

# HELLFROST LAND OF FIRE

## • REALM GUIDE #3 •

# THE GREAT NORTHERN DESERT

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## Introduction

Although considered a desolate wasteland by the settled races, the Great Northern Desert is the cradle of many civilizations. Although now considered separate lands, the spheres of influence of the gatomen, ophidae, scorpionmen, not to mention fallen Hekata, rose, clashed, and fell here. Even the jinn lorded over the northern desert once. Yet for each of these known ancient cultures a dozen more are now forgotten, the crumbling ruins of their former cities, temples, and tombs are all that remains of their former power. Much adventure, wealth, and danger await those who would disturb the haunted structures. This supplement expands on material found in *Hellfrost: Land of Fire*

## ORIGIN OF THE MINOTAURS

The origins of the minotaurs are a great mystery. One popular theory points the finger of blame at the jinn, claiming the elemental beings used fell magic to merge men and beasts to form a strong slave race. But these claims ignore historical evidence.

Records found on Hekatan monuments speak of the early pharaohs' armies crushing and sacking minotaur cities. Today, these are widely regarded as political exaggerations intended to show the pharaohs overcoming a great foe, not as accurate records of battles. Later texts written by the Anari who settled in what is now the Free Emirates indicate they launched many crusades against the "bull-headed beastmen" that lived in the deep desert and raided trade caravans in a "cruel and barbarous" way.

Amid the shifting sands of the Great Northern Desert are many half-buried ruins decorated with images of bulls and bull-headed humans, and of a size quite obviously designed for creatures taller than humans. Yet those few scholars who have visited these remote sites dismiss any claim the barbarous, primitive minotaurs raised them and lived here, instead inventing human cultures who honored bull deities. Even gold coins bearing bull heads and giving the names of kings are dismissed, the finder typically accused of forgery.

Despite these constant dismissals, the minotaurs did once rule from cities. They stood proud in the ancient days when "beastmen" were the supreme powers and men little more than savages. Bordered by the ophidae and scorpionmen, against whom they frequently warred, the minotaurs developed civilization, crafted works of art, instituted laws (albeit ones based on physical might), and worked the land, building irrigation channels, growing crops, and raising livestock.

By the time the early denizens of Hekata raised their first pyramid the minotaurs' civilization was millennia old. Seriously weakened by their constant struggle against the

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## RULES OF THE REALM

These setting rules apply in the Great Northern Desert.

\* **Equipment and the Bedu:** The Bedu rarely produce metal armor, weapons, or goods, though they regularly trade for them. The price for metal items in the Great Northern Desert, when they can be found, is increased four fold. When trying to sell the spoils of their adventures to nomadic bands, the heroes' roll to find a buyer suffers a -2 penalty unless the heroes happen across an oasis, in which case the penalty is negated.

\* **Trading with the Bedu:** Although the Bedu settled around the oases use coins, their true nomadic cousins rarely bother, preferring to trade goods. Heroes looking to sell war booty or buy equipment from nomadic wanderers will need to accept or offer trade goods if they hope to strike any kind of deal. The GM should not demand the heroes keep a detailed list of their exact trade goods. A hero who spends 100 dinars on trade goods need only record "trade goods: 100 d" on his character sheet, leaving the exact nature of the goods flexible. He may then spend the trade goods as if it were coin in the Great Northern Desert. For convenience, every 5 dinars of trade goods weighs 2 pounds.

other "beastmen," decadent, and sliding steadily into decay, their once magnificent cities were prime targets for the expansionistic Hekatic Empire. One by one the cities fell to the advancing armies, the treasures stolen to line the tombs of the pharaohs for eternity, the survivors driven into the deep desert. Hekata's continued growth westward coupled with the rise of the Kingdoms of the Sphinxes in the east prevented the minotaurs from ever regrouping and rebuilding. By the time the jinn appeared, the minotaurs were largely confined to the Valley of the Ancients, their ancestral heartland, and the dunes eastward. Some minotaurs were enslaved by the jinn, but most managed to retain their liberty, though at great loss of life, for the jinn were as merciless as the minotaurs were stubborn. Had the Anari not landed in -232, the minotaurs could perhaps have pushed eastward beyond the mountains and founded a new kingdom. Instead, they found another enemy out for their blood. When the jinn finally fell and slaves departed, the minotaurs were too few in number and too set in their new way of life to take advantage and fill the void.

Five centuries on the minotaurs remain a broken race, confined geographically by their desire to be near their ancestors, continually harassed by Bedu and companies from the Free Emirates, forced to raid for essential supplies, shattered into tribes ruled by rival chieftains, and largely ignorant of their former heritage as a major race. To most citizens of Al-Shirkuh, the title of "beastmen" is one well deserved.

## Religion

The major deities honored in the Great Northern Desert by the Faithful are Duamutef, Upuaut, Shamash, Apsu, and Ashtart, in order of number of worshippers.

Virtually every Faithful nomad honors Duamutef, for his faith is a way of life rather than a part of life. For those tribes who do not control an oasis, hunting and camel herding remain the main way of life, as it has done for innumerable generations. Every tribe has a main shrine. Some of these stand at oases and some are fixed in the landscape near ancestral hunting grounds, but most are small, easily carried on camels and set up wherever the tribe camps for the night.

Upuaut has few dedicated followers, but only a fool sets out on a journey without offering him a token prayer, more so when that journey involves travelling into a vast desert. Even Bedu give frequent supplication to Upuaut. Many honor him by carving his holy symbol on the soles of their sandals and branding the feet of their camels, every step they take being a form of indirect worship.

Shamash is honored as god of the sun more than any other aspect, for he is rarely veiled by cloud in the desert. Many offerings are supplications for him to be merciful, and not evaporate the scant water supplies on which the tribes rely. Despite being nomadic, life among the scattered tribes is very orderly, with camps set up in specific manners, routes used by generations, and vigilance always required against the many ferocious beasts and hostile creatures that haunt the desert. Thus, Shamash is also honored in his other roles to a lesser extent.

Regardless of where one dwells, water is essential to life. In terms of dedicated worshippers, Apsu actually ranks higher than both Upuaut and Shamash. However, his cult is mainly centered around oases and other permanent water sources, and is thus not as widespread as the former deities.

All Bedu pay homage to Ashtart, for she is the goddess of fertility, birth, and life in general. Her cult is strongest and most focused around oases, where the waters of Apsu allow crops to be cultivated. Regardless of where the tribes dwell, Ashtart's cult is traditionally a woman's cult. Males are not prohibited from joining, but they are seen as a little odd.

## Trade & Tribute

The once vibrant trade that flowed through the Great Northern Desert is in serious decline. Having adopted waterborne trade and with direct routes available, the sphinxes no longer export goods to southern Rassilon along the Snake Road. Combined with the re-emergence of the ophidae, the two halves of the Great Northern Desert are now divided into two halves into separate trade networks.

# The Great Northern Desert

Trade along the Free Trade Road remains strong, but with southern Rassilon importing less and less each year, much of the traffic heads through the Jinn Lands or turns south at Clearwater Oasis.

What trade does exist across the northern wastes is much reduced from a generation ago, the cargoes of less exotic goods. Although the Bedu caravans charge less than the ports of the Emirates for transportation, speed and the ability to deliver goods into the heart of Rassilon have swayed merchants in favor of waterborne trade routes.

## Major Locales

While *Land of Fire* describes a handful of locations in the Great Northern Desert, countless others exist. This section delves into some of the other sites in and related to the arid realm.

### THE BURNING BEACON

East of the Oasis of Dreams, amid the barren, wind-swept hills, stands a tall, unadorned black stone tower, its walls broken by a single bronze door. The local Bedu shun the place, for many lesser ifrits haunt the region, attacking intruders without warning and without mercy. They also fear the tower itself, claiming it was raised overnight by jinn shortly after their invasion of Al-Shirkuh.

Bedu call the tower Siraj al-Jinn (“the Genies’ Lamp”), for at night the hills are bathed in pale red light. Within 20 miles of the tower lighting conditions at night are always one level better (toward daylight). Within ten miles, a flicking flame can be seen seemingly hovering in the night sky. Bedu claim the light illuminated the entire northeast portion of the desert in the days of their distant ancestors, but has grown fainter and fainter as the centuries have passed.

*Detect arcana* reveals a beam of concentrated magical fire emanating from the top of the tower, angled roughly northwest, toward the frozen lands of the barbarians. The beam is visible (through magic) from anywhere along the trade road linking the Oasis of Dreams to Sutmark, though it does not appear on the far side of the distant Sandwall Mountains.

Suleiman, it is said in certain texts now considered heretical by both faiths, came here in his old age. Ignoring the jinn, who bowed low before him, he spent weeks studying the tower and its marvellous fire, being permitted entrance by the fiery guardians. It is said it was this visit that prompted Suleiman retired from public life, and which led him to utter his supposed final words—“My arrogance has damned us all.”

### CARAVANSERAI OF SPEARS

**Population:** 200 (90% Hadaree, 10% sand goblins)

**Ruler:** Captain Omar bin-Abbas

The gateway to the Emirates, the Free Trade Road has become a bustling highway, a vital link along which trade to and from the northern, central, and southern lands flows. In response to an increase in the number of attacks against caravans, Emir Ubaid, ruler of Qurqas, City of Slaves, ordered the construction of a heavily fortified caravanserai. Finished only a year ago, the caravanserai is a military outpost first and foremost.

Although the caravanserai offers shelter to caravans and serves as a marketplace, it is governed by a mameluk captain, not a merchant. He leaves the mercantile side of the operation to Barakah bin-Hamal, a merchant who paid the emir a tidy sum to operate out of the caravanserai. Barakh is entitled to keep 10% of the profits made by the caravanserai, which has a well, and is wise enough not to try and swindle the emir.

Barakh is in charge of 30 human and 20 sand goblin staff. The humans are primarily merchants, entertainers, and craftsmen, with the goblins serving as laborers and stablehands. Unbeknownst to anyone, two of the goblins are actually spies, planted here by the emir to listen out for gossip that may concern the city, as well as keep an eye on both Omar and Barakh.

Captain Omar commands a force of 100 mameluk heavy camel cavalry, the Thunder of Qurqas. All troops are proficient riders, equipped with lances, long bows, and scimitars, and trained in desert survival. At any given time half the force is out on patrol, riding along the trade road in ten-man squads. In addition, there are 50 non-combatants under his command—healers, veterinarians, blacksmiths, armorers, and leatherworkers. In addition, there are two priests of Karmelos who serve as instructors and tacticians.

Although merchants greatly value the refuge and its escorts, the caravanserai is despised by the local Bedu tribes. They see it as a blatant attempt to expand the borders of the Free Emirates beyond the mountains. Much of their resentment is limited to refusing to trade here, but a small number have begun a smear campaign against the caravanserai, accusing the resident traders of cheating visiting caravans and offering protection at extortionate rates. A very small few are arguing in favor of attacks against the patrols, but their radical demands have yet to find much audience. That may change soon, though, for Emir Ubaid is considering constructing several more fortified caravanserais along the trade road.

### GATORMAN RUINS

On the slopes of the Six Sisters stand numerous ruins raised in antiquity by the gatormen. Abandoned during the lizardman uprising and never reoccupied, they have weathered the passage of time remarkably well. Most are simple structures, guard posts and barracks for the lizardmen miners who slaved to hew stone and excavate precious gems for their cruel overlords. Unlike the richly decorated ziggurats found in the Salt Marsh, the ruins are plain and functional, displaying little evidence as to their function.



## CLERICS OF DUAMUTEF

The Faithful chapter in *Land of Fire* details the core aspects of the greater gods, and provides a information on the clergy's duties. This entry is an expansion for the cult of Duamutef, providing facts useful to both players and GMs.

**Training:** Although Duamutef is the god of nomads and desert life, a few city-dwellers feel the call of the endless sands and seek out his cult. Training is entirely practical, with novitiates learning how to identify animals by their tracks and spoors, stalk their prey, and kill them quickly and silently with arrows; as well as find water and conserve rations, butcher and prepare animals so nothing is wasted, read the weather, and spot desert hazards.

Students also learn the complex laws that govern nomadic life, as well as the history and folklore of their tribe. Novitiates are permitted to eat in the tent of the local nobility, for here they learn the art of mediating disputes first hand, as well as (hopefully) grasp the nuances of politics that prevent solutions to problems being black and white.

**Prayers:** Duamutef's clerics use desert-related symbolism. When dealing with nomads they use simple allegory. For instance, one might insult a rival by saying "You are like a toothless jackal." But when talking to city-dwellers, who are considered unwise in the ways of the burning sands and its proud people, they always add a second part, explaining the symbolizing. In the former case, the insult would be given as, "You are like a toothless jackal that yaps loudly but cannot bite."

**Adventures:** Any adventure taking place in the desert or involving nomads automatically appeals to the cult. Such tales might be martial, investigative, political, or a blend of all these elements.

Clerics might be called upon to battle marauding sand orcs or fire giants, end a bitter feud between two tribes, advise on or forge a peace treaty, rally scattered tribes to fight a common enemy, or track down missing caravans.

**Character Guidelines:** Clerics of Duamutef are many things, and need a good balance of abilities. Woodsman is the quintessential Edge. Survival is the primary skill, with Notice, Shooting, Stealth, and Tracking close behind.

Priests need a high Smarts, since they are expected to be well-versed in the laws and lores of their particular tribe (all handled by Common Knowledge). A smattering of Knowledge skills, especially Area, Folklore, and Law will prove beneficial. As advisors and mediators, they should consider at least a few dice in Persuasion, backed by a positive Charisma if at all possible.

Paladins should look toward ranged combat as their focus, with Dodge and Marksman favored over melee-oriented Edges like Frenzy and Sweep.

One of the buildings, seemingly innocuous and of little interest to explorers from the outside, is actually the vestibule to a labyrinthine necropolis. At the rear of the chamber, concealed behind a thin veneer of crumbling plaster, stand two colossal stone doors, lavishly decorated with glyphs and imagery of gatormen of noble and priestly bearing. A masterful work of engineering, the doors swing inward with a gentle push, releasing a blast of stale air.

Constructed at the height of the gatorman empire, before their fall in decadence and worship of a sole god, Sarkeb, the tomb complex stretches deep in the mountain, extending over five levels. Laid out on ornately engraved biers are the mortal remains of high priests of over a dozen deities, each mummified naturally and laid to rest with rich funerary goods.

That the gatormen did not seal the entrance doors should be warning enough to tomb robbers. Those who ignore the warning must contend with deadly traps (magical and mundane), animated statues, and a small army of undead gatormen soldiers whose souls were ritually bound to their withered corpses so they might stand eternal vigil over their former masters.

## THE JINNI'S OVEN

Standing in the middle of the desert, scores of miles from any nomad campsite, is a large stone oven of antique design. Fresh ash lies at its base, and discarded bones litter the surrounding sand.

Nearby lives a powerful greater khamsin jinn, Pashar Malika bint Faisal, Daughter of the Storm, the Howling Princess, Dancer in the Desert. A loner before the War of Copper Jars, she spent her days cooking captives in her oven, for the flesh of mortals, especially ones whose meat was sweetened by sheer terror, greatly appealed to her refined palate.

Suleiman, cast out into the desert in the years before the War, found her oven and lit a fire in the hearth before settling down to sleep. He awoke to find himself tied to a spit, Malika stoking the fire beneath his rapidly warming flesh. Remaining calm, Suleiman informed the jinni he was a master chef and could prepare for her a feast unlike no other she had tasted before.

Malika was doubtful and wary of trickery, but Suleiman carried on, proclaiming that it would be a shame if she killed him before tasting his food. Figuring that at worse her next meal would be delayed by a few hours if the mortal was lying, she untied Suleiman and bade him set to work preparing his feast. Grateful as he was, Suleiman politely informed his host that the meal was a secret one, and that he could not prepare it while anyone was watching. Malika informed Suleiman she would return in one hour to eat his feast or his flesh, and promptly vanished.

She returned exactly at the appointed time, only to find Suleiman sitting before an empty oven. He bade her sit on the sand, and then went through the motions of serving her food. Before she could speak, Suleiman

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said that his recipe was magical, one that only those of worthy station could taste. To lesser creatures or beings of dull intellect, he claimed, the food would look and taste as air.

Naturally vain, as khamsins are, and unwilling to appear stupid in front of a lowly mortal, Malika went through the motions of eating, complementing Suleiman on his magnificent food and claiming it was beyond comparison to other fare she had tried. So pleased was she with the food that she let Suleiman go. During the War of Copper Jars, Suleiman bound Malika to the oven, swearing that she would eat only air until a mortal fed her of his own volition with food prepared at her oven.

Whenever a fire is lit in the oven, Malika appears soon afterward. Half-starved, she is a pale reflection of her former beauty. Her once perfect skin is pulled tight over her skeleton, her hair is lank and dirty, and her limbs, once magnificently formed, are withered sticks.

Unable to beg for food, for Suleiman's curse makes such food tasteless and without nutritional value, she simply stares at diners, patiently waiting for them to offer her a mouthful. Mortals who know of the site and Malika's curse can trade food for favors.

## MINOTAUR RUINS

Littering the desert around the Valley of the Ancients, stretching as far north as the Grazelands, are dozens of ruins. Amid the burning sands stand rows of bull-headed sphinxes, cracked and shattered by time and war, lining avenues long ago swallowed by the desert; crumbling cities raised by builders taller and broader than men; toppled temples adorned with images of bulls; lone obelisks engraved in the ancient and forgotten tongue of the minotaurs proclaiming mighty deeds of long-dead kings; and broken mastaba tombs, their mud bricks inexorably returning to the dust from which they were formed.

These half-buried, scarcely explored structures (at least by outsiders) are all that remain of the forgotten kingdoms of the minotaurs of old.

## SERPENT OASIS

**Population:** 249 (100% Bedu)

**Ruler:** Sheikha Mayyadah of the Altair tribe

**Religion:** Faithful (Duamutef, Apsu, Qedeshet; secretly Ss'esslis)

**Imports:** Trade

**Exports:** Trade, snakes

Serpent Oasis lies on the Snake Road, roughly a day's hard march east of the Snakelands' border. It takes its name from the many snakes that live in the surrounding vegetation. These form a vital part of the tribe's economy, the nomads selling the skin and meat, and occasionally live snakes, to passing merchants.

The population is slowly shrinking. Some nomads have packed up their camels and left, heading into the desert and a harder life despite the relative prosperity of the oasis. Others have vanished, their tents empty, their

possessions left behind. Sometimes they return at a later date, other times they are never heard from again. Those who do return are subtly different, not as friendly as they once were. More eerily, they never blink.

Sheikha Mayyadah is growing concerned, but she is unsure who she can trust. Indeed, lack of trust is now rife. The once friendly nomads are as suspicious of their neighbors as they are strangers. Once the sun begins to set, they retreat to their tents, fastening them securely and refusing to open the flaps until dawn.

The cause of the problem is a powerful naga from the Snakelands. Before her people can fully reclaim their territory and think about expanding without fear of retribution, they need to control the local tribes. She has decided to begin with Serpent Oasis, finding it a fitting place to begin the work.

Possessed of hypnotic powers, the naga has begun converting the Bedu to the cult of Ss'esslis. Unwilling to risk her own life, the naga uses her minions and the few warriors at her disposal to kidnap potential new recruits. Those captives she cannot dominate into obeying her every whim are sent to the Snakelands and a life of servitude, or, if they seem troublesome, killed, crushed in the naga's coils.

Her cultists, for such they have become, identify each other through a small snake tattooed on a hidden part of their body. A small few are being trained in rudimentary magic. Those chosen will be sent out into the world as assassins, killing any who might threaten the nagas plan by commanding serpents to strike them dead or transforming weapons into venomous snakes.

## THE SIGNPOST

Rising from the golden sand of the eastern desert is a stone obelisk inscribed in ancient text of unknown origin. Once tall and proud, the obelisk now lies almost horizontal, propped up by a sand dune.

Although many miles from the modern trade roads, it was erected long ago as a signpost, standing at the crossing of two long erased roads. The archaic writing, which can be deciphered only using *speak language*, indicates the location of four ancient cities.

The cities are named (from north clockwise to east) as Meydha, City of Silver; Mâaziz, City of Spices; Akka, City of Fragrance; and Zrarda, City of Scribes. With no distances given, the names are of little use to would-be explorers. Many ruins lie in this region, but their names are largely lost. None of those with names match the inscriptions on the obelisk.

## SIX COLUMN OASIS

Located along the Northern Trade Road, the oasis lies within a circle delineated by six towering stone obelisks engraved with faded Jinn script.

Although referred to as an oasis, the water source is little more than a puddle. The water is barely potable, and is too little to support any agriculture. Despite being

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the only water for many leagues, Bedu come here to fill their waterskins or water their camels only when desperate. Under no circumstances do they ever set up camp here, and most avoid the place once the sun sets. They are not the only ones who avoid the oasis—animals and birds never drink here.

Beasts brought into the area delineated by the obelisks shy and buck, desperately fighting to return to the open desert. Anyone mounted must make a Riding roll at -2 or be thrown. No amount of coaxing, beating, or magic (such as *beast friend*) can persuade an animal to enter or stay within the circle of its own volition—even tethered beasts struggle constantly to escape the circle, risking injury in a bid to escape.

By day, the atmosphere feels wrong, as if the visitor is intruding somewhere forbidden. Once the sun sets, the air grows more malevolent. The hair on the back of the neck rises, eyes involuntarily dart toward the shadows, and palms begin to sweat. Spirit rolls made to resist Fear are at -2 within the circle. Anyone who tries to sleep within the area marked by the obelisks must make a Spirit roll. Failure means the character gets no sleep due to suffering deeply traumatic nightmares. A critical failure requires a roll on the Fright Table (no modifier). Even with success, the sleeper awakens knowing that something terrible haunted his dreams.

Local Bedu have several theories as to the cause of the malevolence. Most common is the story that a jinni that escaped Suleiman's wrath lies hidden beneath the sands. Unaware of the passage of time, it remains concealed, fearful its pursuer is still searching for it. A related tale claims the jinni was actually bound by Suleiman. Over the centuries, it has learned to extend its fell influence beyond its prison (a copper jar in most versions), though what it wants beyond tormenting mortals is unknown. Other notable legends point to Hekata, for some believe the site marks a tomb, and the ophidae, whose accursed lands lie nearby.

## PERSONS OF NOTE

### BEYAH ATIYA DAR-MUNEER

Youngest daughter of Sheikh Bursuq of the Muneer tribe, Atiya has recently reached her majority. Her father hoped to marry her to the son of a neighboring sheikh, thus cementing an alliance, but Atiya held a terrible secret quite literally in the palm of her hand.

On the day she turned 16, Atiya awoke from a troubled sleep to find a strange mark on her right palm. Over the next few days, the mark took more distinct form—a serpent with a human skull coiled around a pyramid.

She spoke in secret with the tribe's high priest. A learned man who had travelled far in his youth, he told her it was the mark of Apophis, the terrible withered pharaoh of Hekata. His attempts to divine the meaning of the mark, for he promised her it was not necessarily a

bad omen, perhaps being a sign from Tammuz that she was chosen for some great deed involving Hekata, did not end well. As he entered a trance his eyes turned to inky darkness and his flesh was consumed by a host of scarabs that burst from his stomach.

Atiya's screams summoned others, who, on seeing the mark and the dead priest, immediately branded her a witch, a servant of Iblis, father of serpents. Denied a trial, for her guilt was evident to all, the girl was taken into the desert, where she was to be staked out and left for Shamash to claim. A sandstorm rose out of nowhere, and Atiya escaped in the chaos.

Now 19, Atiya has spent the last three years wandering the desert, gathering as much lore on Hekata as she can. In that time she has accidentally discovered that touching a corpse with her right palm animates it into an obedient servant. She has also begun suffering nightmares, in which she is mummified alive.

Desperate to find the purpose behind her strange powers and the meaning of her tortured dreams, torn between walking the opposed paths of light and darkness, she plans to enter Hekata and explore the black pyramid. Here, she believes, she will discover her destiny, for in her dreams she has seen a door marked with the same symbol that adorns her palm.

### MAHDI THE DIGGER

Bedu speak about the scrawny, sand-encrusted, wild eyed old man they refer to only as Mahdi ("Guided to the right path") with a healthy mixture of awe, amusement, and fear. Some believe he is mad or cursed, others that he is on a sacred quest.

He appeared in the desert over forty years ago, a young man with the soft skin and innocent look of a city dweller. After purchasing a few supplies, he set out into the desert and began digging in the sand. He has spent the last four decades excavating holes a cubic yard in volume before moving on, seemingly at random, and repeating his labor. He has uncovered many treasures in that time, which he trades to Bedu and passing caravans for essential supplies, accepting a pittance for items literally worth their weight in gold.

No one is sure how many holes he has dug, or why he does so, for the Mahdi either chooses not to or has lost the ability to speak. Asked why he digs, he merely stares at the questioner for a few moments with a puzzled look on his face, then returns to his task.

Many stories have grown around the strange digger. One says he is searching for treasure, but in his madness has forgotten the purpose of his quest. Another claims a sorcerer (or priest, or jinni) imprisoned his wife's soul in a lamp for a slight and buried it in the deep desert. Others claims include him being a priest who sinned gravely and is carrying out a lengthy penance, a jinn mage searching for a powerful jinni bound into a copper jar and buried by Suleiman, a Devoted soul laboring toward Oneness through his strange task, or, with a wide grin, a greedy merchant who lost the keys to his strongbox.



## SCRIBE HUSNIYAH BINT-WAHHAB

Born and raised in Hajjad, City of the Gods, Husniyah studied hard to become a priest of Qedeset. Originally she planned to be a librarian, but her path has taken a different route. While helping catalog a collection of scrolls sold to the temple by a tomb raider, she uncovered an ancient text listing dozens of gods whose names she has never heard before. She vowed then and there to discover the names of all the gods throughout the ages, for they deserved to be recorded and remembered.

For the last 15 years she has travelled the desert, keeping a meticulous record of the name of every deity she comes across. Her current tally stands at 97. Although she generally travels alone, having learned the skills necessary to survive the harsh desert from Faithful Bedu, she is quite prepared to work with others, even adventurers of less than savory character. In return for helping her reach previously unexplored ruins, Husniyah uses her skills as a translator and historian and her magic to help adventurers seeking more mundane treasures.

Husniyah dresses as a Beda, speaks the language fluently, and understands the complex and convoluted customs and relationships of the nomads like a native of the endless desert. She has many friends among the Bedu tribes of the Great Northern Desert, both Faithful and Devoted. In the eyes of the latter she is seen as walking the path to Oneness, earning her enlightenment by recording all the names of the Creator.

## THE WALKER

Majin Emir Aswad bin Husam, Lord of the Earth, He Whose Strength is Without Peer, Strongest of the Strong, was defeated in single combat by Suleiman during the War of Copper Jars. Beaten but not humbled, Aswad mocked the prophet, boasting that no prison could hold him, such was his physical strength.

Suleiman played on the jinni's vanity, saying that if the creature could complete one task requiring monumental strength set by the prophet it would be freed and allowed to return to its native domain. Thinking no task of strength beyond him, Aswad agreed. He was dismayed when he discovered Suleiman's task required not physical strength, but mental strength.

Known today only as the Walker, Aswad is tasked to tread every grain of sand in Al-Shirkuh before he can earn his freedom, a task so boring and repetitive that it requires immense strength of will to set one foot in front of the other year after year without fail.

Of course, Suleiman knew full well the task is all but endless, for the wind blows sand away, revealing new sand beneath upon which the Walker must tread. Needing neither rest nor sleep, the jinni has trudged through the wastes for 500 years, cursing Suleiman with each laborious footstep.

Nothing prevents the Walker from going on the rampage, using its powers and impressive strength to harm

## FESTIVALS TO DUAMUTEF

### DAY OF GREETINGS

*Ansbi Yaus al-Niwt Baot Alak Arkbet*

Nomad culture is strongly centered on hospitality. Through the complex rituals and unwritten laws, the tribes weave an intricate network of alliances, neutrality, and rivalries. Such feelings change as often as the wind, for the Bedu are both easily befriended and easily slighted.

On this day, though, all civilized visitors are treated as honored guests, regardless of the current relationship between tribes. Acts of friendship and generosity are entirely genuine and heartfelt, even toward tribes normally at each other's throats. Bitter rivals sit together by camp fires and swap stories and jokes, passing around tabac pipes and waterskins like old friends. But such behavior is short lived, for when Shamash next peeks over the horizon the old status is resumed.

### DAY OF WANDERING

*Amt Yaus al-Nefar Baot Alak Paret*

Although some nomadic tribes have settled at oases, wells, and along rivers, they have never forgotten their roots as wanderers. The ritual coincides with the growing season, when the scant scrub grass and shrubs are most edible to their camel and goat herds. Across the desert, the truly nomadic tribes pack up their tents, load up their camels, and break camp, heading for their ancestral feeding and hunting grounds. Among the more settled tribes, the exodus lasts but one week, a token gesture to appease Duamutef, but also an opportunity to remind youngsters of their heritage, and ensure they have all the skills necessary to survive in the wastes.

mortals. At first, the jinni did exactly this, venting its frustration by crushing bodies and smashing homes. After a while, the Walker tired of this and set about his task.

Although determined to end his labors as quickly as possible, the Walker is quite prepared to help mortals with their pitiful endeavors. Centuries of wandering have given him a deep knowledge of the desert and its many ruins. In return for answering a single question regarding hidden locations, the Walker charges one alchemical *speed* device. This is non-negotiable. Despite his hatred of mortals, he never knowingly lies—in return for a few words, he can shave an hour off his quest, and happy customers are repeat customers.

He may even accompany adventurers on their quests, though his rates are excessive—two alchemical *speed* devices per hour of service (not including travel time, as any travel furthers his goal).

## FESTIVAL TO DUAMUTEF

### FIELD BURNING DAY

*First Yaus al-Maat after the harvest is collected*

Although Geb-Agni was placated by Ashtart replanting the stones she cleared from her fields (explained in *Realm Guide #11*), Duamutef still fumed that “his” land was being misused by the goddess.

Although Ashtart kept her side of the bargain by harvesting each year, she left the roots of the plants in the ground, thus binding the soil together and preventing it from becoming sand again. Frustrated, Duamutef stole into Geb-Agni’s fiery realm, stole a burning brand, and set fire to the remaining stalks. Once the crops have been harvested, followers of Duamutef march into the fields carrying burning brands, which they use to set fire to the stubble. Clerics of Ashtart often attend the ceremony, loudly wailing and lamenting the loss of plant life.

*speed, storm\*, stun, summon beast* (bulls only), *summon berald\**.

**Trappings:** All trappings involve bulls. Some spells, like *battle song*, *beast friend*, and *boost/lower trait*, involve bellowing, while others, such as *knockdown* and *stun*, summon spectral bulls.

**Special:** Spells marked “\*” are not available to non-minotaur worshippers.

Quite who honored Apis first is open to much debate among Faithful scholars and savants. Humans, displaying typical racial bias, claim Hekata as the origin of the cult, for before the people became fixated with death they worshipped the bull as protector of the pharaohs. From here the minotaurs learned of the bull-headed deity and, in their primitive manner, reckoned it as the father of their barbaric race. Yet within the desert lie cities far older than Hekata, half-forgotten ruins whose religious imagery clearly shows a bull-headed god. These cities, some sages claim, were raised by minotaurs in a distant epoch, when bestial races ruled supreme in Al-Shirkuh.

Apis is the only deity shown veneration by modern minotaurs. In their mythology, the sun hangs between his horns, rising and falling as the god walks the celestial fields in which he dwells. The scarce desert rains are dew drops shaken from his tail, which also causes the cooler winter winds to blow as it flicks to and fro. The warm summer winds are his hot breath, thunder the sound of his hooves, and earthquakes his stomping gait.

Once a royal deity and a war god, among the few Faithful farmers who still venerate Apis he is now honored as a fertility god. It is he who ensures the cows bear healthy calves and their milk flows freely. To his human worshippers, he is an aspect of Ashtart, goddess of life, a minor deity and one of little renown. His human worshippers are as disliked by minotaurs as other races.

While a few shrines exist among the civilized races, typically on livestock farms or cattle markets, the only active temples stand in and around the Valley of Ancients. Countless ruined structures marked with the god’s holy symbol stand in the open desert, a reminder that worship of Apis was once much more widespread.

When depicted in art, minotaurs venerate their god by showing him as one of their race, physically perfect, with an enlarged phallus (symbolizing his aspect of fertility), and crowned (indicating lordship). Other races only ever show the god as a bull wearing a crown, Apis being lord of bulls and a former symbol of kingship.

Clerics are extremely rare outside of minotaur tribes. Here, priests act as advisors to chieftains, tend the physical and spiritual needs of the tribe, and lead religious ceremonies. Paladins serve as bodyguards to priests and chieftains, protect the ancient tombs of the minotaur chieftains, watch over the minotaurs’ ruined cities and thwart tomb raiders, and fight alongside the warriors.

Ceremonies involve energetic ritual dancing and the tossing of one’s head. Non-minotaur worshippers wear horned headdresses. While laity dance, clerics sacrifice cows, sending their souls to Apis’ celestial herd, and burn bundles of grass, to feed the deity.

## Gods & Monsters

This section details four new minor deities, seven new creatures, and one new NPC archetype common to the arid desert.

### APIS

**Titles:** The Celestial Bull, the Horned God, Shaker of the Heavens, the Bellowing One.

**Aspects:** Minotaurs, bulls, lordship, strength, ferocity, courage, fertility, thunder.

**Affiliation:** Ashtart (among non-minotaurs)

**Symbol:** Stylized bull’s head (downward facing triangle, the baseline extended and turned slightly upward at the end)

**Priesthood:** Hooves of Apis (priests); Horns of Apis (paladins).

**Herald:** Apis sends a Wild Card bull.

**Holy Days:** Amt Yaus al-Niwt of each month is a holy day. The death of a minotaur chieftain is a high holy day for his tribe.

**Duties:** To protect bulls, act courageously, serve minotaur chieftains.

**Sins:** (Minor) accidentally harming a bull, failing to perform a feat of strength, showing fear; (Major) intentionally harming a bull, disobeying a minotaur chieftain; (Mortal) active treason or violence against a minotaur chieftain, killing a bull.

**Signature Power:** *Beast friend* (bulls only).

**Powers:** *Battle song\**, *bless/panic\**, *boost/lower trait* (Spirit, Strength, Vigor, and Fighting only), *gift of battle\**, *knockdown*, *quake*, *shape change* (bull only)\*,



## ERU

**Titles:** The Great Host, Lord of Strangers, Friend of All, He Who Welcomes, Giver of Gifts.

**Aspects:** Hospitality.

**Affiliations:** Duamutef, Marqod.

**Symbol:** A hand offering salt.

**Priesthood:** Honored Hosts (priests); Honored Protectors (paladins).

**Herald:** None.

**Holy Days:** Any day a guest is welcomed is a holy day. Day of Greeting (p. 7) is a high holy day.

**Duties:** To welcome guests, to protect strangers staying in one's house.

**Sins:** (Minor) accidentally insulting a guest, allowing a guest in your house to be injured, failure to gift a guest; (Major) deliberately insulting a guest, accidentally harming a guest; (Mortal) deliberately harming a guest, allowing a guest in your house to be killed.

**Signature Power:** *Refuge*.

**Powers (Paladins):** *Armor\**, *boost/lower trait* (Vigor, Fighting, and Notice only), *deflection\**, *healing\**, *stun*, *warding\**.

**Powers (Priests):** *Boost/lower trait* (Knowledge (Heraldry), Notice, Persuasion, and Streetwise only), *charismatic aura*, *feast*, *light*, *sentry*, *speak language*.

**Trappings:** None with specific game mechanics. Many take subtle effects, such as an aura of calm, warming shades of light, pleasing aromas, or soft music.

**Special:** While paladins and priests share the same signature spell, they have different lists. Paladin spells marked "\*" only function on the paladin or guests in a household the paladin owns or is charged with guarding on behalf of the legitimate owner. If a guest leaves the house (defined as any permanent or temporary residence), the spell effect ceases to apply, although the spell is still Maintained. If the guest returns before the spell expires, its effect automatically begins working again.

The desert is a harsh environment. Without hospitality from strangers, it would be far worse. Eru is a trusted servant of Duamutef, charged with welcoming guests to his lord's tent and deciding the level of hospitality they should receive.

Eru has no temples, nor does he desire them, for all domiciles are his home. Any homeowner worthy of the name has the god's symbol engraved over the door or has a small shrine just inside the door. Nomads frequently work the symbol onto their tent flaps or into rugs reserved solely for guests. Similarly, Eru is rarely depicted in art. Every host who greets a guest is the living embodiment of Eru.

Priests are usually in service to nobles and other rich citizens, employed as is their god to welcome guests into the household. They are entrusted to speak on behalf of their master, and whatever level of hospitality they offer is considered the level the householder would give. Beyond this, they are permitted to make polite small talk, but have no other authority to speak for their master. Paladins are charged with protecting guests. A house-

## EXPANDED HOSPITALITY

Known by the Bedu term *diyafa*, hospitality requires hosts to water, feed, and offer sleeping quarters for guests, as well as provide for their security, though not to an equal extent. Honored guests, for instance, may be guests at a banquet every night for which a prize animal is sacrificed, while scorpion guests may receive a bowl of watery gruel, a few bones, and a hunk of foul-smelling cheese. Financial status does not exempt a host from his duty.

## WELCOME

Guests must announce their full name, faith (Devoted usually say "follower of Suleiman"), and tribal affiliations to their host. Lying is not only insulting, it invalidates the social contract between host and guests, leaving the latter open to reprisals.

Once introductions are over, the host offers his guests a small meal comprised of specific foodstuffs (see below). The *absence* of foodstuffs signifies the level of hospitality being offered. For instance, guests offered bones, coffee, and dates is are Accepted guests.

\* Honored guests are given salt, a precious commodity and a sign of purity. This indicates the guest is viewed as being equally pure and, symbolically at least, a friend of the host.

\* Welcomed guests are offered water, a substance never wasted on the undeserving.

\* Accepted guests receive dates, a staple foodstuff.

\* Tolerated guests are given a cup of strong, black, bitter coffee, a common drink across Al-Shirkuh.

\* Scorpion guests are offered bones, the traditional food of dogs. This is a clear indication the guest is unwelcome, and that his presence is being tolerated only because the laws of hospitality demand it. If offered with other foods, the bones are traditionally left untouched or fed to dogs. Either act politely ignores their presence.

Once the level of hospitality is known, the senior most guest is expected to gift their host. In return, he receives a gift of equal value. Gift etiquette, including values, is explained in adventure *NF1: The Curse of the Sand Lord*. Refusing a gift is a grave insult, one likely to be remembered for many years.

## THE THREE DAY RULE

Guests are expected to relieve their host of the mantle of hospitality after three days, lest they become a financial drain. Guests are usually allowed to stay in the camp after this period has elapsed, but must provide for themselves or purchase provisions. Scorpion and tolerated guests may find themselves carefully watched for signs of treachery once the hand of hospitality has been retracted.

## FESTIVAL TO DUAMUTEF

### RAIDING DAY

*Baot Yaus al-Hamala Ansbi Alak Paret*

Nomadic families keep herds of camels and goats, both of which they rely on for milk, meat, skin, and wool. Hard currency means very little to the nomads, for it is the size of herds, especially camels, that determines true wealth. As such, they are prized possessions. Camel and goat raiding has been practiced since the first nomads wandered the endless sands. Since before Suleiman, the taking of female captives has been considered perfectly normal, although the raids are governed by strict rules (see *Realm Guide #0*).

While camel raids occur all year round, this is considered the most fortuitous time of the year. With rivals' animals fat on lush vegetation, stealing them now means they are not such a drain on the tribe's precious resources. By tradition, raids must be conducted outside one's own tribe. It is considered perfectly acceptable to raid an ally's herds, though such an act may have repercussions. Clerics of Duamutef bless the raiders before they head off into the wastes, marking each raider's camel with the god's holy symbol.

By law, a full half of any captured beasts belong to the sheikh. By tradition, he keeps only half of the offering. One-quarter goes to the cult of Duamutef, either joining the clerics' herds or used as sacrifices. The remaining quarter is used to gift the tribe's mirs and beys, thus helping to cement oaths of allegiance. The half not taken by the sheikh are distributed among the various common families, with those whose sons and daughters participated in the raid receiving a larger share.

holder rarely hires just one paladin, for guests must be protected day and night.

Ceremonies to Eru are part of the welcoming of guests, and thus carried out regularly. Rituals involve greeting guests, pouring coffee, serving food, and so on.

**Character Guidelines:** Although not ideally suited for adventuring, a cleric of Eru has many useful spells. Priests are well-suited to interaction with strangers, and paladins make excellent sentries. Both should have a decent Persuasion die, the quintessential social skill, though priests will likely use it more. Streetwise is useful, for talk between host and guest is a common way of passing on news.

Paladins should favor defensive Edges over offensive ones, with Shieldwall being a priority. Since paladins may be required to perform nocturnal vigils, Vigor is important to avoid falling asleep.

## KAMALOS

**Titles:** Duamutef's Camel, Ship of the Desert, the Two Humped One, Carrier of the Nomads, He Who Stores Water.

**Aspects:** Camels.

**Affiliations:** Duamutef, Upuaut.

**Symbol:** A camel.

**Priesthood:** Camel Tenders (priests); Camel Lancers (paladins).

**Herald:** None.

**Holy Days:** Any day a calf is born. Day of Wandering (p. 7) and Raiding Day (p. 10) are high holy days.

**Duties:** To protect and care for camels, to ride camels into war.

**Sins:** (Minor) accidentally injuring a camel, not treating an injured camel, walking when you can ride a camel; (Major) overburdening a camel, purposefully injuring a camel; (Mortal) killing a camel.

**Signature Power:** *Speed\**

**Powers:** *Arcane resistance\**, *armor\**, *boost/lower trait* (Spirit, Strength, Vigor, Fighting, and Riding only)\*\*\*, *healing\**, *leaping\**, *quickness\**, *wilderness step\**

**Trappings:** Any except necromantic.

**Special:** Spells marked "\*" can only be cast on a camel the caster is riding. Should the rider dismount for any reason, the spell is negated, though it is still being Maintained. When the rider remounts, the spell effect returns immediately. *Boost/lower trait* only works on camels and those mounted on camels.

Tired after all his walks through the desert, Duamutef bought a horse. When the horse proved unsuited to desert life, Duamutef went to the other gods and asked them each to grant his mount a gift. Geb-Agni, who complained hard hooves hurt his back, transformed the mount's feet in wide, soft pads. Apsu, who saw the horse was always thirsty, gave it a hump in which it could store water. Upuaut blessed it with long eye lashes, so that the desert wind would not blow sand into its eyes. Ashtart granted it the ability to consume the dry vegetation found in the wastes, so it would not hunger. Iblis, who was not invited to bestow gifts, cursed the beast a cantankerous nature out of spite.

Duamutef was so pleased with the new creature, that he promptly elevated it to the status of a minor god, calling it Kamalos, from where the word camel originates. The new god was a randy creature, and having no others of its kind it took to breeding with Upuaut's prized horses. When Duamutef discovered this he hid all the baby camels on the earth, concealing them in the endless desert.

As nomadic as the people who rode his children, Kamalos has no temples, nor does he desire them. Shrines are common in city camel markets, as well as among the Bedu. A typically shrine is nothing more than a small carved camel. The poorest shrines make do with small wooden effigies, while rich ones have life-sized statues made of exotic wood covered in beaten gold. Imagery is little used, for any camel is a living representation of the



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god. Shrines of Duamutef sometimes depict the nomad god riding a camel, carrying a camel-headed staff, or as a camel-headed humanoid. All three indicate the presence of Kamalos.

While clerics of Kamalos are sometimes found in cities, most are found among the nomadic tribes. Priests favor more pastoral activities, working as camel trainers and veterinaries, as well as camel traders. Paladins defend the herds from marauding beasts, bandits, and camel raiders; or lead camel raids, act as mounted scouts, and fight as cavalymen. Even without using their spells, clerics of Kamalos are some of the best camel racers and trainers in Al-Shirkuh, and are highly sought after by those rich enough to own a stable of racing camels.

Ceremonies honoring Kamalos are part of a cleric's daily life. He greets the camels in a ritualized manner each morning, prays or sings as he milks them or tends their wounds, and sings them to sleep with prayers of protection each night. Although they are expected to tend for camels, Kamalos does not punish clerics who eat camel meat, a staple part of the nomad's diet. However, clerics are expected to conduct funeral rites before the carcass is butchered, thus ensuring the animal's spirit returns to the god's celestial herd.

**Character Guidelines:** Riding is a vital skill for all clergy. Priests are advised to take a few dice in Healing in order to carry out their obligation of caring for camels. Paladins should invest in both Fighting and Riding at equal ratings. Agility, Strength, and Vigor are important attributes. Given clerics work at their best when mounted, both Beast Bond and Beast Master suit the cult. Fast Mount is useful, but not vital.

## PITATI

**Titles:** The Divine Archer, Archer of the Gods, Celestial Marksman, He Who Never Misses.

**Aspects:** Archery.

**Affiliations:** Duamutef, Karmelos.

**Symbol:** Three arrows pointing upward.

**Priesthood:** Bowstrings of Pitati (priests); Arrows of Pitati (paladins).

**Herald:** None.

**Holy Days:** Any day before a battle is a holy day. Bow and Arrow Day (p. 13) is a high holy day.

**Duties:** To make bows and arrows, to train others in archery, to protect one's community.

**Sins:** (Minor) using a ranged weapon other than a bow for more than one round during a combat, training someone in the use of any weapon except the bow; (Major) using a weapon other than a bow for the majority of a battle; (Mortal) ignoring a community's call to arms.

**Signature Power:** *Aim*.

**Powers:** *Blast*, *bolt*, *boost/lower trait* (Agility and Shooting only), *prolonged blast*, *smite* (arrows only), *weapon immunity* (arrows only).

**Trappings:** All trappings for damage-causing spells take the form of arrows. For instance, *blast* is a hail of arrows raining down on the affected area.

**Special:** Clerics of Pitati may take the Double Shot Edge, ignoring the elf racial requirement.

Two core myths concerning the origin of Pitati exist among the Faithful. Bedu hold that when Duamutef decided to become a nomadic wanderer he knew nothing of archery. Desperate for meat, he ran around the sands trying to catch hares and gazelles with his bare hands. Alas, the hunted were faster than the hunter, and Duamutef soon grew tired and hungry.

One day, the god came across Qedeset. Knowing the god of invention was wise in all things, Duamutef asked his peer for help in catching his nimble prey. Qedeset smiled and handed the nomad a feathered quill. Thinking he was being taunted, Duamutef threw the quill away, watching in amazement as it sped through the air and struck dead a gazelle. So was born the knowledge of archery. Duamutef named his first bow Pitati, eventually transforming it into a minor deity of humanoid form.

Among settled Faithful, Pitati is an aspect of Karmelos. They claim Karmelos invented the technique during the God War, for Iblis' forces were cowardly and refused to engage in combat. Karmelos taught archery to Pitati, who led the war god's archer companies in battle. As an aside, Bedu hold that Karmelos once stole Pitati (in his bow form) from Duamutef, learning his secrets before he could be recovered by his rightful owner.

No temples stand to honor Pitati. Shrines are found within most temples of Karmelos, and always outside the barracks of archery companies. He is depicted as a lightly armored warrior holding a bow or, more rarely, simply as a bow and bundle of arrows. Among Bedu there are few unique shrines, for Pitati is present whenever Duamutef is shown carrying his bow.

Settled and nomadic priests serve as archery instructors, bowyers, and fletchers, ensuring the warriors are well-skilled and well-armed. Paladins are full-time archers, serving in armies, protecting their tribe, or, more rarely, hiring themselves as mercenaries. Pitati provides no benefits to mounted archers—he cares little whether his clergy fight on foot or mounted.

Personal ceremonies begin with followers ritually stringing their bows while recanting prayers. Special arrows, each inscribed with a short prayer, are then fired high into the air. If the arrow lands intact, Pitati has heard the prayer and is pleased. If it breaks on landing, or worse, hits a living creature, then the god is angered by the mortal's plea. Group rituals take the form of archery competitions.

**Character Guidelines:** As clerics of the god of archery, priests and paladins need a high Shooting die. Marksman is the quintessential Edge, followed closely by Double Shot. Clerics who wish to be mounted archers need a few dice in Riding and the Steady Hands Edge. Dead Shot can be very powerful, but it is best combined with Level Headed.

Dodge is the best deterrent against enemy missile troops. Although nothing prevents the cleric being a capable melee combatant as well, it is definitely not his focus (and may be sinful). Consider Fleet Footed as both

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a means of keeping distance between yourself and your foes and quickly closing the gap to Short range.

## CAMEL FLY SWARM

Camel flies take their name partly from their thick hair and partly from their ability to drain a living creature of its body water. The swarm fills a Medium Burst Template.

**Attributes:** Agility d10, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d12, Strength d8, Vigor d10

**Skills:** Notice d6

**Pace:** 10; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 7

**Treasure:** None

**Special Abilities:**

- \* **Bite:** Camel fly swarms inflict hundreds of tiny bites every round to their victims, hitting everyone in the template automatically. Everyone in the swarm must make a Vigor roll at -2 or suffer a level of Fatigue. This can lead to Death. Recovery is as per dehydration.
- \* **Split:** Camel fly swarms are clever enough to split into two smaller swarms (Small Burst Templates) should their foes split up. The Toughness of these smaller swarms is lowered by -2 (to 6 each).
- \* **Swarm:** Parry +2; Because the swarm is composed of scores, hundreds, or thousands of creatures, cutting and piercing weapons do no real damage. Area effect weapons work normally, and a character can stomp to inflict his damage in Strength each round.

## CAMEL MASTER

Every caravan has a camel master, whose job it is to ensure the cooperation and tend to the welfare of the camels. Camel masters rank highly, being just below the caravan master and baggage master in the chain of command.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Fighting d4, Healing d6, Intimidation d6, Persuasion d6, Riding d6, Survival d4

**Charisma:** +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6

**Hindrances:** Varies

**Edges:** Beast Bond (camels only)

**Gear:** Leather shirt (+1), short spear (Str+d6, +1 Parry)

**Treasure:** Meager

## CAMEL, RACING

Camel racing is a popular pastime among the Bedu and Hadaree. Racing camels are lighter than other camels, breed for speed rather than carrying capacity. A good quality racing camel costs 500 dinar, while a thoroughbred costs as much as 2000 dinar.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Notice d6

**Pace:** 8; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 8

**Treasure:** None

**Special Abilities:**

- \* **Camel:** Camels do not start making Vigor rolls for heat or dehydration until the 8th day after water runs out.
- \* **Fleet-Footed:** Racing camels roll a d10 running die, instead of a d6.
- \* **Kick:** Str.
- \* **Ornery:** Camels are contrary creatures. Characters must subtract 1 from their Riding rolls when riding them.
- \* **Sand Walker:** Camels treat sand as normal ground in tactical combat and as Average terrain when using overland movement.
- \* **Size +2:** Camels are only slightly larger than riding horses.

## MINOTAUR

Minotaurs stand over 7' feet tall and have massive, bull-like heads and horns. They are fierce creatures, always eager for battle, and possessed of an ingrained stubborn nature.

The few remaining tribes live around the Valley of the Ancients. Until recently they survived by raiding caravans for livestock and weapons, and then retreating back into the sands before help could be summoned. With trade along the Northern Trade Road dying off, the beasts will soon have to look further afield.

## TYPICAL MINOTAUR

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d12, Vigor d10

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Stealth d6, Survival d6, Throwing d6

**Hindrances:** Stubborn

**Edges:** —

**Pace:** 8; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 8

**Gear:** Spear (Str+d6, +1 Parry, Reach 1), throwing spear (Range: 3/6/12; Damage: Str+d6)

**Treasure:** Meager

**Special Abilities:**

- \* **Fleet-Footed:** Minotaurs roll a d10 when running.
- \* **Gore:** Minotaurs use this maneuver to gore their opponents with their horns. If they can charge at least 6" before attacking, they add +4 to their damage total.
- \* **Horns:** Str+d4.
- \* **Size +1:** Minotaurs stand over 7' tall.



## CHIEFTAIN

Minotaur tribes are ruled by chieftains. Unlike in some barbaric cultures, such as orcs, chieftains rule through a mix of physical strength, political manipulation, and appeasement.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d12, Vigor d10

**Skills:** Fighting d10, Intimidation d10, Knowledge (Bat-



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tle) d6, Notice d8, Stealth d6, Survival d6, Throwing d6  
**Pace:** 8; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 9 (1)

**Hindrances:** Stubborn

**Edges:** Command, Fervor, Frenzy, Sweep

**Gear:** Leather armor (+1), battle axe (Str+d8)

**Treasure:** Rich

**Special Abilities:**

- \* **Fleet-Footed:** Minotaurs roll a d10 when running.
- \* **Gore:** Minotaurs use this maneuver to gore their opponents with their horns. If they can charge at least 6" before attacking, they add +4 to their damage total.
- \* **Horns:** Str+d4.
- \* **Size +1:** Minotaurs stand over 7' tall.

## BATTLE RAGER

Battle ragers are the living embodiment of Apis, the bull god. Strong, fearless, and prone to violent rages, they are the tribes' shock troops. Fortunately for those who travel the wastes, they are extremely rare.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d12, Vigor d10

**Skills:** Fighting d10, Intimidation d10, Notice d6, Stealth d4, Survival d6, Throwing d4

**Pace:** 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8

**Hindrances:** Stubborn

**Edges:** Berserk, Combat Reflexes, Improved Frenzy, Improved Sweep

**Gear:** Great axe (Str+d10, -1 Parry)

**Treasure:** Meager

**Special Abilities:**

- \* **Fleet-Footed:** Minotaurs roll a d10 when running.
- \* **Gore:** Minotaurs use this maneuver to gore their opponents with their horns. If they can charge at least 6" before attacking, they add +4 to their damage total.
- \* **Horns:** Str+d4.
- \* **Size +1:** Minotaurs stand over 7' tall.

## PRIEST OF APIS

Minotaurs worship the bull-headed god Apis.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d12, Vigor d10

**Skills:** Faith d8, Fighting d8, Healing d6, Intimidation d10, Knowledge (Alchemy) d8, Notice d8, Stealth d6, Survival d6

**Pace:** 8; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 8

**Hindrances:** Stubborn

**Edges:** Arcane Background (Miracles), Hedge Magic

**Gear:** Spear (Str+d6, +1 Parry, Reach 1)

**Treasure:** Meager

**Special Abilities:**

- \* **Fleet-Footed:** Minotaurs roll a d10 when running.
- \* **Gore:** Minotaurs use this maneuver to gore their opponents with their horns. If they can charge at least 6" before attacking, they add +4 to their damage total.
- \* **Horns:** Str+d4.
- \* **Powers:** *Battle song* (irate bellowing), *beast friend* (bulls only), *boost/lower trait* (Spirit, Strength, Vigor,

## FESTIVAL TO DUAMUTEF

### BOW AND ARROW DAY

*Ansbi Yaus al-Niwt Tamith Alak Shemu*

Having rested over the hot, dry summer, archers and hunters begin preparing for the new season. Bedu tribes gather at their sheikh's camp in preparation for this festival. Throughout the day archers and hunters pit their skill against each other, firing at static and mobile targets, as well as seeing who can shoot the farthest. Competition is fierce, for whoever wins brings great honor to his family and clan. Among the Faithful armies, archers hold similar competitions, with archers representing their company. Traditionally, the winner of the Bow and Arrow Day competition is gifted a bow containing an alchemical charm by the cult of Duamutef.

Clerics also fletch arrows on this day, selling them for ten times as much as normal. It is widely believed that so long as the archer is in favor with Duamutef these arrows will never miss their target.

and Fighting only), *knockdown* (spectral bull), *speed, stun* (bellow).

- \* **Size +1:** Minotaurs stand over 7' tall.

## SANDWALKER

In the same way the northern barbarians judge a man's wealth by his cattle, so the Bedu value camels. As well as beasts of burden, camels are a vital source of milk and meat. While bandits and thieves are a nuisance, those who rely on camels for survival fear the voracious sandwalker more.

Sandwalkers are similar in form to giant crabs, though they have a curved beak and a scorpion's tail. During the day they hide beneath the sand, for sandwalkers are a favorite prey of Duamutef, the desert hunter. At night, when the nomad's god sleeps, they emerge from their burrows to hunt camels.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Notice d8, Stealth d8

**Pace:** 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 11 (3)

**Treasure:** Worthwhile, in lair.

**Special Abilities:**

- \* **Armor +3:** Sandwalkers have thick shells.
- \* **Beak/Claws:** Str+d6.
- \* **Infravision:** Halves darkness penalties against heat-producing targets.
- \* **Scorpion's Tail:** Str+d6. Anyone Shaken or wounded must make a Vigor roll or suffer an automatic wound from the creature's poisonous sting. This counts as a separate injury for purposes of Soaking.
- \* **Size +2:** These creatures weigh around 1,000 lbs.