. The magic of the Three Lands is not docile and tame, that it should bend its *ashe* in any way a nganga desires.

CONVERTING AND SPENDING TREASURE

Now that the heroic crew has dragged their battered and blood-spattered forms from the depths of some cavernous pit or crumbling ruin, they likely have a great many gems, pieces of jewelry, fine portable furnishings, and other objects of value. The first thing many of them will want to do is convert their plunder to liquid wealth. The second thing they'll want to do is spend it on something.

Converting gems, jewelry, and other objects is easier said than done. An adventurer trying to turn an object into ready ingots will be lucky if they can get so much as half of the item's base price in ingots, and will probably not get more than a quarter. Someone with a Trade skill such as Jeweler or Gemcutter might get closer to half, as would those PCs with a business background, but ordinary souls can count on no more than 25% of the base price.

This also assumes that the buyer actually has enough ingots on hand to purchase the item. Small villages can usually launder up to 500 si worth of plunder, but that will tax the liquidity of the entire village. Market towns can usually pay up to 10,000 ingots for a take, while a major city can usually provide up to 100,000 silver ingots for valuable objects before the prices start to crash from the glut of gems and precious objects. These guidelines are doubled in Sokone, where the towns and cities are rich in ingots and opportunities for trade, and reduced by 90% in Meru, where they have little use for ingots in the few small settlements to be found there.

Once the adventurers convert their plunder to more liquid forms, they then need to worry about actually carrying it. It should be remembered that 100 ingots count as one item, so the average man can carry about 1,500 ingots without being slowed by the weight, assuming he is otherwise unburdened. Most adventurers will have to arrange for porters and guards to cart more substantial sums, and can't simply carry it around in their purses.

Once a band of heroes starts to acquire enough wealth to worry about this sort of thing, they're likely to realize that they have need of friends and allies to guard their property. There are no savings banks in the Three Lands. Goldsmiths and moneylenders might be persuaded to hold coin for a time in their strongrooms, but they'll expect a 1% fee of the total each week, and they may not have the facilities to guard truly spectacular troves. They might

even be tempted too much by the prospect of sudden and spectacular wealth, and conspire with the local officials to cheat the adventurers out of their honestly-won plunder. Custom insists that the Spears of the Dawn are due the fruits of their heroism, but greed can bend many laws.

Most adventurers find it wisest and best to make friends among the locals, those they can trust to hold their belongings while they are out adventuring. Heroes tend to provide the kind of services that win profound gratitude from those they aid, and a powerful local family can be trusted to be both keep wealth safe and prevent other locals from conspiring to cheat the PCs out of it. Of course, it is understood in such circumstances that if disaster befalls the family, their good friends will not object if they take whatever they strictly need from the goods entrusted to them.

In the long term, prosperous adventurers often find it necessary to build their own strongholds or found their own settlements where the people can be expected to be explicitly and specifically loyal to their interests. Golden ingots can be stolen and gems can be squandered, but land and stout walls are harder to lose. Wealth put into the bellies of hungry peasants can buy the kind of service that market-hired minions would never give.

For those with less willingness to settle down, it often proves necessary to simply leave their wealth in the form they found it in. A fist-sized ruby might be worth more gold than a man can carry, but it will fit neatly into a pocket. In a time of need, the gem can be offered for services and redeemed for some portion of its worth, even if such barter usually ends in some form of overpayment.

In all cases, the GM should keep an eye on the logistics of the party's wealth. It's not necessary to track things to the exact coin or carefully measure the encumbrance added when the marabout swipes a pouch of golden ingots, but no group should be walking around with 40,000 silver ingots on their shoulders. The challenges of converting, moving, and guarding great troves of wealth can make for interesting conundrums in a campaign and can motivate players to seek the kind of allies who can help them hold on to the profits of their endeavors- or it can incite them to spend the stuff quickly, before it starts to weigh them down.

THE HIRING OF MAGICAL AID

It is not unusual for a party to find it necessary to seek the aid of a powerful spellcaster- most often to cast some sort of curative or curse-lifting sorcery, or to call back the spirit of a recently-slain companion. Spellcasters skilled enough to be of great use to a party are uncommon, and rarely placed in a convenient location. More importantly, they are rarely willing to sell their services for simple coin like a common market charlatan.

The table provided here gives the chance of a nganga or marabout being present in a city, town, or village, and the likely level of power for such figures. Cities and towns are much more likely to have representatives of these esoteric arts, but the kind of sorcerer who dwells in a city is rarely the kind of sorcerer who seeks true occult power. The most potent and fearsome ngangas live deep in the bush, where they can more easily gather the components of their arts and treat with powers outside the sight of ordinary men. Powerful marabouts often find it necessary to seek the wilderness as well, driven out of a city by priests who fear usurpation and the constant importuning of others seeking their aid.

The table to the right gives a general idea of the number of casters of a particular level that will be found in a city, prosperous market town, or particular region of wilderness. If a percentage chance is given, it is the chance that a single caster of that level is in the area. If you are building a town as a starting base for a campaign, you may wish to intentionally put a 7th level marabout and a 7th level nganga somewhere in the vicinity, as experienced adventurers often have need of strong curative spells. There is no necessity to make them naturally cooperative, however, if the PCs lack the foresight to build a friendly relationship with them early on.

Assuming a spellcaster can be found in the area, the PCs must convince this wonder-worker to aid them. Moderately powerful casters, up to fifth level or so, can usually be approached directly amid the throng of other locals seeking aid for their particular woes and afflictions. Some of these worthies will be willing to accept a flat cash payment for their aid in casting a spell, usually couched in the polite form of “gifts” and “tokens of respect” amounting to 50 si for a first-level spell, 250 si for a second-level spell, or 1,000 si for a third-level spell. Others will be quick to take advantage of a skilled band of adventurers and ask them to perform a minor favor. These favors should not absorb much time or serious effort in a session, though complications can always arise.

Spellcasters of renowned power, those of up to 7th level, tend to be less cooperative. Such figures can afford to listen only to chiefs, obas, and nobles, and they are often afflicted with little problems best solved by adventurers. Getting a 4th level spell cast by them might cost as much as 4,000 si, and may require a substantial outlay of favors before the caster will consent to aid them. Sometimes the assistance will be given in advance, but in such cases the PCs can expect to leave behind occult connections with the caster to help ensure that they do not suddenly forget their pledges afterwards.

The most powerful and fearsome of spellcasters are usually the most inaccessible. None of them would ever have any peace if

SPELLCASTERS IN A VICINITY						
LEVEL	NGANGAS			MARABOUTS		
	CITIES	TOWNS	BUSH	CITIES	TOWNS	BUSH
1	1d10	1d6	50%	1d6	1d6	75%
2	1d6	1d4	50%	1d6	1d4	50%
3	1d4	1	50%	1d6	1d4	25%
4	1d4	50%	25%	1d6	1	25%
5	1d4	50%	10%	1d4	1	10%
6	50%	0%	5%	1d4	75%	5%
7	25%	0%	5%	1	50%	5%
8	0%	0%	3%	15%	0%	5%
9	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	5%
10	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	5%

they entertained every petty noble or wailing merchant-prince who tried to buy their favor, and so they commonly dwell deep within the bush or in long-abandoned temples, jealous of their privacy and tolerating the visits of only the strongest petitioners. Such strength is almost always directed toward necessary services to the caster before they will give their aid, and for services that require no great effort on their part they might still charge eight or ten thousand silver ingots.

RAISING THE DEAD

Character death is not unknown in *Spears of the Dawn*. The likelihood isn't quite as common as it may seem at first glance due to the ways in which mortally-wounded characters can be stabilized and revived, but it is still very easy for a PC to go down under the spears of his foes or be smote by the dark witchcraft of an enemy. Sooner or later, it's very likely that the PCs will want to find someone capable of reviving the dead.

The 4th level marabout spell *Calling Back* can be used to revive a recently-dead PC, provided that the marabout is conversant with the Spirit sphere and able to cast the spell. The body must also have all of its major components together and be no more than one day dead for every level of the marabout. A human corpse is all that a single strong man can carry, barring readied items.

It is not a GM's duty to make resurrection available. If the PC dies deep in the bush, far away from a marabout capable of such spells, it is not a GM's obligation to somehow produce an extra life. Wise PCs might lay in spirit tokens imbued with the spell as insurance, though such tokens would run at least 5,600 si to make, plus an additional 4,000 or so to get the marabout to provide the labor.

Low-level PCs who perish rarely have the opportunity to return. Only true heroes have the wealth and fame necessary to provide even a chance at a second breath of life.

HIRELINGS AND SERVANTS

Adventurers are often in need of assistance in more mundane affairs, and it can be useful to know the cost for hiring servants and minions. The prices here assume a fairly large market town with a decent supply of labor. For those roles requiring a particular skill, level-1 can be assumed, with no ability modifier. Level-2 practitioners will cost at least ten times as much, and level-3 artisans are the stuff of kingdom-wide fame, and can their help can rarely be bought with mere silver.

PCs who wish to hire a minion for an indefinite term can simply pay the “permanent hire” price, a one-time price that abstracts the long-term cost of hiring the servant indefinitely. Such employers are expected to provide food and shelter as well in most cases. The permanent hire prices also reflect the cost of a slave with those skills in those grim lands where slaves are sold openly.

Some tasks presume a certain tolerance of danger, such as the role of soldier or guardsman. Such employees will tolerate all ordinary dangers, but will shy away from delving into tomb-houses or other uncanny places, and may break and flee if faced with supernatural perils. An employer with Leadership skills or a good Charisma modifier may be needed to persuade them to carry on; when in doubt, use a reaction roll as given in the Bestiary chapter to determine what employees will do. Increased wages can help to an extent, but soldiers know that dead men spend no silver.

Artisan: This heading includes all practitioners of the skilled trades. Most will have whatever hand tools they require for their profession, but will not have access to workshops or other facilities unless at least twice as much is paid for them per day.

Entertainer: Musicians, dancers, poets, acrobats, and other purveyors of delight fall under this heading. No court is worth its name if it does not have a regular supply of merriment from these people.

Griot, Minor: Famous griots cannot be hired for day-wages or by those without a name worth praising. Those with fewer scruples or lesser fame can be persuaded to work for less universally-acclaimed patrons, doing their best to laud them in praise-songs and clever speech. Would-be nobles would never be taken seriously at public occasions if they did not have at least one griot attending them.

Guardsman: These men use the Commoner human statistics from the Bestiary chapter. They are equipped with leather armor and hand weapons and will dutifully guard their employer’s home and belongings against all predictable threats.

Guide: Whether an urban bawd or a bush-wise hunter, the guide will show the way to local destinations of interest to his employer. Most have enough sense to avoid entering places of real danger.

Healer: This healer lacks magical skills, but is quite competent to tend a critically-wounded or direly ill companion.

Porter: These men and women are willing to carry heavy burdens for their employers, often over land too rugged or sickly for pack animals. They are a tough lot, and willing to venture into the wil-

COMMON EMPLOYEES		
ROLE	COST/DAY	PERMANENT HIRE
Artisan	4	500 si
Entertainer	2	250 si
Griot, Minor	10	2,000 si
Guardsman	2	400 si
Guide	3	400 si
Healer	4	500 si
Porter	2	300 si
Priest	4	800 si
Prostitute	1	250 si
Sage	20	5,000 si
Scribe	5	1,000 si
Soldier	4	600 si
Unskilled Laborer	1	200 si

derness and face the teeth of ordinary beasts, but they will not go into places of supernatural danger or obvious mortal peril.

Priest: While lacking the supernatural gifts of a marabout, this priest knows all the usual skills necessary for satisfying the gods and maintaining the spiritual health of a household. Any community of any consequential size will need at least one such priest to guide the communal rituals and oversee the vital funerary rites for members of the community.

Prostitute: In these hard times there are all too many widows and orphans who have nothing left to sell but themselves. The most comely and charming can hope for a briefly-comfortable life at prices ten or a hundred times what their lesser brethren earn, but most of these souls are lucky to fend off hunger for one more day.

Sage: All sages have at least level-2 skill in the Scholar skill and are usually quite well-informed upon at least one broad topic. They can often identify obscure languages, solve esoteric riddles, and otherwise provide answers beyond the ken of the party. Even if they cannot, however, they will still expect to be paid for the time spent researching the question.

Scribe: Unlike most commoners of the Three Lands, the scribe can read and write, and is a regular feature of even small villages, where he may be called upon to read missives sent from distant clan-kindred. Merchants often hire such men as clerks and functionaries, and they are usually skilled at business administration.

Soldier: Using the Soldier human statistics in the Bestiary chapter, these men will fight against any reasonable opponent and follow their employer with minimal reserve. While keenly aware of the value of their own skin, many soldiers in this bloody age have few other scruples.

Unskilled Laborer: For those fit only for simple manual labor.

HENCHMEN AND LOYAL RETAINERS

There are times when even the bravest and most resolute band of adventurers finds it prudent to enlist a little extra help for an expedition, aid that goes beyond the usual hiring of porters and guides. More established heroes might have need of servants that can be trusted with important positions, such as a regent to oversee their lands or property while they are out adventuring. These sort of trusted, responsible NPCs are known as *henchmen* and *retainers*.

Henchmen are hired hands enlisted for a particular expedition, ones willing to share the same dangers and perils that face the PCs. To acquire their services, PCs search the community for capable, adventurous young men and women willing to face a perilous undertaking alongside the characters. Even a small village might have at least 1d6 such souls, though it usually takes as much as a week to winnow them out of the more unsuitable candidates.

The vast majority of these henchmen will be 1st level warriors of one stripe or another. For each candidate, the GM rolls 2d6; on a 4 the candidate is a griot, on an 11, the candidate is a marabout, and a 12 means that he or she is a nganga. The Resources chapter includes tables to help flesh out such NPCs, but most of them will require little more than a name and a distinguishing feature or two. Statistics can be lifted from the example NPCs in that chapter.

Henchmen require a specific employer, a particular PC who will be in charge of them. Most will faithfully take any risk their employer is willing to share with them, but they are not fools and will not throw their lives away for their paymaster. When a henchman's loyalty is tested, the GM should make a reaction roll for them, modified by their employer's Charisma and Leadership skills.

Henchmen usually require at least a half-share of any of the rewards of an adventure, and the rare henchman of higher than 1st level will surely demand more. Some may also require a signing bonus, or surety-money left with their family in case they never return. If the henchman has any dependents, he's sure to require at least 100 si in surety left behind with his family, to be given back only on his safe return.

Henchmen are skilled and capable people, but they don't have the kind of steel-hard resolve and unflinching courage that most PCs possess. After facing death on an adventure, a henchman needs to make a reaction roll modified by their employer's Charisma and Leadership. The specific threshold will depend on how near they came to dying in the last adventure and how profitable it was for them in the end, but usually a roll of 8+ is needed to convince the henchman to keep adventuring with the PCs. One too many close shaves will eventually convince most of them that the adventuring life is not for them.

A single PC can usually manage only one henchman at a time unless the GM makes allowances otherwise. The player should be given the henchman's statistics and details of their possessions, and allowed to determine the NPC's actions in combat and while adventuring. If they start to play the NPC as more courageous or selfless than the circumstances suggest, the GM is fully within their rights to veto their actions and take control of the henchman.



LOYAL RETAINERS

Retainers are similar to henchmen, but are acquired in a very different way. Retainers are those men and women bound to the PC by past favors and shared dangers. They are those souls whom the PCs have aided or defended in the past, and a certain sense of loyalty pervades the relationship. They will expect to be treated properly, but they are also willing to undertake far more demanding and responsible tasks than a simple henchman.

It is the GM's discretion as to when a retainer has been earned by the party. Many of these NPCs may not be overly useful in the depths of a tomb-house, but they may have skills and aptitudes that would be very useful to running a domain, managing an estate, or providing skillful assistance. These retainers can be relied upon to keep things functioning smoothly when PCs are away.

The pay and other perquisites expected by a retainer will vary based on their duties. In most cases, their services are rolled into the cost of building holdings and need not be broken out into a separate fee. For those retainers whose services are used only occasionally, they may be content to aid simply out of gratitude or the honor of assisting such mighty heroes. Still, gifts of 100 to 1,000 si would not be considered inappropriate when a retainer performs some important favor for an old friend.

BUILDINGS AND REAL ESTATE

The most successful adventurers often find it necessary to establish something of a home base for their expeditions, a refuge where they can expect to find allies and security against their enemies. By the time a party has enough wealth to consider such matters, they usually have enough foes that a place of refuge becomes a practical necessity. Living out of guest-houses and the homes of friends simply leaves them too exposed to the machinations of those they have barked in the past.

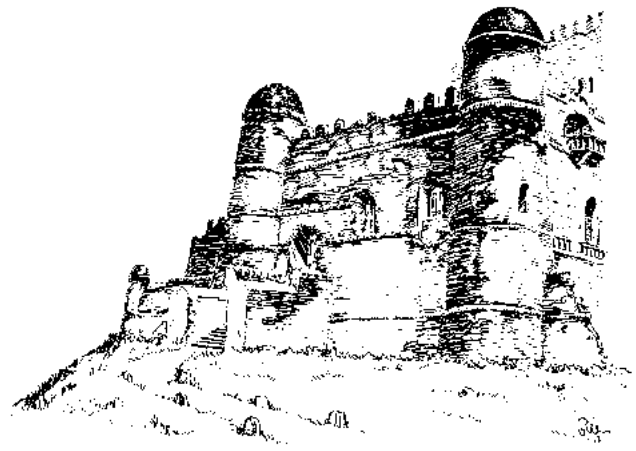
Acquiring property in peasant villages is more complicated than simply paying silver and taking title to a patch of land. A village is a cohesive whole, a community that does not automatically stretch to include every wanderer or vagabond who cares to settle within its borders. People must be able to trust their neighbors and rely on them to pull together against the constant press of hunger, raiders, and internal quarrels. Outsiders are welcome for a time and travelers can always pass through, but those who mean to actually *settle* must convince the village that they are worth having.

Some history of heroism on behalf of the village is usually sufficient to win an invitation to stay and the use of some marginal land at the edge of the settlement. The best farmland will have been taken up by the more important village clans long before, but most of the Five Kingdoms are sufficiently depopulated that fallow land is available for the taking. Such new residents are expected to participate in village rituals, share tribute and service dues to the settlement's ruler, and respect the customs of the locals. For most adventurers, the monetary aspects of this are so trivial that they aren't even worth recording- the scrapings of a hero's purse are worth more than most villages see in a year.

Service, on the other hand, can be more exacting. As hardened warriors and at least locally-famous heroes, the PCs will be called upon to address grave threats to the village and matters that the local elders cannot handle themselves. Most chiefs are loathe to ask for favors like this, as it makes them appear weak, but in cases of dire necessity they will go to visit the heroes and ask them humbly to consider the matter. Refusing to help will result in a great deal of disapproval and blame from the villagers, and life will be very uncomfortable for such reluctant warriors.

Those who do accomplish such feats for the village can expect to be regarded with great respect and reverence by their neighbors, and their goodwill considered very carefully by the chief. For many retired or settled adventurers, this is really all they desire from life- an honored and peaceful life at home, respected by their neighbors and admired by their community. Most Spears of the Dawn that do not die in their duties- that is to say, a tiny percentage of them- retire to such honored quietude in some village they have helped to save.

Town life is simpler in many ways. There are enough landowners and mercantile clans there to sell space within the walls at prices that would be ruinous to ordinary souls. They expect nothing but silver for their services and new owners need do nothing but pay the town taxes and avoid the oba's displeasure. Such town homes can be far finer and more splendid than a simple village dwelling,



but they are often less secure. It is impossible for strangers to enter a border village without being noticed and remarked by the locals, whereas an entire squad of assassins can enter a town without drawing attention- and the townsfolk are far more likely to turn their eyes from their work.

Whether the PCs choose to take holdings in a town or village, the GM should take care not to shackle them in place to defend their property and possessions. Country estates, border strongholds and urban palaces should be *assets*, not burdens that require constant vigilance to maintain. The occasional threat or plea for help can be spice to a campaign, but the GM should avoid punishing the PCs for carrying on an adventurer's life after they become landlords.

BUILDING COSTS

Rather than calculate complex details of structure and floorplan, the costs in this section are abstracted. A PC draws a rough outline of the sort of structure he or she wishes to erect, and pays a price related to the size of the structure. For each 10' cube of structure, the PC pays a price based on the type of construction.

Thus, a simple 10 foot square hut of unadorned wood and thatch would cost 50 si, while a grand stone palace with a 100 foot square foundations and three floors would cost a princely 30,000 si. In places where a particular material is scarce, such as wood on the savannahs or stone in the jungles of Lokossa, the prices may double or even treble for large structures. Particularly ornate structures decorated with fine carvings, sculptures, and other signs of wealth cost twice as much as plainer structures.

The interior of a building can be arranged at the player's discretion, with interior walls, stairs, doors, and other basic furnishings added as they wish. Particularly splendid or unusual furnishings might have an additional cost.

In addition to structures, the PCs might wish to build free-standing walls, fortified trenches, or tunnel through earth or stone. Within the depopulated villages of the Five Kingdoms, additional land can usually be acquired for a trivial price, but space within the walls of a city or market town comes at an exceedingly dear price.

TYPES OF STRUCTURES

In addition to the basic building-blocks of new constructions, prices and details are also provided for complete structures. GMs can use these prices as rough guidelines for the sale of existing real estate.

Peasant huts are simple affairs, usually built of wooden posts, grass or wicker weaving, and grass thatch roofs. Most are no more than ten or fifteen feet in diameter and occupied only at night or in inclement weather, as the busy life of a common family takes place in the fields and the village.

Most **village compounds** are built around a main house, usually about thirty feet square, and a fenced-in yard for small livestock and the protection of a vegetable garden. Such homes usually house an extended family and are found among the richer and more important clans of the village. Adventurers find them convenient for housing servants and guardsmen for their stockpiled wealth.

While little larger than a village compound, a village **shrine** is adorned with the carvings and fine decorations pleasing to the gods. Most villages can afford to work only in wood, but Nyalans and Sokonese sometimes go to the expense of stone construction, doubling the shrine's cost.

Town compounds are vastly more expensive than village structures, as the price of a 50' square plot within city walls can be ruinously dear. Most such compounds are encircled by a low stone wall, with a two-storey wooden building along the back of the lot.

Country estates are favored by nobles, as they provide a dignified residence for an overseer that can house the owner as well when a change of scenery is desired. The unsettled conditions of the modern age have discouraged constructions in wood, so most are large stone structures, at least fifty feet on a side and with two storeys. Walls are thrown around gardens and outbuildings, the whole built with an eye for defense against bandits as well as the pleasures of gracious living.

Border forts are often tumbled ruins or decayed wrecks, but a few still stand guard in the wilderness. The gradual decline of the Five Kingdoms since the end of the Long War has resulted in a slow pullback of their forces, until forts that were once sheltering market towns and cities now stand isolated in an untamed land. Most include a number of smaller structures within high, sheltering walls.

Siege warfare was never common in the Three Lands, as the sorcerous marvels of marabouts and ngangas often made it possible to strike at a fortress' weakest points. With magic bewitching its defenders and blinding its guardians to intruders, there was little benefit in relying too much on stone walls. Instead, many such forts were spread across the borders, the better to force attackers to spread their sorcerous resources thin.

Urban palaces depict the kind of splendor fit for a merchant-prince or great oba, often built over the course of generations. Even a great city won't have more than a half-dozen such structures within its walls.

STRUCTURE COSTS	
CONSTRUCTION	COST
Plain Wood Building, 10' x 10' x 10'	50 si
Ornate Wood Building, 10' x 10' x 10'	100 si
Stone Building, 10' x 10' x 10'	100 si
Ornate Stone Building, 10' x 10' x 10'	200 si
Wooden Wall, 10' x 10' x 3'	10 si
Stone Wall, 10' x 10' x 3'	20 si
Earthen Trench, 10' x 10' x 10'	10 si
Earthen Tunnel, 10' x 10' x 10'	20 si
Stone Tunnel, 10' x 10' x 10'	200 si
Land inside city walls, 10' x 10'	200 si
Peasant Hut	50 si
Village Compound	500 si
Shrine	1,000 si
Town Compound	7,000 si
Country Estate	30,000 si
Border Fort	30,000 si
Urban Palace	75,000 si

BREAKING WALLS AND DOORS

Adventurers being the kind of people they are, it's to be expected that they will eventually attempt to smash through a door or wall. To do so, their weapon must be suited to the need- smashing a wooden door with an axe or runku is reasonable, but a spear or sword will only shatter. The spirits of magical weapons will be greatly insulted by such use unless there is an obvious and heroic need to use them in such a way.

The table below covers certain common barrier types and the number of hit points of damage that must be done to break a man-sized hole in them. Flammable objects will usually suffer 1d6 damage per round if set aflame.

Adventurers who make a habit of smashing their way through a tomb-house should take care. The noise of such brutish explorations is quite likely to draw the attention of everything else within the ruin, and if they don't come running immediately it is only because they are likely to organize themselves to repel intruders before they charge after the noisy interlopers.

BREAKING THINGS	
CONSTRUCTION	HP
Thatch or Woven Wicker	6
Interior Wooden Wall or Light Door	10
Exterior Wooden Wall or Heavy Door	20
Interior Stone Wall	20
Exterior Stone Wall or Metal Door	40

GAMEMASTER RESOURCES

The following resources are intended to be a miscellany of tools useful in composing adventures and running a game. Players might get use out of the quick name tables, but most of the tools are intended to help a GM spark their own creativity and formulate interesting situations for their own version of the Three Lands.

The tools here are starting points. They are intended to give you pieces and fragments loosely coupled together and then allow you to apply your own creativity in deciding just how the pieces fit. For example, when in need of a crisis for a village, you might roll on the Conflict Elements table opposite and come up with “Heavily-armed cult zealots demand tribute or they will kill hostages.”

Who are these zealots and what tribute do they want? In some cases, the answers to those questions will be obvious. In others, you might flip back to the Adventures chapter and roll on the “Building an Eternal Cult” tables to brew up this nefarious pack of

evildoers. Where your own information or creativity needs an extra dose of help, you can turn to these tools to move things along.

In some cases, the tables might produce a seemingly nonsense result. Most of the time, you’ll want to simply edit the result or throw it out entirely, but sometimes you might find it useful or interesting to take it seriously, and think about the kind of situation that would lead to such a circumstance. No fiction can be so strange as reality, and a dose of the implausible can actually improve a game’s verisimilitude at times.

In all cases, however, you should remember that you are the arbiter of your campaign. These tools are useful only insofar as they serve your needs, and you should always feel free to edit or rework a result if you are struck by a better idea. They are there to leverage the power of your own creativity and ability to draw connections, and when you don’t need them, you shouldn’t feel bound by them.

QUICK ADVENTURE ELEMENTS

While the conflict generators and one-page templates in the Adventure chapter can be quite useful, sometimes a little further inspiration is due. These tables provide a number of sample adventure elements to mix and match together. To use the conflict generator on the opposite page, just roll 1d12, 1d8, and 1d10 together and read across the table to get a potential conflict outline.

ADVENTURE ELEMENTS					
1d20	MACGUFFIN	LOCATION	PATRON	ANTAGONIST	FIGHTING OVER...
1	Abandoned body of a loved one	Abandoned shrine	Artisan	Adventurer	A claimed debt
2	Blackmail evidence of a crime	Ancient mine	Chief	Assassin	A man
3	Blessed good-luck talisman	Bandit hideout	Courtesan	Bandit	A public insult
4	Bones of a mighty ancestor	Burial palace	Courtier	Cultist	A splendid weapon
5	Book of sinister occult lore	Collapsed school	Criminal	Eternal	A woman
6	Cache of long-lost treasure	Cursed dwelling	Elder	Fraud	An adulterous spouse
7	Cure for a dire disease	Decrepit palace	Griot	Griot	An ancient feud
8	Dangerous Eternal occult relic	Destroyed fortress	Guard	Marabout	An official post
9	Document proving a business deal	Dilapidated estate	Merchant	Mercenary	Business ownership
10	Encoded map to a great treasure	Entangling swamp	Newlywed	Merchant	Credit for a victory
11	Holy icon or statuette of a god	Giant-built palace	Nganga	Nganga	Culpability for a crime
12	Kidnapped family member	Mazey slum	Noble	Noble	Enforced obedience
13	Pile of a merchant's trade ingots	Prehuman ruin	Official	Official	Food distribution
14	Plundered temple treasure	Ruined town	Peasant	Outcast	Land ownership
15	Precious house shrine implement	Sea or river-cave	Priest	Poisoner	Precious gems
16	Proof of a legal privilege	Tangled grove	Relative	Priest	Recent crime
17	Relic of an honored ancestor	Thieves' den	Scholar	Relative	Sheer spitefulness
18	Sack of precious jewels	Tomb-house	Scout	Rival	Social status
19	Stolen bride-to-be	Tunnel warren	Spear of the Dawn	Slaver	Supporting kinsmen
20	Stolen tribute due a local lord	Undercity tunnels	Urchin	Thief	Trade ingots

CONFLICT ELEMENTS				
1d12	1d8	ONE SIDE OF THE CONFLICT...	1d10	THINGS IMPORTANT TO THE CONFLICT
SOCIAL 1-3	1	Gave up a Thing but wants it back now	1	A hand in marriage
	2	Has already caused a Thing to a rival's chagrin	2	Acceptance of kinship
	3	Is owed a Thing by a recalcitrant other side	3	An official position
	4	Lost a Thing and wants revenge on the takers	4	Clan social preeminence
	5	Wants to defend a Thing against an enemy	5	Credit for a great deed
	6	Wants to create a Thing despite hostile rivals	6	Familial right to noble rank
	7	Wants to ruin and destroy a Thing	7	Freedom from servitude
	8	Wants to take or claim a Thing	8	Guilt of a crime
			9	Right to live in a place
			10	Rule of the local community
ECONOMIC 4-6	1	Has discovered a Thing and wants to keep it from foe	1	Buried treasure
	2	A Thing they have is cursed or problematic	2	Cache of weaponry
	3	They're doing reckless, foolish deeds for a Thing	3	Grand building
	4	A Thing was stolen from them by a rival	4	Large inheritance
	5	Their rightful ownership of a Thing is doubted by a foe	5	Number of slaves
	6	They fight among their own kin over the Thing	6	Plot of land
	7	A Thing is being sought by corrupt officials or nobles	7	Precious jewels
	8	A Thing was lost long ago but its whereabouts surface	8	Profit from a merchant caravan
			9	Profitable business
			10	Rich mine
MILITARY 7-9	1	A Thing's warriors have crushed the local forces	1	"Taxmen" from neighboring land
	2	A Thing demands tribute or will kill hostages	2	Bandit raiding band
	3	A Thing threatens to depose the local ruler	3	Deniable military raiders
	4	A rival is secretly backing a Thing	4	Eternal kidnapping force
	5	A Thing is flexing recently-gained power	5	Heavily-armed cult zealots
	6	Two rivals bid for the support of a Thing	6	Local rebels against authority
	7	A Thing is destroying a trusted ally	7	Mercenary band turned raider
	8	A Thing has been smashed and the survivors run wild	8	Monstrous foes in the wild
			9	Vicious bully and his minions
			10	Warriors of a tyrannical lord
RELIGIOUS 10-12	1	Violent zealots have focused on a Thing	1	Bones of a holy person
	2	A Thing has split the temple into factions	2	Book of holy rituals
	3	A Thing is denounced by a violent demagogue	3	Dominant community religion
	4	Mistrusted strangers have brought a Thing	4	Expulsion of "heretical" priests
	5	Documents surface leading to a Thing	5	Local religious persecution
	6	A young priest flees those who would hide a Thing	6	Miracle-working idol
	7	Commoners have become obsessed with a Thing	7	Relic of a great marabout
	8	A Thing has been stolen or provoked by foes	8	Secret witchcraft in the faith
			9	Temple hierarchy dominance
			10	Troublemaking missionaries

QUICK NAMES

Many players and GMs are apt to be unfamiliar with the sort of names that are common in the Three Lands. The following tables provide a quick reference for some of the more likely names in a given culture, including those for men, women, clans, and place-names.

In villages and other small communities, it is most usual for a person to go only by their given name, sometimes modified by an epithet fitting their accomplishments or notable traits. Thus, a small village might see the little girl Afia playing with her father Baokye the Smith outside the house of Chief Kwaku, only to be waylaid by One-Armed Kusi the village beggar as he asks for a little maize for Oshun's sake. Meanwhile, the mighty heroine Asiwa Tenslayer chivvies the chief for his neglect of his duties, and the old man must swallow the reproof out of respect for the woman's terrible spear.

In towns and other larger settlements, the confusion of persons often requires more qualification. In such cases, the person's clan is usually provided as a surname, with Afia becoming more commonly known as Afia Mafi along with her father Baokye Mafi and her mother Akosi Muru, who maintains her clan affiliation even

after marriage. Should her husband die, she would return to her kindred with her children unless otherwise arranged by her inlaws.

The people of the Three Lands often add additional names in acknowledgement of important events or notable deeds. As Afia grows, she might distinguish herself as Afia Goodluck Mafi after surviving a dangerous childbed fever, or Afia Breaks Them All after she manages to kill a trio of night-time robbers with her father's hammer. A person may adopt a new name at any time, but it is its use by the community that confers legitimacy on it.

When creating NPCs for a new campaign, a GM is well-advised to use names with epithets. Many of the names of the Three Lands are novel to players, and they can have a hard time pronouncing them or making them "stick" in memory without some familiar anchor as a mnemonic. "General Mantled-In-Glory" and "Lord Abazu the Unsmiling" are both much easier for them to remember than "General Mitri Menkare" or "Lord Abazu Ezekuna". In the same fashion, new players might be hesitant or confused about giving names to their PCs that they have a hard time pronouncing. You can refer to the pronunciation guide in the foreword of the book, or just let them pick suitable epithets.

LOKOSSAN NAMES				
1d100	MALE	FEMALE	CLAN	PLACE
1-4	Amoyaw	Abena	Aboade	Adanse
5-8	Antwi	Aberafi	Aduana	Agogo
9-12	Asamu	Adjua	Afram	Akuroforem
13-16	Asiba	Adwoa	Agona	Akyem
17-20	Ason	Afia	Akede	Amakom
21-24	Atakora	Afiriye	Akom	Ampabame
25-28	Boakye	Akosi	Amran	Apagya
29-32	Bontu	Akua	Ankomade	Asaman
33-36	Duro	Amankwa	Asakyiri	Asuemgya
37-40	Gyamfi	Ame	Asekere	Asumanya
41-44	Gyasi	Amma	Asenie	Banko
45-48	Kofi	Anane	Asona	Boaman
49-52	Kusi	Asantewa	Bia	Bonwire
53-56	Kwabena	Ase	Bretuo	Dadease
57-60	Kwadwo	Asiwa	Ekona	Dankyira
61-64	Kwaku	Baduwa	Konsi	Dormaa
65-68	Kwame	Bediako	Krete	Dwebiriso
69-72	Kwesi	Esi	Mafi	Jamase
73-76	Mensa	Kakyire	Mayesu	Kenyase
77-80	Osei	Obiragowa	Muru	Kumawu
81-84	Safo	Pra	Ompo	Kwaman
85-88	Sasraku	Safoa	Oyoko	Kwaso
89-92	Sekyere	Sarpoma	Sika	Tafo
93-96	Tabiri	Sisiwa	Tano	Takyiman
97-00	Yao	Yawa	Toa	Tikurom

NYALAN NAMES				
1d100	MALE	FEMALE	CLAN	PLACE
1-4	Adama	Adja	Ablo	Ansongo
5-8	Amadu	Aicha	Assitan	Bafulabe
9-12	Bakari	Aminata	Burima	Banamba
13-16	Balubo	Amita	Camara	Burem
17-20	Bubakar	Asetu	Gafu	Dima
21-24	Dembele	Awa	Gundo	Diolla
25-28	Dramane	Bintu	Hamane	Kangaba
29-32	Foday	Chaita	Kady	Kati
33-36	Idris	Diarra	Karida	Kayes
37-40	Issa	Didia	Keita	Kidal
41-44	Karim	Dina	Konate	Kita
45-48	Kone	Djeneba	Lamine	Masina
49-52	Kulibali	Fanta	Madi	Menaka
53-56	Moctar	Hawa	Maiga	Mopti
57-60	Modibo	Kadi	Makane	Nara
61-64	Musa	Kadiatu	Malik	San
65-68	Namory	Kilia	Mathzahu	Segu
69-72	Salif	Lalla	Saliku	Sikasso
73-76	Sayf	Namisi	Sankoh	Tenenku
77-80	Seku	Rahama	Sanogo	Tessalit
81-84	Seydu	Ramata	Sidibe	Tibi
85-88	Siaka	Rosine	Tah	Tominan
89-92	Siriman	Sali	Traore	Toya
93-96	Umar	Wassa	Yama	Yelimane
97-00	Yakuba	Yatasaye	Yuma	Yuwaru

MERUAN/DESHRITE NAMES				
1d100	MALE	FEMALE	CLAN	PLACE
1-4	Amenken	Ahset	Jepu	Abedju
5-8	Anen	Ana	Kakhent	Anpet
9-12	Bek	Aneksi	Kheti	Djedhor
13-16	Dedu	Bakt	Matkare	Djerti
17-20	Harkhaf	Bast	Menhet	Gebtu
21-24	Henenu	Bintanath	Menkare	Hebit
25-28	Ibebi	Dedyet	Meritamon	Henen
29-32	Intef	Hentmire	Nebet	Khentmin
33-36	Irsu	Herit	Neferu	Mabu
37-40	Kewab	Imi	Nefruta	Meseri
41-44	Kha	Kawit	Nejet	Min
45-48	Khamet	Khemsit	Nethotep	Nekheb
49-52	Mahu	Kiya	Nikare	Nemti
53-56	Mehi	Maia	Pabasa	Nesuf
57-60	Mereruka	Merti	Qar	Pabimut
61-64	Mitri	Nebetawi	Rekhetre	Resif
65-68	Nakht	Nefertari	Sadeh	Selket
69-72	Nebet	Nofret	Sahure	Senusret
73-76	Nekure	Senisonbe	Senebsen	Taheri
77-80	Panhesi	Sitamun	Taharka	Taseti
81-84	Ramoseh	Sitre	Takhat	Tjebu
85-88	Sabu	Tasherit	Tarset	Tjeku
89-92	Setka	Tetisher	Webensenu	Waset
93-96	Sihathor	Tia	Weret	Zau
97-00	Weshtah	Tuya	Yanhamu	Zawti

KIRSI NAMES				
1d100	MALE	FEMALE	CLAN	PLACE
1-4	Abdulaye	Abibata	Adama	Banfora
5-8	Ali	Agha	Agumbi	Dakoro
9-12	Arzuma	Arzentiga	Basega	Diontala
13-16	Atanas	Bubaraba	Bawku	Dokui
17-20	Dagomba	Gumasida	Bisa	Fara
21-24	Goamda	Kende	Bouri	Kangaba
25-28	Gombe	Kibsa	Bulusi	Kassu
29-32	Hado	Kiegba	Drogba	Keleya
33-36	Kone	Kulidiati	Filiga	Kemeni
37-40	Larba	Lafibala	Gare	Kona
41-44	Lokre	Ligidi	Kabore	Korossa
45-48	Mogho	Liluaga	Kalo	Koruma
49-52	Nedega	Mafuni	Karite	Koti
53-56	Nufu	Netuma	Mitifufu	Luta
57-60	Odraogo	Nyennega	Morey	Manga
61-64	Omaru	Poko	Moringa	Nangola
65-68	Raogo	Pokobila	Okwani	Ruko
69-72	Raonogo	Sibiri	Rasandaga	Singdin
73-76	Raouda	Sumaila	Razam	Tassila
77-80	Riale	Tapsoba	Sassamba	Teney
81-84	Wendkuni	Wendnaloki	Sawadogo	Tenkodogo
85-88	Yabasure	Yali	Wagadugu	Torosso
89-92	Yalle	Yasoma	Yatenga	Tugo
93-96	Yibeogo	Zabri	Zimba	Zana
97-00	Zabdame	Zuma	Zogore	Zebala

SOKONE NAMES				
1d100	MALE	FEMALE	CLAN	PLACE
1-4	Abazu	Adaek	Abak	Aba
5-8	Adaku	Amaka	Akuma	Afikpo
9-12	Afam	Amala	Amavo	Akumaimo
13-16	Akobundu	Amalachi	Anyigo	Akwa
17-20	Akuabata	Amara	Avosi	Amairi
21-24	Belonwu	Anuli	Ekpene	Amise
25-28	Echezona	Bamidele	Ezekuna	Arochukwu
29-32	Egobudike	Beke	Ezza	Arongwa
33-36	Ejimofor	Borie	Gbo	Bawsi
37-40	Ekwutosi	Chi	Gwa	Boko
41-44	Enyi	Chidera	Ibibi	Diokata
45-48	Esomchi	Chinwemma	Imo	Ibene
49-52	Halim	Chioma	Izzi	Inoma

SOKONE NAMES				
1d100	MALE	FEMALE	CLAN	PLACE
53-56	Jamuike	Ekwi	Maka	Isiala
57-60	Kalu	Fumnanya	Mbutu	Itungwa
61-64	Kwemto	Ijeli	Nsulu	Munachi
65-68	Nwafor	Isi	Nwoha	Mvosi
69-72	Nwankwo	Isioma	Ohuhu	Obegu
73-76	Nweke	Jeneta	Okpuala	Ohanze
77-80	Nworie	Jinika	Owerri	Osisioma
81-84	Obioma	Kambina	Tigha	Owerinta
85-88	Okafor	Lotanna	Ukwa	Oza
89-92	Okeke	Meliga	Ukwu	Sukka
93-95	Okereke	Nwamaka	Umuakpara	Umuahia
96-98	Okori	Ozioma	Umunoha	Umuba
99-00	Onwu	Uche	Waukwu	Umuolike

QUICK CULTURE GENERATION

It may be that your campaign is not set in the Three Lands, or you might want to generate a minor state or remote tribe for your players to encounter. The following tables help provide a little more inspiration and flavor for these situation, providing dominant cultural traits, current societal strengths and weaknesses, and a selection of roles or important tasks that adventurers can fulfill in their society.

By scaling these answers up or down, these generators can be used to give flavor to clans, social groups, or any other collection of people. Where a nation might be ngangacratic, ruled by a mighty sorcerer-prince, a clan might happen to have a nganga for a patriarch, and a secret society might be led by a sinister witch-priest. A nation described as “Brutal” might ruthlessly enslave its weaker neighbors, while a family described the same way might systematically exile or disown those members that fail to serve the interests of their more senior kindred. The adjectives can be used on multiple levels.

As with all such charts, you should use them in whatever numbers or combinations suit you best, rolling once or several times.

CULTURAL QUALITIES	
1d100	QUALITY
1-2	<i>Artistic.</i> They greatly admire art and beauty.
3-4	<i>Avaricious.</i> They are greedy to take what others have.
5-6	<i>Bonds.</i> A neighboring society is a close ally.
7-8	<i>Brutal.</i> Compassion and mercy are scorned as weak
9-10	<i>Builders.</i> They love to build great edifices.
11-12	<i>Cautious.</i> Prudence and circumspection are prized.
13-14	<i>Collapsing.</i> Their society is currently falling apart.
15-16	<i>Courteous.</i> Extreme politeness is expected of all.
17-18	<i>Cruel.</i> They admire displays of methodical harm.
19-20	<i>Decadent.</i> They are jaded and self-absorbed.
21-22	<i>Deceitful.</i> A good liar is praised for his cunning.
23-24	<i>Democratic.</i> Obas and kings are weak or nonexistent.
25-26	<i>Divided.</i> A minority has trouble with the majority.
27-28	<i>Erudite.</i> Learning is greatly honored among all.
29-30	<i>Eugenic.</i> The weak are scorned and culled.
31-32	<i>Exiles.</i> They were cast out of another group.
33-34	<i>Grudging.</i> They hate a neighboring group.
35-36	<i>Heterodox.</i> They have a very novel religion.
37-38	<i>Honest.</i> Truthfulness in all things is honored.
39-40	<i>Honorable.</i> Their word means everything to them.
41-42	<i>Imperialist.</i> They nurse ambitions of great conquests.
43-44	<i>Innovative.</i> They are eager to try new ways.
45-46	<i>Insular.</i> Outsiders are feared, mistrusted or scorned.
47-48	<i>Loyal.</i> Faithfulness to lord and friend is foremost
49-50	<i>Manipulative.</i> They honor those who use the foolish.

MAJOR SOURCES OF WEALTH	
1d12	SOURCE
1	Rich mines and mineral resources
2	Lush fields and extensive agricultural holdings
3	Enforced tribute from weaker neighbors
4	Cunning artisans with a knack for a particular trade
5	Vast herds or abundant game animals
6	Scavenged relics from a richer predecessor people
7	Rare plant extracts, spices, or textiles
8	The realm a trade hub for its neighbors
10	Slowly-dwindling treasury from a former ruler's age
11	The favor and aid of a mighty nganga or marabout
12	Secret, terrible pacts with nightmarish powers

CULTURAL QUALITIES	
1d100	QUALITY
51-52	<i>Martial.</i> Personal strength at arms is greatly praised.
53-54	<i>Matriarchal.</i> Men are merely chattel in this society.
55-56	<i>Mercantile.</i> Merchants and businesses are lauded.
57-58	<i>Merciful.</i> To forgive a defeated foe is honorable.
59-60	<i>Newly-made.</i> The society has only recently coalesced.
61-62	<i>Ngangacratic.</i> Their leaders are all sorcerers.
63-64	<i>Nomadic.</i> They shun large towns or cities.
65-66	<i>Occupied.</i> Their rulers are foreign in some way.
67-68	<i>Patriarchal.</i> Women have no public voice at all.
69-70	<i>Peaceful.</i> They strongly dislike physical violence.
71-72	<i>Plundering.</i> Raiding and theft is a sign of strength.
73-74	<i>Reckless.</i> They esteem boldness perhaps to excess.
75-76	<i>Remnant.</i> They were much greater in the past.
77-78	<i>Settled.</i> They fear and shun the bush and its dangers.
79-80	<i>Spartan.</i> All society is oriented toward a single goal.
81-82	<i>Stigmata.</i> They share a congenital deformity or trait.
83-84	<i>Stratified.</i> Iron-bound castes divide society.
85-86	<i>Supremacist.</i> They were born to rule all others.
87-88	<i>Theocratic.</i> Priests rule in all matters of true import.
89-90	<i>Traditional.</i> Deep love of custom and traditions.
91-92	<i>Treacherous.</i> He who stabs first is a clever man.
93-94	<i>Tribal.</i> Government is a shifting alliance of elders.
95-96	<i>Usurped.</i> The current ruler is an uneasy usurper.
97-98	<i>Vengeful.</i> Every offense requires due payment.
99-00	<i>Witch-fearing.</i> They have a great dread of magic.

CULTURAL STRENGTHS OR ADVANTAGES	
1d20	STRENGTH
1	They have a strong and skilled military force
2	The people trust and honor their leaders
3	The land is united or harmonious in its faiths
4	They have powerful magical relics to aid them
5	The favor of the spirits brings them unusual luck
6	They have infrastructure that tempers natural disaster
7	They work together with very little social friction
8	The magistrates and officials are unusually honest
9	They have an impressive artistic heritage
10	Their leader is remarkably powerful or talented
11	They have many allies and friends
12	Their culture is flexible, able to adapt new thoughts
13	They have an acute sense of history and unity
14	They have ancient, powerful border fortifications
15	Their land is uncommonly healthy and disease-free
16	Cults of the Gods Below are swiftly uncovered here
17	Property rights are secure even against noble greed
18	Leadership passes peacefully from one to another
19	Prosperity has been increasing notably of late
20	They have at least one great center of learning

CULTURAL WEAKNESSES OR CRISES	
1d20	WEAKNESS
1	A recent famine has badly weakened the people
2	A great pestilence has culled the population
3	A ruler offended the spirits, and his land suffers
4	They are brittle, unable to cope well with new ideas
5	A large segment of society is forbidden from learning
6	A recent rebellion was crushed with much loss of life
7	The leadership is prone to vicious quarreling
8	Their religious leaders are notably corrupt
9	Their magistrates and taxmen are especially grasping
10	Leaders and chieftains are weak and irresolute
11	Military power has fractured among the nobles
12	Their leaders refuse to learn from experience
13	Witchcraft plagues the people with great virulence
14	Dark cults prosper under semi-official approval
15	Their neighbors quietly seek their submission
16	Old ethnic quarrels are only thinly patched-over
17	Religious strife threatens to split the populace
18	The nation's wealth is being squandered uselessly
19	The leadership succession threatens violence
20	The leaders are cynical, willing to scapegoat anyone

COMMON EMPLOYERS OF ADVENTURERS	
1d20	EMPLOYER
1	A nganga spymaster to the king
2	Leader of a commoner mutual-aid religious society
3	Chief priest of a local temple
4	Hard-pressed chieftain of a poor bush village
5	Noble's cunning senior wife
6	Rich young maiden with an independent streak
7	Leader of a local funeral society
8	Richest farmer in the village
9	Half-mad beggar with a hidden trove
10	Sinister bush nganga with a need for strong hands
11	Mildly heretical marabout
12	Insatiably curious scholar
13	Grizzled military commander
14	Wealthy courtesan in need of muscle
15	Heir to a now-infested ruin
16	Learned griot searching for lost history
17	Desperate clan patriarch
18	Stubbornly honest magistrate
19	Oba with untrustworthy servants
20	Decadent noble

JOB: THEY HAVE FOR ADVENTURERS	
1d20	POSSIBLE EMPLOYMENTS
1	Enlisted by idealistic rebels
2	Employed to run down vicious insurrectionists
3	Sent in to clean out an old structure for a new lord
4	Guard a powerful figure from spirit assassins
5	Commit brutal violence upon a rival or enemy
6	Take an estate or fort back from bandits or monsters
7	Map the treacherous underways of a city
8	Identify and root out worshipers of the Gods Below
9	Pass- and enforce- impartial judgment on two rivals
10	Deal with a villager their neighbors fear to confront
11	Kill a tyrannical king, vicious oba, or corrupt lord
12	Bring relief to a beleaguered military outpost
13	Hunt down a fearsome spirit-beast
14	Lay an unquiet ghost to rest- peacefully or otherwise
15	Rescue an unwilling bride from a tyrant husband
16	Seek out a long-lost ruin or unspent mine
17	Stand as champions in a ritual gladiatorial battle
18	Lead untrained troops into a desperate battle
19	Discover a traitor in a noble's court
20	Avenge a lowly figure on a mighty tormentor

QUICK NPC STATISTICS

It can be cumbersome to generate a high-level NPC on short notice. The following tables give sample statistics for NPC characters in an abbreviated format. In a pinch, players in need of a fast replacement character might grab one off these tables.

GRIOT									
LVL	HP	AC	AB	WEAPON/ARMOR	PHYSICAL EFFECT	MENTAL EFFECT	EVASION	MAGIC	LUCK
1	4	7	+1/+1	Light Spear (1d6)/Leather Armor & Shield	14	12	13	16	15
	Skills: Artist-1, Combat/Spear-0, Culture/Nyala-0, Culture/Traveller-0, Language-0, Persuade-1, Scholar-1 Songs Known: 2 Minor Songs								
3	12	6	+2/+3	Light Spear/Warding Amulets & Shield	13	11	12	15	14
	Skills: Artist-1, Combat/Spear-1, Culture/Nyala-1, Culture/Traveller-0, Language-0, Persuade-2, Ride-0, Scholar-1 Songs Known: 4 Minor Songs								
5	20	6	+4/+7	Light Spear+1 (1d6+1)/Warding Amulets & Shield	12	10	11	14	13
	Skills: Artist-2, Combat/Spear-2, Culture/Nyala-1, Culture/Traveller-0, Language-0, Perception-0, Persuade-2, Ride-0, Scholar-1 Songs Known: 5 Minor Songs and 2 Great Songs								
7	28	5	+5/+8	Light Spear+1/Warding Amulets+1 & Shield	11	9	10	13	12
	Skills: Artist-2, Combat/Spear-2, Culture/Nyala-1, Culture/Traveller-0, Language-0, Perception-0, Persuade-3, Ride-0, Scholar-2 Songs Known: All Minor Songs, 4 Great Songs and 2 Ancient Songs								
9	36	4	+7/+12	Light Spear+2 (1d6+2)/Warding Am.+2 & Shield	10	8	9	12	11
	Skills: Artist-2, Combat/Spear-3, Culture/Nyala-1, Culture/Traveller-0, Language-0, Perception-0, Persuade-4, Ride-0, Scholar-2 Songs Known: All Minor Songs, 6 Great Songs and 4 Ancient Songs								
An NPC griot's default attributes are Strength 7 (-1), Intelligence 14 (+1), Wisdom 11 (+0), Dexterity 7 (-1), Constitution 11 (+0), and Charisma 14 (+1). All skills are class skills except for those marked with an asterisk; players can swap skills in and out accordingly. The listed attack bonus gives the base and the character's bonus with their listed weapon.									
Griot Class Skills: Artist, Business, Combat/Any, Culture/Any, Language, Navigation, Perception, Persuade, Ride, Security, Scholar, Trade									

MARABOUT									
LVL	HP	AC	AB	WEAPON/ARMOR	PHYSICAL EFFECT	MENTAL EFFECT	EVASION	MAGIC	LUCK
1	4	7	+1/+2	Hand Axe (1d6)/Leather Armor & Shield	15	14	16	13	12
	Skills: Combat/Axe-1, Culture/Kirsi-0, Leadership-0, Persuade-1, Ride-0*, Scholar-0, Priestcraft-1 Spheres: Sun (Favored), Curing								
3	12	5	+2/+4	Hand Axe/Mail Armor & Shield	14	13	15	12	11
	Skills: Combat/Axe-2, Culture/Kirsi-0, Leadership-0, Persuade-1, Ride-0*, Scholar-1, Priestcraft-2 Spheres: Sun (Favored), Curing, War								
5	20	3	+4/+7	Hand Axe+1 (1d6+1)/Royal Armor & Shield	13	12	14	11	10
	Skills: Combat/Axe-2, Culture/Kirsi-0, Leadership-2, Medicine-0, Persuade-1, Ride-1*, Scholar-1, Priestcraft-2 Spheres: Sun (Favored), Curing, War								
7	28	2	+5/+8	Hand Axe+1/Royal Armor+1 & Shield	12	11	13	10	9
	Skills: Combat/Axe-2, Culture/Kirsi-1, Leadership-2, Medicine-1, Persuade-1, Ride-1*, Scholar-1, Priestcraft-3 Spheres: Sun (Favored), Curing, Spirits, War								
9	36	1	+7/+11	Hand Axe+2 (1d6+2)/Royal Armor+2 & Shield	11	10	12	9	8
	Skills: Combat/Axe-2, Culture/Kirsi-1, Leadership-2, Medicine-2, Persuade-1, Ride-1*, Scholar-1, Priestcraft-4 Spheres: Sun (Favored), Curing, Herding, Spirits, War								
An NPC marabout's default attributes are Strength 11 (-1), Intelligence 7 (-1), Wisdom 14 (+0), Dexterity 7 (-1), Constitution 11 (+0), and Charisma 14 (+1). All skills are class skills except for those marked with an asterisk; players can swap skills in and out accordingly. The listed attack bonus gives the base and the character's bonus with their listed weapon.									
Marabout Class Skills: Artist, Combat/Any, Culture/Own, Leadership, Medicine, Persuade, Priestcraft, Scholar, Trade									

Nganga									
Lvl	HP	AC	AB	Weapon/Armor	Physical Effect	Mental Effect	Evasion	Magic	Luck
1	3	5	+1/+1	Dagger (1d4) / Warding Amulets & Shield	16	13	15	12	14
	Skills: Combat/Blades-0*, Culture/Lokossa-0, Language-0, Leadership-0*, Medicine-1, Occult-1, Scholar-1 Spells Known: 3 1st								
3	9	5	+2/+3	Dagger / Warding Amulets & Shield	15	12	14	11	13
	Skills: Combat/Blades-1*, Culture/Lokossa-0, Language-1, Leadership-0*, Medicine-1, Occult-2, Scholar-1 Spells Known: 6 1st / 3 2nd								
5	15	4	+3/+4	Dagger / Warding Amulets+1 & Shield	14	11	13	10	12
	Skills: Combat/Blades-1*, Culture/Lokossa-1, Language-2, Leadership-0*, Medicine-1, Occult-2, Scholar-2 Spells Known: 6 1st / 6 2nd / 3 3rd								
7	21	4	+4/+6	Dagger+1 (1d4+1) / Warding Amulets+1 & Shield	13	10	12	9	11
	Skills: Combat/Blades-1*, Culture/Lokossa-1, Language-2, Leadership-0*, Medicine-1, Occult-3, Scholar-3 Spells Known: All 1st / 6 2nd / 6 3rd / 3 4th								
9	27	3	+5/+9	Dagger+2 (1d4+2) / Warding Amulets+2 & Shield	12	9	11	8	10
	Skills: Combat/Blades-2*, Culture/Lokossa-1, Language-2, Leadership-0*, Medicine-1, Occult-4, Scholar-3 Spells Known: All 1st / All 2nd / 6 3rd / 6 4th / 3 5th								
An NPC nganga's default attributes are Strength 7 (-1), Intelligence 14 (+1), Wisdom 7 (-1), Dexterity 11 (+0), Constitution 14 (+1), and Charisma 11 (+0). All skills are class skills except for those marked with an asterisk; players can swap skills in and out accordingly. The listed attack bonus gives the base and the character's bonus with their listed weapon.									
Nganga Class Skills: Culture/Own, Language, Medicine, Occult, Perception, Priestcraft, Scholar, Survival, Trade									

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

QUICK NPC CREATION

GMs often find themselves in need of a large crop of NPCs on short notice. The following tables allow for one-roll NPC creation. Just take one of each type of die in hand and throw them all at once. Match the dice with the results below to assemble your instant NPC. As in all cases, you should feel free to tweak or omit tables as the circumstances suggest.

GENDER	
1d4	GENDER
1-2	Male
3-4	Female
In Lokossa, roll 3d6 as well. On a 3, they're a male-identifying Reaper, and on an 18, they're a female-identifying lagredi.	

AGE	
1d6	AGE
1	Barely more than a child
2-3	Young and vigorous
4-5	Mature and established
6	Elderly

ADULT FAMILY ROLE	
1d8	ADULT FAMILY ROLE
1	Unwed, divorced, bereaved or unsuitable for wedding
2-3	Married recently and without children
4-5	Married happily and with children
6-7	Married unhappily and with children
8	Disowned or estranged from their family.

GREATEST AMBITION	
1d10	AMBITION
1	To win glory and renown in their profession
2	To attain riches and standing for clan or family
3	To get revenge on an old tormentor
4	To win the love of a particular object of desire
5	To have hedonistic pleasure in life
6	To do harm to a particular class of enemies
7	To get revenge on one who killed kindred of theirs
8	To live up to their family reputation- good or bad
9	To win glory for their service to a leader
10	To have safety and security from want and their foes

In particular, the Personal Traits table provides a list of qualities suitable for a patron or random NPC alongside a list of vices more appropriate for an antagonist in an adventure. Of course, there are few human hearts unmixed with evil, and you can always use a roll as inspiration about the kind of urges an otherwise good-hearted character might secretly nurse.

GREATEST PROBLEM	
1d12	PROBLEM
1	They suffer from a persistent sickness or birth defect
2	The local leader has a grudge against them
3	They are unloved or mistreated by their family
4	They are deeply in debt to cruel people
5	Their business or farm is failing rapidly
6	They are afflicted with unusual poverty or want
7	They have a bad reputation- earned or unjustly so
8	They are being tormented by vengeful witches
9	A local lord is trying to seize their land or spouse
10	A child of theirs has gotten into grave trouble
11	A spouse, partner, or other is about to betray them
12	They have a personal vice they can't control

PERSONAL TRAITS		
1d20	TRAITS	VICES
1	Cunning	Blasphemous
2	Curious	Cowardly
3	Despairing	Deceitful
4	Desperate	Depraved
5	Distantly-related	Envious
6	Far-travelled	Greedy
7	Foolish	Jealous
8	Grizzled	Lecherous
9	Gullible	Maddened
10	Impoverished	Murderous
11	Rebellious	Paranoid
12	Respected	Rapacious
13	Sage	Sadistic
14	Secretive	Spiteful
15	Skilled	Thieving
16	Subtle	Treacherous
17	Wealthy	Tyrannical
18	Well-loved	Venial
19	Widely-scorned	Violent
20	Worried	Witchcrafting

QUICK NGANGA MAGIC

Compiling the list of spells available to a ngangas can be annoying at times. In place of hand-picking choices off the Magic chapter lists, you can use the tables below to quickly determine available sorceries. For example, if a ngangas knows 6 first-level spells, and you decide that he knows 3 ritual sorceries and 3 nkisi, just take the first three rituals and first three nkisi off the table below.

NGANGA SPELLS			
FIRST LEVEL RITUALS	EFFECT	FIRST LEVEL NKISI	EFFECT
<i>Rite of the Twisted Limb</i>	Curse a distant target	<i>Nkisi of the Deadened Mind</i>	Enslave a victim's mind
<i>Create Warding Amulet</i>	Make an AC 6 amulet	<i>Nkisi of the Evil Eye</i>	Curse a target with bad luck
<i>Cleanse the Curse of Misfortune</i>	Lift a Lesser Curse	<i>Nkisi of the Burning Brand</i>	Ignite a target: 1d6+lvl dmg
<i>Open the Hunter's Path</i>	Aid tracking and stealth	<i>Nkisi of the Nganga's Eye</i>	See magical auras and curses
<i>Create Charm of Soothing</i>	Create a curing charm	<i>Nkisi of the Blessed Spear</i>	Make a weapon +1 for a time
SECOND LEVEL RITUALS		SECOND LEVEL NKISI	
<i>Burden the Accursed House</i>	Curse a building and area	<i>Nkisi of the Blighted Fate</i>	A curse that lasts for a week
<i>Call Spirit Minion</i>	Summon a spirit animal	<i>Nkisi of the Sloughing Skin</i>	Inflict a rotting disease
<i>Create Amulet against Beasts</i>	Aids in dealing with animals	<i>Nkisi of the Nganga's Command</i>	Command animals to serve
<i>Create Bakakari Shirt</i>	Shirt protects against curses	<i>Nkisi of the Ghost</i>	Become invisible
<i>Create Talisman Against Misfortune</i>	Allows a save reroll	<i>Nkisi of Grasping Vines</i>	Cause vines to grasp foes
THIRD LEVEL RITUALS		THIRD LEVEL NKISI	
<i>Rite of Death in Life</i>	Direly curse a distant target	<i>Nkisi of the Tearer of Veils</i>	1d6/level dmg to lvl targets
<i>Rite of the Altered Skin</i>	Shapeshift into an animal	<i>Nkisi of the Cold Clay Limbs</i>	Target's movement is slowed
<i>Cleanse the Curse of Death</i>	Lift a Greater Curse	<i>Nkisi of Blinding Rage</i>	Target attacks ngangas's foes
<i>Echoes of the Distant Song</i>	Speak to another in dreams	<i>Nkisi of the Speaking Stone</i>	Speak with inanimate object
<i>Calling the Veiled Bower</i>	Conjure a hut for shelter	<i>Nkisi of the Sundered Spell</i>	Counterspell/ lift Lesser Curse
FOURTH LEVEL RITUALS		FOURTH LEVEL NKISI	
<i>Call Spirit Hunter</i>	Summons spirit assassin	<i>Nkisi of the Crimson Nail</i>	Pin and hurt the target
<i>Rite of Casting Forth the Eye</i>	Scry a distant place	<i>Nkisi of the Bestial Form</i>	Force a target into bestial form
<i>Ward of the Scabrous Hand</i>	Ward an item against others	<i>Nkisi of the Broken Shadow</i>	Hit target's shadow to hurt it
<i>Ward of the Knotted Path</i>	Hide the ngangas's refuge	<i>Nkisi of Fixing the Soul</i>	Target lives even at 0 HP
<i>Rite of Mending the Soul</i>	Cure level-draining effects	<i>Nkisi of the Invincible Will</i>	An ally's action is successful
FIFTH LEVEL RITUALS		FIFTH LEVEL NKISI	
<i>Curse of the Far Spear</i>	Kill a person from a distance	<i>Nkisi of Severing the Head</i>	Strike targets into a coma
<i>Rite of the Listener</i>	Eavesdrop on a distant target	<i>Nkisi of the Shadow That Kills</i>	Target's shadow attacks them
<i>Rite of the Tempest Rider</i>	Fly with others to a far place	<i>Nkisi of the Shattered Name</i>	Target is forgotten by friends
<i>Create Amulet of Might</i>	Fashion powerful amulet	<i>Nkisi of the Walker at Night</i>	Travel between far shadows

MAXIMUM NKISI PREPARED PER DAY										
NKISI LEVEL	NGANGA LEVEL									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	1	2	2	3	3	4	4	4	5	5
2	-	-	1	2	2	2	3	3	4	4
3	-	-	-	-	1	2	2	2	3	3
4	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	2	3
5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2

QUICK CULT FLAVOR

Nefarious cults dedicated to the Gods Below or to some red-jawed spirit beast are all too common in the Three Lands. While the Spirit Way is a very broad and tolerant tradition, there are some gods and some powers that demand more than any community can bear to offer. Those that pledge their worship to such dark entities are given aid and favors both to reward their fidelity and ensure that the cult itself is not discovered by outsiders.

In some places these cults grow so strong that they are able to throw off the mantle of discretion and worship openly. The Eternal cults of the Gods Below are universally hated and feared, but those who worship less obviously vicious powers might come to dominate entire towns with the gruesome might of their adepts and the frenzied service of their twice-damned worshipers.

Such powerful cults rarely persist for long, however. The gods they serve are greedy and impatient things, driving their slaves into such excesses and extravagances that their cults are certain to collapse under the strain, leaving survivors to scatter- and spread.

CULT ORIGINS	
1d10	ORIGIN OR FOUNDER
1	A prophet possessed by an evil spirit.
2	A renegade Spirit Way priest.
3	A heretical school of the Sun Faith.
4	Ethnic division in an existing faith.
5	A failed temple power play by the founder.
6	A ruler seeking to deify himself.
7	Eternal-enforced worship of the Gods Below
8	Desperate need turning people to dark gods
9	Lunatic with miraculous magical powers
10	Incited by a nonhuman cult leader

WHY THEY ARE AWFUL	
1d10	DEPLORABLE SIN
1	They perform copious human sacrifices
2	They conduct sadistic worship rituals
3	There is a nauseating depravity in their hungers
4	They are avid for cannibalism
5	They have been enslaved by dark spirits
6	They have a murderous lust for political power
7	They seethe with burning hatred for a local ethnicity
8	They plot schemes of bloody theocracy
9	They practice dire witchcraft
10	They systematically enslave unbelievers

THE BENEFITS OF JOINING	
1d10	ADVANTAGE
1	Forbidden pleasures
2	Magical aid in business affairs
3	Protection from monsters
4	Protection from officials
5	Protection from cult itself
6	Murder or harm of enemies
7	The cult has great wealth
8	Official influence and aid
9	Fear and respect in the community
10	Satisfaction of a family tradition

THEIR STRONGEST WEAPON	
1d10	WEAPON
1	Elite assassins
2	Powerful witchcraft
3	Bribed officials
4	Strong popular support
5	Copious blackmail
6	Monstrous minions
7	Allied spirits
8	Addictive pleasures
9	Powerful magic item
10	Many strong warriors

THEIR SECRET LAIR	
1d10	LAIR
1	Grove in the bush
2	Chambers in a palace
3	Abandoned tomb-house
4	Crumbled estate
5	Prehuman tunnels
6	City underworks
7	Cave complex
8	Slum compound
9	Within a subverted temple
10	Beneath a fortress

QUICK BESTIARY REFERENCE

CREATURE LIST								
NAME	AC	MOVE	HD	ATK	SAVE	ML	SKILL	SPECIAL
BUFFALO	7	60'	3	+4/1d8 gore	14+	9	+1	Chimes act as <i>Nkisi of the Deadened Mind</i>
CROCODILE	4	40'	4	+5/1d10 bite	13+	8	+1	
ELOKO	6	20'	3	+5 x 2 /1d6 claws	14+	8	+2	
ETERNAL								
DREAMER	7	30'	1	+2/by weapon	15+	9	+1	Minimum dmg. from piercing weapons
NOBLE	7	30'	7	+6/by weapon+2 dmg	12+	10	+2	Minimum dmg. from piercing weapons
LORD	7	30'	10	+11/by weapon+4 dmg	10+	11	+3	Minimum dmg. from piercing weapons
FANGED APE	7	40'	3	+4/1d6 bite/smash or wpn	14+	8	+1	Immune to non-magical weapons, touch drains level
GHOST	3	30'	5	+6/1d8 chill touch	13+	12	+2	
GIANT	6	50'	11	+11/fld8 fist or weapon x2	10+	11	+4	Immune to heat and cold
HORSE	7	80'	2	+3/1d8 kick	14+	7	+2	ML 9 for war-trained horses
HUMAN								
BANDIT	7	30'	1	+1/by weapon	15+	7	+1	Immune to non-magical weapons, shapeshifter
COMMONER	9	30'	1	+0/by weapon	15+	6	+1	
SOLDIER	7	30'	1	+2/by weapon	15+	8	+1	
ELITE SOLDIER	5	30'	2	+3/by weapon	14+	10	+2	
HYENA	8	60'	1	+2/1d6 bite	15+	7	+1	Immune to non-magical weapons, shapeshifter
HYENA, DIRE	7	50'	4	+5/2d6 bite	13+	9	+2	
ILOMBA	4	30'	5	+5/1d8+1 caustic fangs	13+	10	+2	Immune to non-magical weapons, shapeshifter
KISHI	6	30'	6	+7 x 2/weapon and 1d6 bite	12+	10	+3	Immune to non-magical weapons
LEOPARD	5	80'	4	+5 x 3/1d6 bite, 1d4 claw/claw	13+	7	+2	Immune to non-magical weapons, shapeshifter
LEOPARD, DIRE	4	70'	8	+9 x 3/1d8 bite, 1d6 claw/claw	11+	10	+3	
LEOPARD, WERE-	4	40'/80'	6	+7 x 2/1d8 claw or weapon	12+	11	+2	Immune to non-magical weapons, shapeshifter
LION	6	50'	5	+6 x 3/1d6 bite, 1d4 claw/claw	13+	9	+2	Commands natural beasts
LION, DIRE	3	60'	8	+10x3/1d8 bite, 1d6 claw/claw	11+	11	+3	
MOATIA	4	20'	7	+8/1d10 curse or spells	12+	9	+3	At least a 5th level nganga
NIGHT MAN								
WARRIOR	7	30'	2	+2/by weapon	14+	8	+1	Marabout or nganga of levels 7th-9th ability
WARCHIEF	4	30'	8	+6/by weapon+4 dmg	11+	9	+2	
PRIEST-LORD	4	30'	11	+11/by weapon	10+	10	+3	
NINGIRI	4	50'	8	+9/1d10+2 bite	11+	9	+2	Two consecutive grab hits mean the target is caught
OBIA	6	50'	5	+6/1d8 bite or no dmg. grab	13+	9	+2	
RHINO	5	40'	6	+7/2d6 crush	12+	9	+2	Five or more can sing to bewitch listeners
RHINO, DIRE	3	40'	9	+10/2d10 crush	11+	11	+3	
ROMPO	7	30'	1	+2/1d6 claw or by weapon	15+	8	+1	Can fly at 50', but can't use weapons when flying
SASABONSAM	9	30'/50'	1	+2 x 2/1d4 claws or by weapon	15+	8	+1	
SNAKE								
GIANT VIPER	7	30'	2	+3/1d6+poison bite	14+	7	+2	Tox 9/Int. 1 rd./Vir. 1, 1d6 dmg per rd. poisoned
BLACK PYTHON	6	30'	4	+5/1d8 crush	13+	7	+2	Tox 11/Int 1 rd./Vit 2, 2d6 dmg per rd. poisoned
ASSASSIN SNAKE	4	20'	2	+10/1d4+poison bite	14+	10	+4	
UMTHALI SNAKEMAN	7	30'	1	+2/1d4 bite or by weapon	15+	8	+1	Casts as a 7th-9th level marabout
UMTHALI PRIEST	7	30'	6	+7/1d4 bite or by weapon	12+	10	+3	
WALKING CORPSE	7	20'	2	+3/1d6 bash or weap. +1 dmg	14+	12	+0	Minimum dmg. from piercing weapons
WITCH	9	30'	2	+3/by weapon	14+	8	+1	Subtle magical powers. Cabal leaders are stronger

Quick Location Maps

The following blank maps are included to provide a GM with a fast resource for floorplans and underground maps. They cover some of the more common locations in which adventure might be found, and can be used in conjunction with the tables in the Adventures chapter to quickly produce a site of interest.

If you're reading a PDF copy of this book, you'll find that the upper and lower maps on each page are set on a different layer, allowing you to select only one of them for print. If you're working from a paper book, you can get much the same effect by just photocopying the page with the upper or lower half blocked by a blank sheet of paper.

It can be helpful to make a copy of each individual map before a campaign begins and slide these blank maps into your campaign folder. You can put them alongside a printout of the Quick Bestiary Reference sheet in this section and the printouts of the one-page templates in the Adventure chapter.

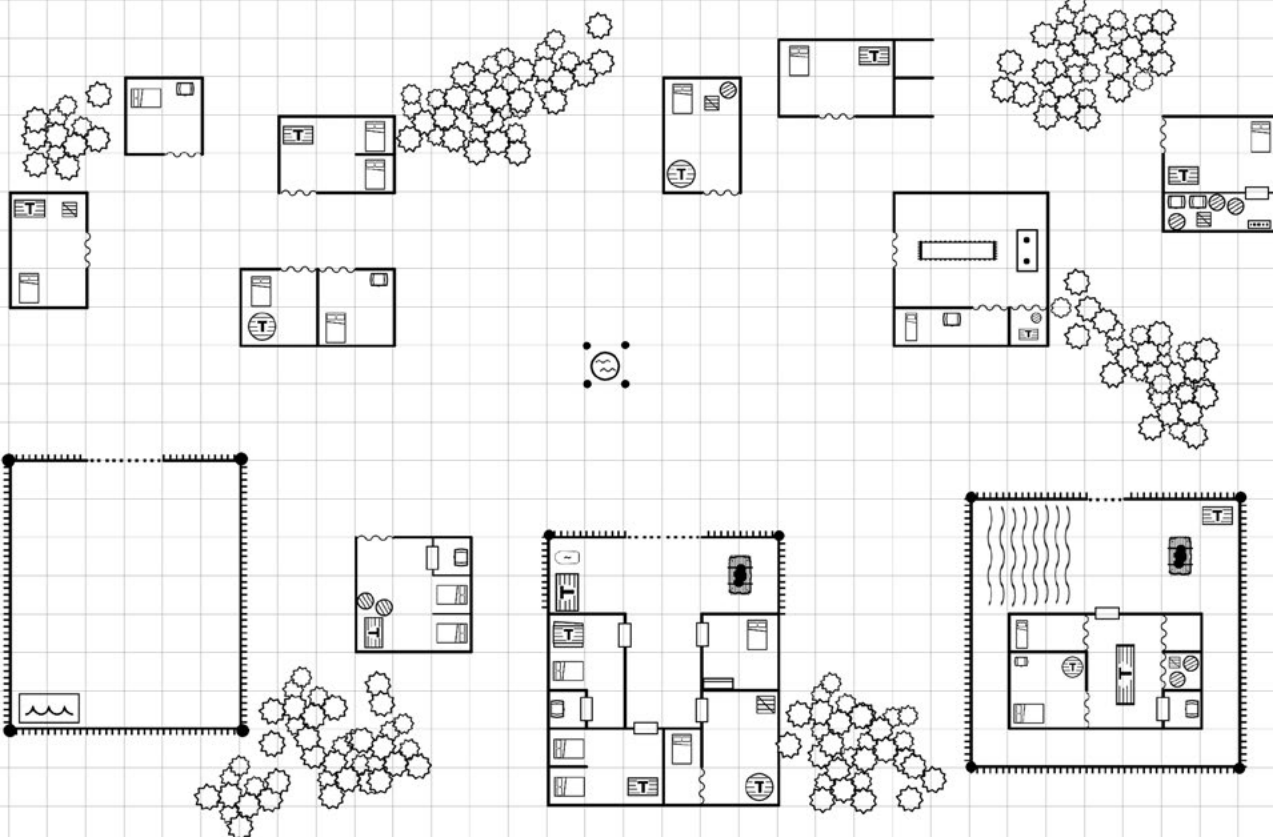
When you need to create content in a hurry at the table, just take out the bestiary reference, a map, and the appropriate one-page template. Take a few minutes to fill out the map with the one-page template and then continue with the game, using the bestiary reference for any necessary combat stats.

At the end of the session, make a note at the top of the map as to the site's name and location and write down any relevant notes on the blank portion of the page. In this way, you can be sure of having the necessary information close to hand if the PCs ever come back to the place, as well as inspiration for future consequences should any survivors want to exact revenge on the PCs.

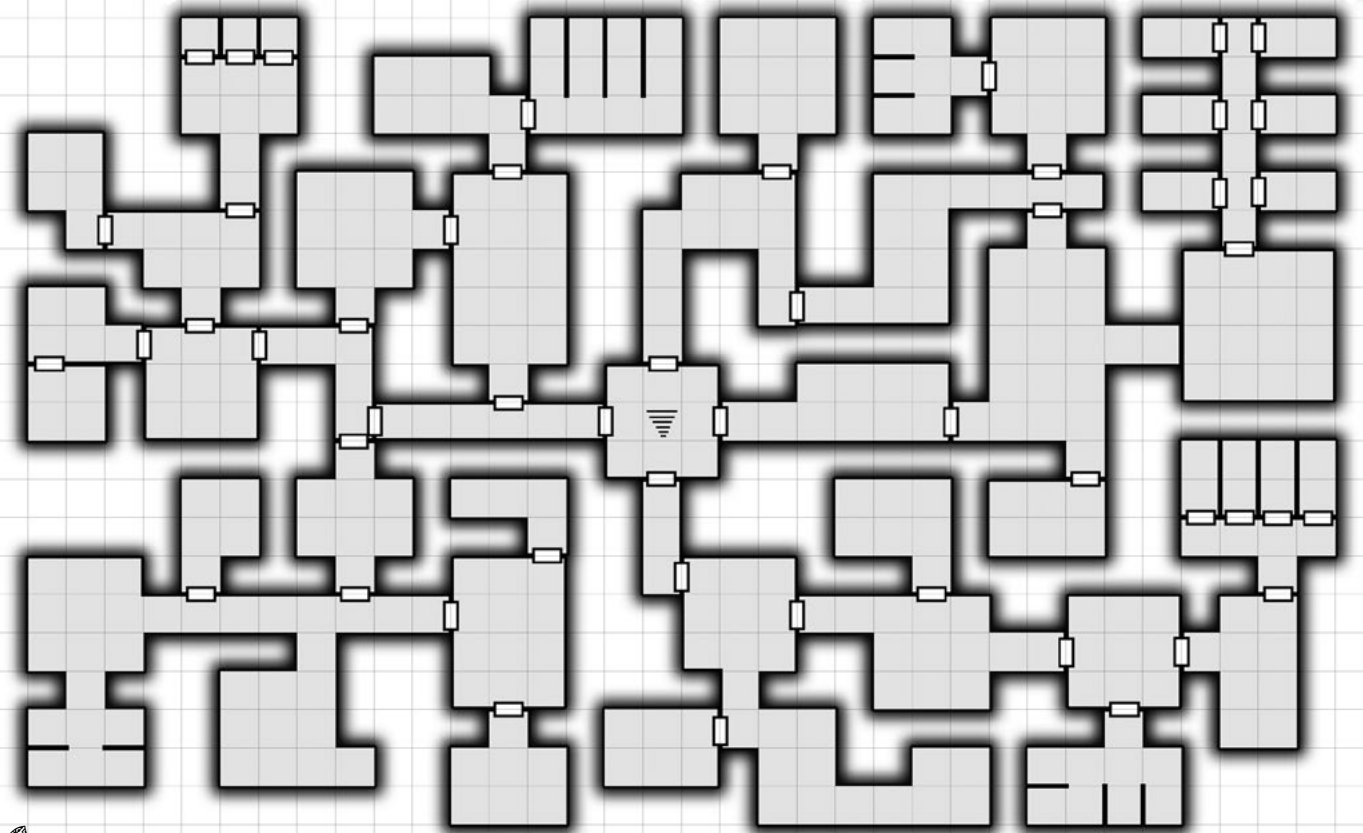
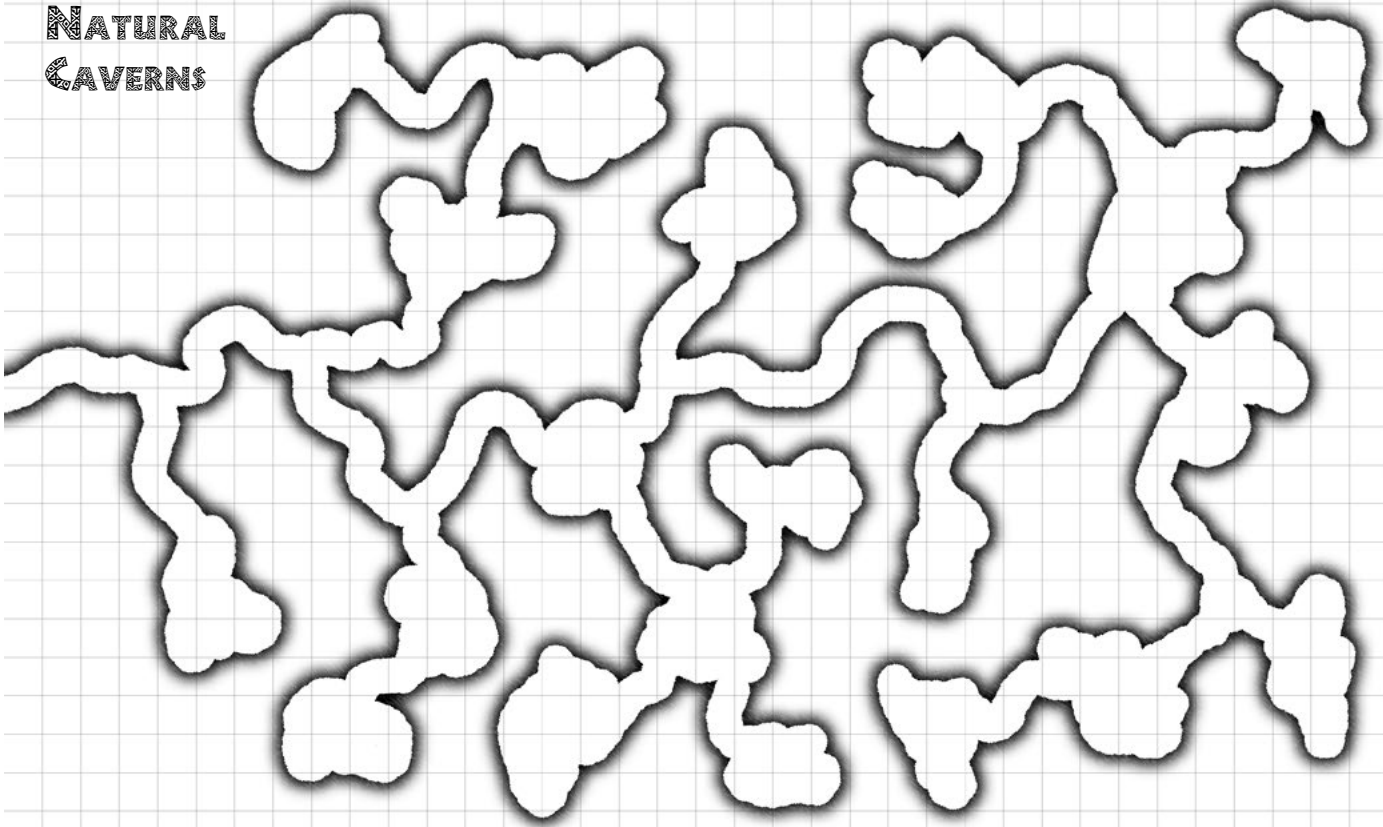
Over the course of your campaign, you'll likely have need of the same sort of structure multiple times. You can simply scrawl in some modifications on the floorplans, strike a door here and there, fill in a room or two, and the players will likely never notice you're using the same map more than once. Some maps, such as the cavern complex or the city undertunnels, can also be clipped and used in fragments, with just one "arm" of the map used at once.

As always, you should also make a habit of stealing content from existing RPG resources or downloading maps from the many online repositories of such adventure-worthy cartography. You might even elect to make up a few such sites beforehand if you find the process enjoyable, just to be sure that you always have a tomb-house on hand if the PCs need a little dungeon-crawling refreshment amid their adventures in the Three Lands.

CLAN HAMLET

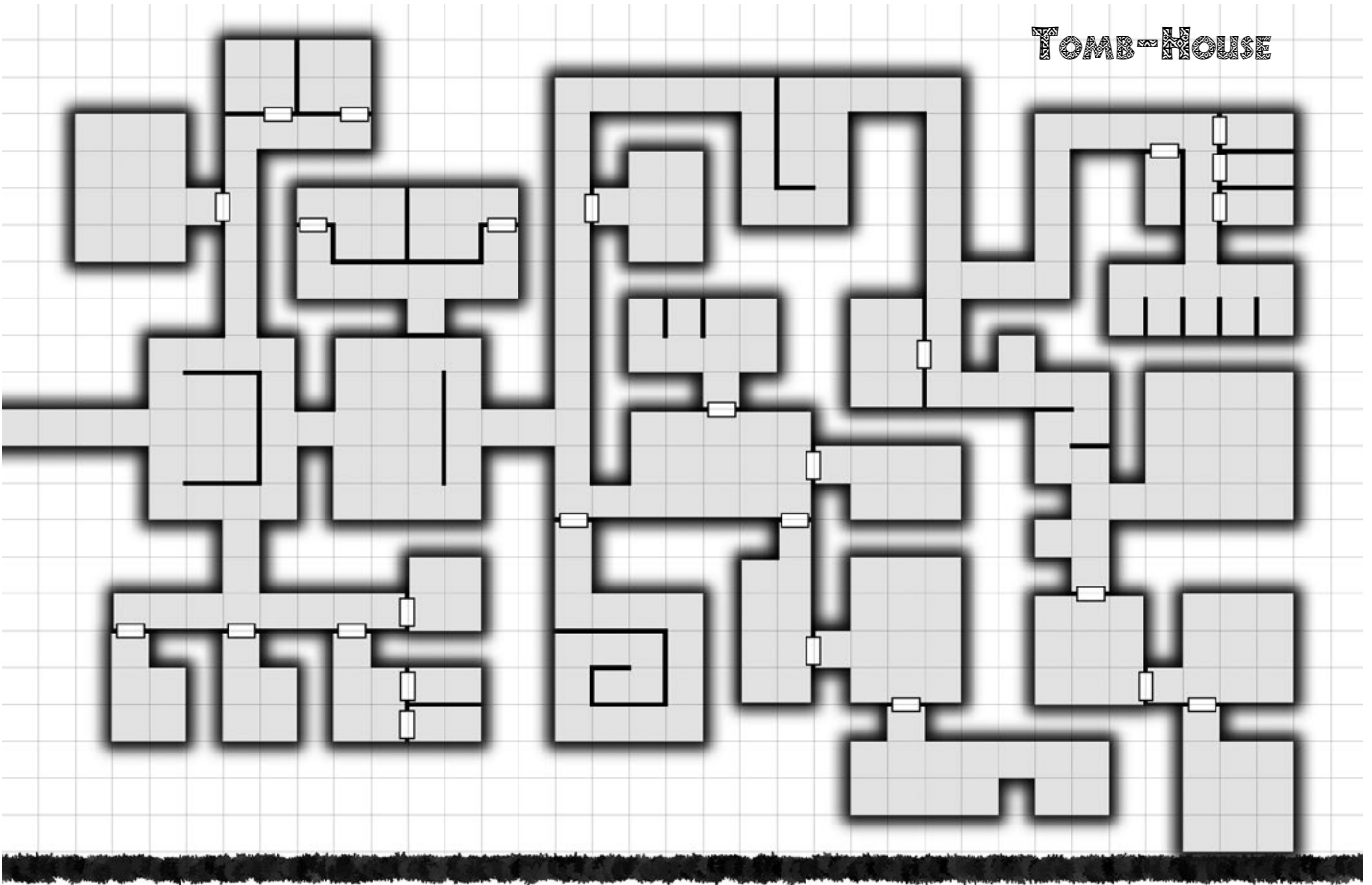


**NATURAL
CAVERNS**

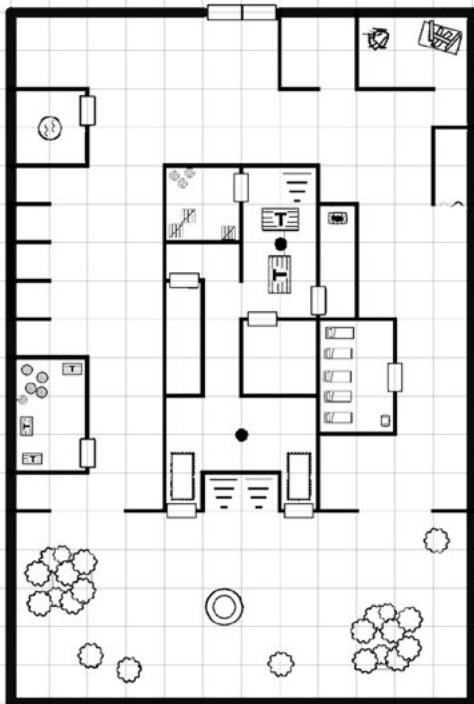


**CITY
UNDERTUNNELS**

TOMB-HOUSE



URBAN PALACE



GROUND FLOOR

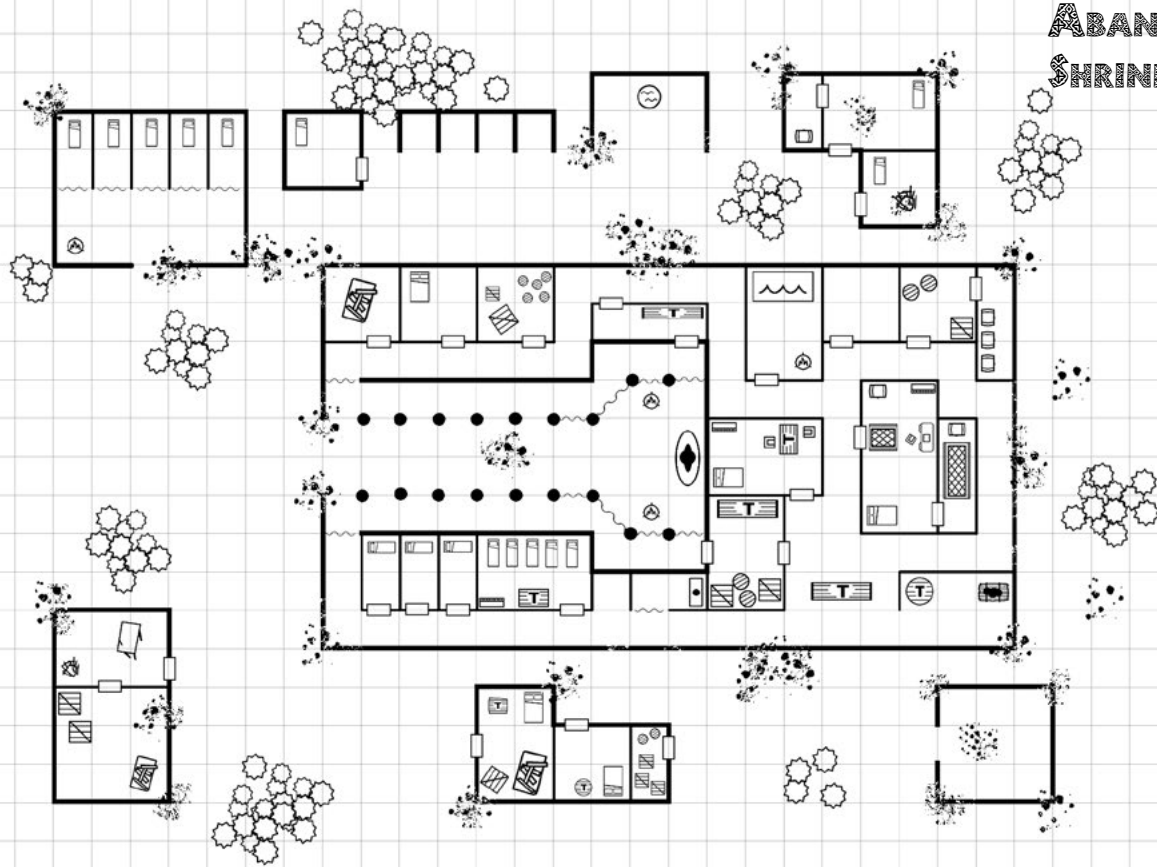


SECOND FLOOR

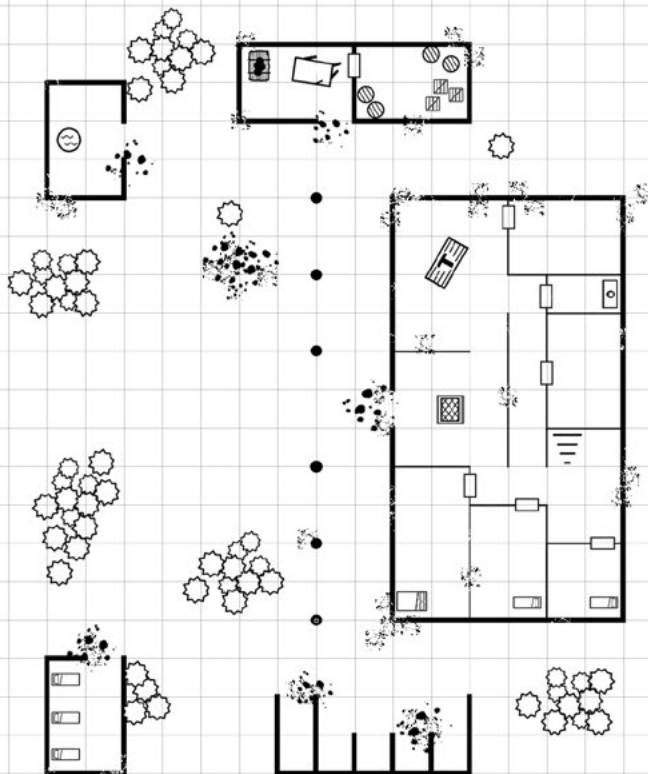


THIRD FLOOR

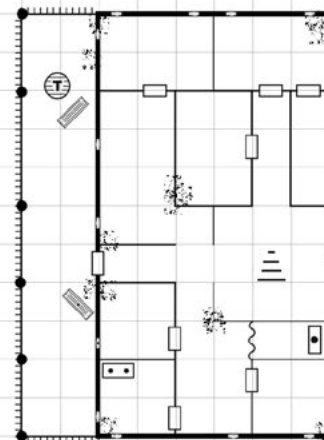
ABANDONED SHRINE COMPLEX



RUINED ESTATE



GROUND FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR

LEADERMAN

Spells Per Day					
Caster Level	Spell Level				
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
1	1	-	-	-	-
2	2	-	-	-	-
3	2	1	-	-	-
4	3	2	-	-	-
5	3	2	1	-	-
6	4	2	2	-	-
7	4	3	2	1	-
8	4	3	2	2	-
9	5	4	3	2	1
10	5	4	3	3	2

Ngangas may prepare this many nkisi per day. They may use ritual magic as often as they have time and components.

Marabouts may use their available spells this many times per day. Sun Faith marabouts may increase each number above by one, to account for their narrower focus.

Criot Songs and Inspiration		
Song Level	Inspiration Cost	Min. Criot Level
Minor	1	1st
Great	3	4th
Ancient	5	7th

CURIOT INSPIRATION POOL			
LEVEL	INSPIRATION	LEVEL	INSPIRATION
1	2	6	14
2	3	7	22
3	4	8	26
4	10	9	30
5	12	10	34

[illegible]

THE LOST MASTABA OF KHAMOSE

A hundred years ago the people of this village groaned beneath the yoke of Lord Khamose. He and his legion had conquered this land for the Eternal King, and he took cruel tribute from the surrounding communities. Their sons were enlisted to build a tomb-house befitting his noble stature and their daughters were sent to his table to feed his captains' awful hungers. For the better part of a century Lord Khamose tormented the land.

In time, the advancing armies of Emperor Kaday drew him out to a battle where he and all his warriors perished. For forty years, the site of his buried mastaba has been forsaken by the locals, who

remember well the agonies their grandfathers endured. Even the precise location of the mastaba has been lost to the silence of departed elders, the better to discourage strangers from disturbing it.

But now herdsmen in the western hills have begun to vanish, their cattle driven off toward the accursed hill. Perhaps something has disturbed the tomb-house- or something within has finally clawed its way out. The villagers fear to send their sons and brothers to investigate such an ill-omened place, but strangers who dare to venture into the mastaba and seek out a reawakened peril will be rewarded as well as their poor means allow.

THE VILLAGE

The troubled village could be placed almost anywhere except at the heart of the old kingdoms. The Eternal forces made deep incursions into every land, and many of them were not burnt out until relatively recently. If you're using this adventure for a setting other than the Three Lands, then Lord Khamose can be explained as a necromantic dabbler who wielded a cruel power until he was suppressed by the local rulers.

The village is small, no more than three hundred souls that make their living on subsistence agriculture and herding. Traders come at the start of each dry season to trade local leather for iron, salt, and other necessities. Their fields feed the villagers, but their herds are vital to their trade. If the loss of their cattle is not stopped the entire village will be beggared in months.

If the PCs are able to find and end the threat to their cattle, the locals will take up a collection amongst themselves of trinkets and trade ingots that have been gathered over the years. The entire pile of baubles can be exchanged for up to 200 si in a town or larger village. The PCs will also be feted as local heroes and can expect cooperation and reasonable aid from the villagers in other matters.

The villagers have little equipment to sell that would be useful to an adventurer. Leather armor can be purchased, as can stretched-hide shields, but available weaponry is limited to bows, spears, knives, and axes. Prices are standard- the villagers want the PCs to succeed, but the locals will be in desperate need of silver.

Old Ingawa is the village chief, a fifty-five year old former mercenary who returned with enough wealth to afford a wooden-walled house and the two prettiest girls in the village for wives. He never goes anywhere without his young grandson in tow, and is easily flattered by those who compliment the boy.

THE TRUTH BEHIND THE RUSTLERS

Two months ago, a pack of bandits was led to the mastaba by Gwoza the Thief, a recent outcast from the village. Heedless of the warnings of the elders, Gwoza helped the bandits break open the tomb-house and transform it into a base for their cattle rustling. Unfortunately for Gwoza, his allies dug too deep, and released Eternal that have slaughtered many of the bandits in the past few days. The survivors hide in the mastaba, dreading the Eternal- one of which has insinuated herself among them as a "runaway wife".

FINDING THE MASTABA

The bandits currently occupying the mastaba have been stealing cattle, and even a half-blind tracker can follow the herd's trail back to the mastaba. Any PC with any skill in Trade/Herder would understand this immediately, and any PC with Survival skill will automatically be able to pick up the tracks if they start looking at the last known location of the most recently-stolen herd.

The mastaba itself is beneath a small artificial hill, earth piled atop stone blocks to create the underground dwelling that the Eternal prefer. The cattle have been scattered in the massacre of the bandits, and PCs are likely to find some of them wandering free on their way to the mastaba. There are no guards posted outside the structure and the bandit cookfires are recently cold. The surviving rustlers hide within the mastaba, too frightened to escape.

ROOM KEY

For the combat statistics of the foes within the mastaba, use the Quick Bestiary Reference sheet and assume 4 hp per hit die and light spears and short swords for weapons. The villagers are too poor to purchase any of the objects of value to be found within the tomb, and will be reluctant to have such ill-omened relics anyway.

1) ENTRYWAY

A few bandits almost made it out before being caught and butchered by the Eternal. Their bodies were taken to be eaten, nothing but bloodstains left behind.

2) SAND GARDEN

The Eternal despise flowing water, living things, and sunlight, so this large chamber has been decorated to merely resemble an outdoor garden. There are plants of enameled clay, a fountain that recycles a fine silvery sand, trees of carved wood and enameled leaves, and a ceiling painted with a white circle that shines as brightly as the full moon.

3) FEASTING HALL

Five ravenous Eternal Dreamers glut themselves on a half-dozen bandit corpses spread over the tables. They are so absorbed in satiating their hunger that they will not notice intruders for one round after they enter. On the table are a dozen delicate blue faience plates. Each is worth 25 si and counts as one encumbrance item. A doorway in the corner once mortared shut has been broken open.

4) BANDIT SLEEPING CHAMBER

The bones of the dead were shoved out of this room to make room for bandit bedding. **Three bandits** are hiding under the heaps of bedding, and will leap out and attack in a mad frenzy for two rounds before attempting to push past the PCs and escape. If somehow calmed or taken prisoner, they will tell of what happened in the mastaba. A chest in the corner contains trash and a pouch of 55 si and three small carnelians worth 50 si each.

5) ETERNAL LARDER

Bronze hooks hang from the ceiling here, piles of human bones beneath each where they rotted and fell. If the bones are searched, one of the spirits of the wretched unburied here will animate a skeleton with the statistics of a **Walking Corpse**.

6) LIBRARY

Tall bookshelves hold manskin books recording tributes Lord Khamose collected and payment due his own masters further east. Behind the farthest hides **Gwoza the Thief**, who fights as an elite soldier with 16 hp. With him is the beautiful young **Senti**, an Eternal noble masquerading as a runaway wife from a nonexistent travelling merchant. Senti devoured a wayward bandit before approaching the others, so was able to restore her human seeming. Gwoza will attack the PCs, assuming that the village knows of his culpability and has sent them to kill him. Senti will wring her hands and play the hapless prisoner, attempting to travel with the PCs to a town or city where she can establish a new Eternal cult. Gwoza wears a belt of beaten gold links worth 100 si.

7) CRUMBLING CHAMBER

The chamber is full of boxes of now-worthless cloth and leather tributes. The roof here is unstable, and after four rounds of being here, all PCs present must save versus Luck. The one who fails it by most is hit by falling debris for 1d8 damage. If all save, it hits no one.

8) HOUND PEN

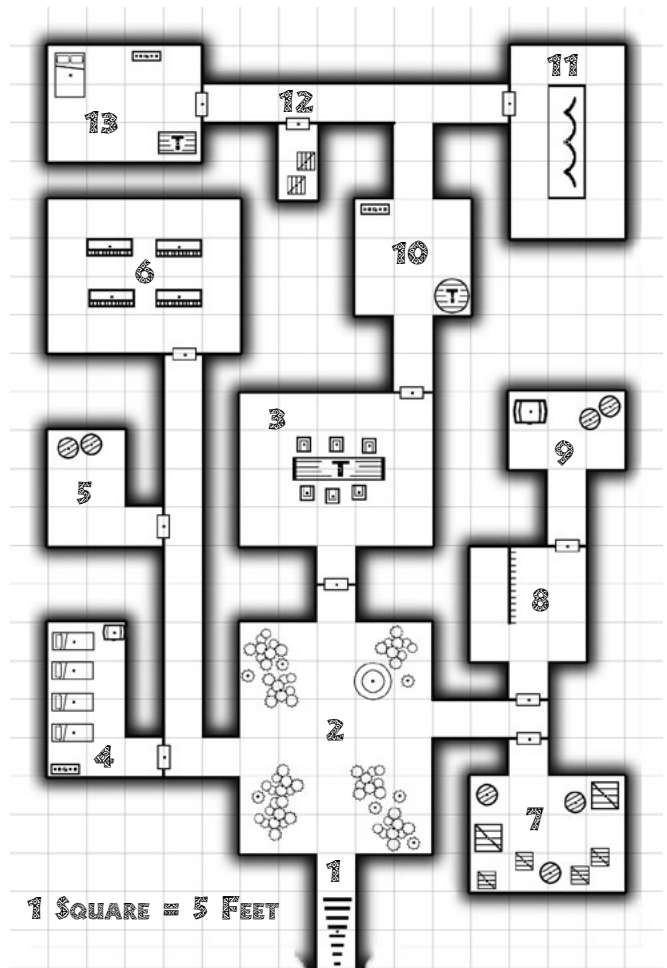
One bandit elite soldier hides here with his **two beloved war dogs**, both with hyena stats. The animals are frenzied by the stink of the Eternal, and will attack strangers instantly. The bandit will not abandon his dogs even to save his own life. The bandit wears a good suit of banded armor (AC 4) and has 12 si in his purse.

9) BANDIT STOREHOUSE

The bandits keep their ill-gotten loot and supplies in this room. The supplies are large amounts of smoked beef and a few sacks of grain, while the locked chest (difficulty 8, 10 minutes to retry, Gwoza has the key) contains eight pieces of silver Deshrite jewelry worth 50 si each and 355 si worth of ingots. If the PCs take more than 10 minutes here, **three Eternal Dreamers** will find them.

10) GUARD POST

A long red slick of blood drags down the center of this guard post, showing where Chamberlain Ushab dragged his meal. **Three Eternal Dreamers** in verdigrised bronze chain armor (AC 5) stand guard against intruders. They will not leave their post, even at the sound of fighting to the south.



11) BATHING CHAMBER

The Eternal hate flowing water, but enjoy the pleasures of a still bath. A half-clogged spring has left the central pool here full of fetid mold. As soon as the door is opened, all in the hall must save versus Physical Effect or be left dizzy with spores for 20 minutes, suffering -2 to hit rolls during that time. The furniture in the chamber long ago collapsed into filth.

12) STOREROOM

Common necessities for Lord Khamose were kept in this closet. Amid decaying Deshrite finery and rotting wooden insignia of rule is a pectoral of gold and semiprecious jewels worth 500 si.

13) KHAMOSE'S CHAMBER

When Lord Khamose's forces were destroyed by Kaday's army, the troops dispatched to seal this place dared not go further than the feast hall, and left Khamose's chamberlain **Ushab** buried with his guards inside. Since then, Ushab has taken over Khamose's quarters. He has stats as per an Eternal noble, but with no spellcasting powers and only 14 hp due to the wounds he took in slaughtering the bandits. He feasts upon the corpse of the most handsome of the dead, though he will snatch up his serpent-headed magical staff of office to defend himself- it strikes as a *runku* +1.

In the chest in the corner is a rotting sack of 422 silver trade ingots from the last tribute claimed before the mastaba's fall.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The following bibliography provides a list of books that you may find useful in providing further material in your own game. Still, a few words of caution might be profitable when using this list.

It is important to remember at all times that Africa is an entire continent. There is no statement, no fact, and no generalization that holds over all times and places. The customs and religion of one group of people may be radically different from the ways of neighbors who live literally next door. When reading these sources, keep in mind that what they are describing and relating is largely true about the *specific people* they are discussing.

Because *Spears of the Dawn* is an African pastiche rather than an attempt at strict historical accuracy, this is not so much a problem for the game. General statements can be made with the ease that comes of describing fictional cultures and places. When adding new material to your own campaigns, however, you should not feel the obligation to add each new cultural or historical element to the entire Three Lands. There can be customs that are specific to a particular place, important differences between proximate groups, and completely unique tribes, city-states, or even whole nations added to fit interesting patterns you discover in your research. Just don't feel obligated to patch your findings into every existing culture on the assumption that it is somehow a universal African truth you are importing.

Related to this, you should also be careful about the density of the material you add. Obviously, you have at least some interest in the topic if you're reading this book, and Africa itself offers every bit of the fascinating, complicated, intricate weave of human history that might be expected from an entire continent of people. It wouldn't be surprising if much of what you learn might seem fascinating, exciting, and fresh to you. There are things in these books that you just don't see in standard fantasy Eurolandia and it's only natural that you should want to share them with your players.

But players have their own priorities in a game and their own level of willingness to engage with complex settings. If you stack too much novelty and too many new ideas onto your game it can frustrate and confuse those players who just want to spend an evening at the gaming table with friends. They don't want to plumb the details of Akan theology, they just want to adventure in a fresh and interesting setting.

If you're going to introduce new ideas and cultural elements in your game, it's best to do so in ways that directly affect play. It's one thing to just tell the players that positions of authority are not automatically inherited by the holder's eldest son and that more qualified relations can take the position if they convince the family. It's another thing to have a rival candidate approach the PCs and offer them a very convincing amount of silver to help him prove the ineptness of the current heir. Mix in the rivalry inherent in children by wives of different seniority, and you make cultural family patterns matter to your game in a far more significant way than with a mere recitation of dry facts.

Finally, be gentle with your players when it comes time to introduce new material. Add it in digestible pieces and do it in the form of facts that matter to their immediate situation. If they get something "wrong" through their unfamiliarity, then smooth it over as best you can without compelling the PCs to pay a price for their players' misunderstanding. If you set the campaign up as an adversarial puzzle to be solved you needn't be surprised if your players don't show a great deal of enthusiasm for engaging with it.

FICTION

"Sword & Soul" is a touchstone for *Spears of the Dawn*, taking many of the familiar tropes of sword and sorcery fiction and placing them within the setting of historical or fantastical Africa. The present dean of the genre is Charles Saunders, whose *Imaro* practically defined the type.

The following list is simply a starting point into the genre, one chosen for the breadth of authors rather than a deep focus on any particular series. Several of the books below are parts of a longer series, most of them well worth following.

Changa's Safari, by Milton J. Davis

Griots: A Sword & Soul Anthology, edited by Milton J. Davis and Charles R. Saunders

Wind Follower, by Carole MacDonnell

Timbuktu Chronicles: Aida and the Chosen Soldier, by Anthony Nana Kwamu

Chaka: An Historical Romance, by Thomas Mofolo

Once Upon A Time in Afrika, by Balogun Ojetade

Imaro, by Charles R. Saunders

HISTORY AND CULTURE

A quick dip into these books can provide a vast trove of NPCs, places, and conflicts to translate into your own game. Particularly with older texts, the observations should sometimes be taken *cum grano salis*, but even wild fancies can provoke your imagination.

The Royal Kingdoms of Ghana, Mali, and Songhay: Life in Medieval Africa, by Patricia and Frederick McKissack. While very much a popular book in writing style, it contains maps and a clear, crisp overview of medieval Africa. Particularly useful for its description of the sometimes-ambiguous sources and pointers to other books.

The history and description of Africa and of the notable things therein contained, by Leo Africanus. Born in 1494 as al-Hasan ibn Muhammad al-Wazzan al-Fasi, Leo Africanus provides a firsthand description of northern Africa in the sixteenth century. Not all of his observations were his own, but his visit to Timbuktu helps to detail the vibrant life of a fabulously prosperous African trade city.

'The History of Ashanti Kings and the Whole Country Itself' and Other Writings, by Agyeman Prempeh. Begun in 1907 by the Asantehene Prempeh I, the essays in the front of this book are of less interest than the history itself, which is told from the perspective of the exiled king who prepared it.

Dynasty and Divinity: Ife Art in Ancient Nigeria, by Henry John Drewal and Enid Schildkrout. This book is useful in providing examples of sophisticated, beautiful artwork in metal, terra-cotta, and other materials. You can use the descriptions to flesh out palaces and come up with characteristic art treasures for your PCs to plunder, as well as get a hint of the subtle religious and aesthetic values that underlay the creation of such works.

MYTHOLOGY AND LEGENDS

A GM can take their pick of myths and legends. Gruesome beasts and quarrelsome spirits make good monsters for your PCs to face, and the marvelous artifacts and tokens of the myth make for handy magic item templates that your players are unlikely to have found a dozen times before.

A Dictionary of African Mythology: The Mythmaker as Storyteller, by Harold Scheub. Fairly popular in character, this book is full of short myth and legend synopses that often feature religious or mythological figures. If you can't get the other books on this list, this one provides a great deal of grist and a useful bibliography.

African Folklore: An Encyclopedia, edited by Philip M. Peek and Kwesi Yankah. A magisterial volume, you can flip this one open and find something interesting on almost every page. The brief treatments are ample for most game uses.

RELIGION

The warning made earlier about not taking a part for the whole applies particularly to matters of religion. Different regions and cultures can hold drastically different cosmologies and religious practices. Disputes over the "real meaning" of rites or customs are common, and you can expect to find as much disagreement over subtleties and particulars as you would find in any other living religious tradition.

Finding good books in this field is difficult- many of them on the market are popular works intended to provide religious guidance

to believers rather than the raw grist most useful to a GM. Those books that take a more scholarly perspective can be hard to find without recourse to a university library.

Encyclopedia of African Religion, edited by Molefi Kete Asante and Ama Mazama. Check for this in a good academic library if you have access to one, as the price tends to be prohibitive to casual users. If you can get access to it, however, you'll have the use of a volume that is remarkably exhaustive on the details and specifics of African traditional religion.

Religions in West Africa and Ancient Egypt, by Jonathan Olumide Lucas. A very hard book to acquire, but the author's eagerness to show derivation between ancient Egyptian and precolonial traditional religion is useful to a GM, as he provides many examples of rites and customs by which to bolster his argument. Whether or not you find it persuasive, you can use the ritual material.

West African Religion: A study of the beliefs and practices of Akan, Ewe, Yoruba, Ibo, and Kindred Peoples, by Edward Geoffrey Parrinder. While first published in 1949, with all the baggage that implies, Parrinder provides the kind of direct observation that is sometimes harder to find in more modern texts. Details on specific practices are particularly useful for GMs who want flavor and detail for religious rituals and marabout customs.

West African Traditional Religion, by J. Omosade Awolalu. Not an easy book to get, but it provides a useful and necessary perspective from a scholar with intimate cultural familiarity with the region.

VISUAL RESOURCES

One particularly useful resource is the International Mission Photography Archive curated by the University of Southern California. This is an enormous collection of missionary photography largely from the late eighteenth and early twentieth century, and a good deal of it is pertinent to Africa. While many of the photographs and postcards depict the rapid cultural and technological change that was in effect at the time, others show details of dress, traditional buildings, important local officials, and other visual details that are hard to find elsewhere. Browsing through the collection can give a GM a great many ideas about NPCs and places of interest for their campaign. It can presently be found at <http://digital.library.usc.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/p15799coll123>

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