

# HELLFROST LAND OF FIRE

• REALM GUIDE #18 •

## JUBBAH CITY OF MONKEYS

### Introduction

Unknown to the ancient cultures yet claiming to exist for millennia, and populated by talking simians mentioned in no musty records, until recently Jubbah was isolated off from the outside world by its fearful inhabitants. Slowly, it has come to accept its part in the greater world, and its gates are now open to traders and sightseers of other races. This supplement expands on material found in *Hellfrost: Land of Fire*.

### ORIGINS OF THE CITY AND RACE

Baba folklore doesn't concern itself with their origins. As far as modern baba are concerned, their ancestors worshipped many gods (whose names they do not recall), and because of their false teachings they lived like beasts. Then Yeowri came out of the wilderness and threw down the altars and idols, removing the veil of barbarity and guiding the baba to their current state. Yeowri told the race that the world was full of evil, and only by remaining within the walls of their city, which Yeowri raised in a single night, would they remain pure in body, mind, and spirit.

The scholars and sages of the other civilized races take this with a heavy pinch of salt. Though the sphinxes' libraries contain only what the pharaohs want others to know, Hekata is a land of ruins, and the jinn left few written records, none of these races make any mention of Jubbah or of intelligent, talking simians. Given that Hekata and the sphinxes warred in the region where Jubbah stands, it seems unlikely their armies could miss an entire city. Equally, the Bedu and other nomads, who have wandered the deserts for many centuries, have no ancient stories or legends about the place.

As for the baba, they are equally wrapped in mystery. Hekata once boasted temples to an ape god whose appearance is similar to Yeowri. Perhaps the race began as slaves, normal apes who somehow gained sentience through outside interference when the kingdom collapsed. While the magicians of Hekata are sometimes apportioned blame for this ungodly act, the jinn are firm favorites, for their magic knew few bounds, and they were beings without conscience. Maybe they created them as pets. Perhaps humans proved too rebellious or unsuited for certain tasks, and the jinn were seeking a new slave race.

The latter belief holds some water, for talk of a "deity" who came out of the wilds and led the race to salvation, who built them a city overnight, and who laid down a law that stopped them being corrupted by the outside world has lead many to sense the hand of Suleiman at work. That the baba claim no knowledge of the great prophet is considered irrelevant—their record keeping leaves a lot to be desired, and it makes sense that Sulei-

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## RULES OF THE REALM

These setting rules apply in Jubbah.

\* **Language:** Baba speak no language but their own, though they can understand other tongues. It has proven impossible for other races to learn their native language. *Speak language* powers are essential.

\* **Markets:** Although it is a city, Jubbah is treated as a village for the purposes of purchasing equipment—the baba lack many types of craftsmen found among other races. Armor fitted for other races must be custom built. It costs three times as much as normal, before any other modifiers are applied, and due to its construction weighs 25% more. Weapons except for spears cost twice as much, and the quality is poor (reduce the weapon's damage die one type, to a minimum of d4).

When selling items obviously designed for other races to wield (such as clothing or armor) or when selling weapons, the seller receives only 10% with a successful Streetwise roll, and 25% on a raise.

\* **Trading with the Baba:** Baba do not mint coins, nor do they see much use for them. All trade and purchases are conducted through bartering goods and services. The easiest way to handle transactions in Jubbah is through trade goods. 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 dinars" 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 Jubbah. For convenience, every 5 dinars of trade goods weighs 2 pounds.

\* **Ugly:** Baba see other races as very ugly creatures. All visitors are treated as if they have a Charisma of -2 (even if they have the Attractive Edge). The Charismatic and Noble Edges apply as normal as they aren't related to physical appearance.

man created for them a deity who mirrored their racial features. Given his immense powers, he may even have adopted another form so as to better enlighten the baba. Bedu legends make mention of Jubbah for the first time not long after the War of Copper Jars, so perhaps the theory is not as crazy as it sounds.

Two related theories slowly gaining adherents claim that Suleiman created the baba. One tells how they were once humans who sided with the jinn in the great war. As punishment, and yet not wishing to exterminate them, Suleiman changed their form and forbade them from leaving their city. Another, one considered rather wild by most citizens, says the baba are in fact jinn, cursed to live as simians (who naturally rank far lower than humans on the civilized being scale).

The question of whether baba should be considered Devoted or Faithful remains unanswered. They they worship a deity does not make them Faithful by default, for they deny all other gods. Similarly, while Devoted

believe in two great powers, they do not worship them in temples. The baba don't really understand either creed—they worship Yeowri, and that's all there is to it.

The origins of the name baba are equally mysterious. In ancient Hekata, there was a baboon deity known as Babi. That this is also the singular term for a member of the race must, certain scholars argue, be beyond coincidence. For those who support the Hekatic origin myth, it is undeniable proof. Unfortunately, whether the name baba was first applied by the baba themselves or by the first outsiders to view them is forgotten. Prone to mimicking other races, the baba may simply have adopted the name and written it into their history.

## Atmosphere

While Jubbah's unique inhabitants are discussed across Al-Shirkuh, first time visitors cannot help but stand and stare incredulously the instant they pass beneath the great gates. Were all the inhabitants removed, any visitor would think Jubbah just another city, with rows of houses, paved roads, workshops, colorful market stalls, well-tended orchards, and so on. But add the baba to the scene, and it becomes surreal. Dressed in clothes, haggling over goods, tilling fields, working metal, tailoring cloth, and hauling carts, they act like humans, but are, of course, sentient and civilized simians.

Day or night, the city is noisy. Baba do not keep to set routines, and cannot understand why other races limit themselves to working set hours. Their language is one of yowls, yaps, growls, and roars, and the race seems incapable of whispering. Even though it is busy, outsiders frequently feel alienated—the result of not being able to understand their hosts without *speaking language* powers.

## Social Hierarchy

Since the creation of the city, Jubbah has always been governed by King Jubbah. Confusingly, no numeral is assigned to the various kings, making it very hard for outsiders to work out exactly which king is being discussed in matters of history. Despite this, the baba seem to have no problem telling them apart.

According to temple records, the current King Jubbah is from an unbroken line stretching back over 2,000 years. While this claim fuels the arguments that support a Hekatic origin for the baba, few serious scholars give it any credence. This is mainly because many kings have reign dates lasting a century or more, far longer than the lifespan of the average baba (45-50 years).

Infallible, unquestionable, and the incarnation of Yeowri, King Jubbah is an autocrat. Once he issues a law, only he can repeal it. This stands even after his death. No matter how strange his decrees might be, baba faithfully obey them. No matter how eccentric his behavior, it is deemed acceptable by his subjects.

# Jubbah, City of Monkeys

Though he rules alone, the king does take advice on occasion. It is forbidden to suggest the king might be infallible in his judgments, and thus advice is given only when it is specifically requested. Rather than having a council, King Jubbah summons baba at random when he desires another opinion. Given he is the king, most advice offered is based on what the speaker thinks the monarch wants to hear, making it far from impartial.

Any baba can become king. When the old king dies, the senior priests form a council of regents for a period of exactly five years. After this, they search among the city's youths born in that period in a bid to find the reincarnated soul of the king. The methods they use vary, but typically it requires the candidate to prove he is the king-in-waiting by performing some act (such as picking an object dear to the old king from a jumble of mundane items). The item chosen supposedly gives some insight into the personality of the new king. The current monarch picked out a plain bowl, from which his predecessor ate dates.

Baba society bestows no special status on the king's relatives (Yeowri's law states the king must be celibate). They may be related to the king, but they are just normal members of society. The king may elect to treat them better than others if he so chooses, but other baba treat them as normal citizens.

Below the king are the clerics of Yeowri. Tradition holds that there can be a maximum of ten priests (the Fingers of Yeowri) and four paladins (the Teeth of Yeowri) at any one time. Until a vacancy arises, novitiates live and work as regular members of normal society. The king, whether or not he is a trained cleric, is the high priest of the cult.

Every other baba falls into the same third tier of society—citizen of Jubbah. The baba do not crave wealth or titles like other races, and respect is given by peers based on a number of different criteria. One should note that while the collective noun for baboons is “troop,” baba do not use this term. Translated, their terms are akin to those of other races—families and clans.

All other races are simple labeled as outsiders. The baba are slowly coming to grips with noble titles, but generally they see visitors as “kings, but not as great as Jubbah,” “priests, but not as devout as those of Yeowri,” and “citizens, but not of Jubbah.”

## Education

All baba receive education at the temple of Yeowri. As well as basic numeracy and literacy, children are taught about their race's faith, history, culture, and laws. Absolutely nothing about the outside world is taught—those who know anything about places beyond the city walls have gleamed information from visitors, and its veracity is questionable.

Education lasts from the ages of five to ten, at which point the adolescent is expected to learn a trade. All of

the craft skills and higher learning, such as architecture, found in baba society is passed on from master to apprentice rather than through advanced education. The nearest the baba have to higher education is further religious training. This is open only to those who join the priesthood, and lasts for six years.

## Religion

The sole deity worshipped in Jubbah is Yeowri. Unlike among the Faithful of other races, whose greater deities have many aspects and whose lesser ones are concerned with a specific area under the major gods' auspices, Yeowri is just the god of the race—he has absolutely no aspects except being the god of the baba. Thus, baba society has no religious views concerning war, death, the heavens, flora, fauna, the weather, and so on. Little thought is given to these topics, even by the clergy—the universe works the way it does, and debating these subjects achieves nothing of practical value. Indeed, the thought of worshipping a tree, the wind, or anything other than Yeowri seems ludicrous to baba.

Devout Faithful scholars and theologians of other cultures have decided that Yeowri is a minor deity, rather than a true inhuman one. His cult is known outside the city, but it is a recent addition to the pantheon, knowledge of the faith carried far and wide by merchants.

No other gods may be worshipped inside the city walls. Those who wish to pray to foreign deities must move outside the city limits or face the wrath of Yeowri's clergy. Unfortunately for first-time visitors, no warning regarding this is given. However, King Jubbah, keen to foster trade with outsiders, has recently decreed that the punishment for a first offense is to be pelted with dung in the city square rather than torn to shreds, as was the usual outcome.

Baba do not see baboons as just apes. According to their myths, baboons are the reincarnated souls of members of their race who forsook the safety of Jubbah to explore the outside world. Corrupted by fell influences, they were denied paradise on death, and reborn in the race's former barbaric state, losing all semblance of civility. Because of this, they are treated with the same fear and revulsion as other races show undead.

The dead are not buried. Their mortal remains are cremated amid much wailing and yowling, and the ash added to mud to manufacture mud bricks for the temple. The name of the deceased is inscribed on the brick before firing, a permanent *memento mori*.

## Military

Though it has no enemies, has never been attacked, has never sought conquest, and is not troubled by monsters, Jubbah has a standing army. Currently it stands at

300 soldiers. These are divided into three companies of 100 men, each led by a captain (the baba word translates as “one who shouts loudly.” This is the highest military rank attainable—King Jubbah is the commander-in-chief. Each company is broken down into ten patrols of ten warriors, and is led by a sergeant (“one who shouts”).

Each company is responsible for providing security for eight hours of the day. Typically, two patrols guard the sole gate into the city, two patrols march up and down the walls, and the rest walk the streets. Given the lack of true military action, they are more akin to a town watch than true soldiers.

By the standards of the great cities, armaments are rudimentary, more akin to those wielded by village militia. The weapon of choice is the short spear. This is used only for stabbing, never for throwing. Every soldier carries a leather satchel filled with rocks, the baba’s preferred ranged weapon. By law, every citizen must keep rocks on the roof of his house, for use if the city is invaded. While baba know how to work leather, a soldier’s only protection is a small, wooden shield.

Each year, the three companies parade around the city to the yowls and cheers of the citizens. Meeting up at the main square outside the royal palace, they engage in a mock battle. Instead of rocks, they pelt each other balls of fresh dung. The company judged to have performed the best by the king has the honor of picking which 8-hour shift it will perform for the coming year.

King Jubbah has a personal bodyguard of twenty handpicked warriors known as the Pride of Jubbah. These fanatics are responsible for palace security. They don leather armor for ceremonial occasions, but otherwise are equipped as per normal troops.

## Law & Order

Baba society is no better or worse than that of other races. The population may be small, but crime still exists. Petty thievery is most common, but more common are fights. These break out when intimidation—the usual way of settling a dispute—fails to produce a clear victor. Outsiders should be wary when a baba appears to yawn—often it is not an indication of tiredness or boredom, but a threatening display of one’s impressive canines, and a precursor to violence if the one party does not break down.

Technically King Jubbah is the sole dispenser of justice. He is usually busy, and prefers to let the clergy handle boring legal matters. In this regard they are acting as proxies for the king, and thus there is no hope of appeal. King Jubbah retains the right to intervene in any civil or criminal case, of course.

There are only three capital crimes—suggesting that King Jubbah is fallible, befouling the city’s water supply, and worshipping a deity other than Yeowri within the city limits. The former is inexcusable, and ignorance of the law is not deemed a valid defense. The latter has been

tempered with a first offense punishment. The death penalty is inflicted by the paladins of Yeowri, who tear the guilty to shreds with their teeth. It is a prolonged, bloody, and barbaric practise, though the baba see nothing wrong with it.

Major crimes carry punishments of enforced slavery, with the duration varying based on the nature of the offense. Such work is carried out on behalf of the state. Beatings (pummeled by fists), biting, and fines are handed down for moderate crimes. Minor crimes are punished by being pelted with dung.

## Trade & Tribute

Until just 75 years ago, Jubbah was completely cut off from the wider world. Those who approached the gates were believed to be demons, and were met with a host of screaming ape-men throwing dung and stones, and waving their backsides (a common taunt). Such behavior hardly encouraged strangers to return, and the city was too far from anywhere of note for anyone to bother sending an army. Slowly, the king at the time came to realize that the demons were in fact mortal beings, less civilized than the baba, but one’s that might not be enemies. So it was that the first tentative trade relations began.

While it imports rice and wheat, Jubbah’s primary value to merchants is as a market for raw materials. Some are used to fulfil the city’s needs for goods, but a larger percentage is turned into goods for trade. Considered novelties rather than luxuries, the baba’s wares nevertheless fetch high prices in the great cities. Cured goat meat and mutton is a minor export, sold to supply visiting caravans rather than to fill distant markets.

King Jubbah does not impose any import or export taxes. Visitors who wish to buy and sell in bulk (any sale over 1000 dinars in game terms) must present a gift to the king before conducting any business. Typically, the gift comes to 1% of the value of the cargo, though this is a tradition that has developed, not a strict requirement. As well as human women, coffee, and sweets, the king is developing a taste for tabac and alcohol.

Citizens are taxed, but only lightly. Every adult must either provide the king with gifts and goods equal to 500 dinars or perform services for the state to a similar value. Services are typically low-level civic duties, such as street cleaning, helping maintain the palace and temple, and filling in potholes.

With Jubbah now open for trade and the Snake Road no longer an essential route, the pharaohs of Jawf, City of War, and Jizah, City of the Sphinx, have debated altering the course of the Sphinx Road. Instead of heading to Lost Tomb Oasis, it would bend southwest and run straight to Jubbah before joining up with the existing road. Wizir Karif abd-Hadi sees this as a threat to ambitions, though there is little he can do to influence the immensely powerful sphinxes (except for engineer bandit attacks against caravans who bypass Lost Tomb Oasis).

## Architecture

While the city walls are made of stone, every other structure within Jubbah is constructed of whitewashed mud bricks. Aside from the temple and palace, which are towering structures, buildings are low, occupy a single storey, and are generally cramped.

Regardless of size, houses follow a standard template—square living quarters fronted by a rectangular courtyard. Baba are sociable creatures, and the courtyard walls are low enough for neighbors and passers-by to peer over (about two feet high, given Jubbah walk stooped). The flat roof is considered an extension of the main house, and is reachable by a ladder rather than stairs (baba are expert climbers, and stairs cannot be withdrawn to thwart an enemy).

A typical house is home to an extended family, with several generations sharing the same living space. Privacy is virtually unheard of, and members of the family share the same living and sleeping space. Baba have calluses on their protruding buttocks (these have no nerves), and thus have never bothered inventing stools or chairs. Most squat on carpets, though a few have imported cushions.

## Major Locales

While the other great cities extend their reach into the surrounding land, Jubbah comprises just what lies within the high city walls.

**Bathhouse:** Baba are fastidious groomers. Unlike other races, the baba do not have separate bathing facilities for males and females—the sole public bathhouse has just a single heated pool.

As well as enjoying a good soak to relax weary muscles, baba casually check each other's fur for nits and other pests while making polite conversation. Having a talking ape rifle through every inch of one's hair is greatly disturbing to many visitors, more so when the babi in question expects the courtesy to be returned.

In order to avoid fights, it is forbidden for a male to groom a female who isn't a member of his immediate family, and vice versa. Unfortunately for visitors, baba only apply this rule to their race. Still, baba find all other races ugly, and the thought of having sexual feelings toward a non-baba arouses the same disgust as a human eying up a sheep as a potential sexual partner.

**Caravanserai:** While visitors are welcome in Jubbah, the only accommodation (barring invitation to stay with a family or at the royal palace) is a purpose-built caravanserai located near the main gate. The caravanserai is operated under license by Bey Al Tijani dar-Qedeshiel, a lazy Bedu merchant who sees Jubbah as an easy way to make money for little effort. A fawning sycophant, he is a frequent visitor at court.

Caravans are charged 0.5% of their cargo's value to

stay here, but receive free food and drink (to a set menu drawn up to keep prices down).

**The Drooping Tail:** A drinking den, the Tail, as it is more commonly known, is popular with baba and visitors alike. Day and night, the dingy tavern is filled with patrons. The noise can be deafening once a crowd gathers, and this is what makes it attractive to those who have private business to discuss. It also serves a very potent date wine.

**Farki's Barber Shop:** A new and alarming fad is sweeping the adolescents of Jubbah—shaving their fur so they more resemble humans. Adults consider it disgusting, the cult of Yeowri howls it is heresy, but King Jubbah has not outlawed the practise. Farki, the barber who started this trend, is popular with human visitors. Cakali and hyaenidae avoid him like the plague, less they end up shorn. Like most barbers, Farki is a gossip.

**The Royal Palace:** At the end of the wide avenue that leads from the main gate stands the largest building in Jubbah, King Jubbah's palace. Extended and modified over the years, it is a maze of corridors and chambers. Inside it is a miniature city, with bathhouses, sleeping quarters, barracks for the royal bodyguard, kitchens, storehouses, and treasuries, not to mention the king's famous harem.

Here the king entertains dignitaries and dispenses wisdom, his corpulent form sprawled on plush cushions while his female human slaves feed him a constant supply of sweetmeats, candies, and honey.

Housed in an ante-chamber off the main court is the Hand of Yeowri. Baba believe this mummified hand is actually that of their god, and thus a major holy relic, while sceptics claim it has a more earthly origin. It looks like a normal baboon's hand, mummified through natural processes rather than funerary preparation. The middle fingers are extended, while little finger and thumb are curled into the palm.

According to legend, Yeowri knew the baba would face many perils not of their making, and he left behind his hand to forewarn them. Each time one of the fingers curls, the baba know danger is imminent. Whether they have existed for 500 years or 2000, so far serious danger has only befallen the city twice. In recent years, though, one of the other fingers has twitched. The priesthood is divided as to the meaning of this omen, but the majority hold that disaster is once again coming to Jubbah.

**Temple of Yeowri:** Jubbah's sole religious building stands next to the royal palace. Almost as grand as the palace, its design is distinctly Hekatic. Pylon gates, inscribed with towering images of the god, lead into a series of columned halls, each of which is carved to form the ape god holding up the ceiling.

At the rear is the holy of holies, which only the clergy may enter. Contained within is a golden statue of Yeowri. Once a year, on the anniversary of King Jubbah's coronation, the statue is paraded through the streets. Citizens fight to touch the statue, believing it will bring good luck and increased virility.

**Translators' Guild:** The introduction of trade with

## CULT OF YEOWRI

Among non-baba, Yeowri's cult is extremely small, and its members are considered to be eccentrics. It is also ill-suited for adventurous types. As such, only the basic information necessary to run NPC babi clerics is presented here for the GM.

**Titles:** The Great One, Creator of the Race, The One Who Gave Life to Jubbah,

**Aspects:** Baba.

**Symbol:** A stylized baboon's head.

**Priesthood:** Fingers of Yeowri (priests); Teeth of Yeowri (paladins).

**Herald:** None.

**Holy Days:** Amt Yaus al-Maat of each month. King Jubbah's coronation anniversary is the cult's only high holy day.

**Signature Power:** *Boost/lower trait.*

**Powers:** *Beast friend* (apes and monkeys only), *fear*, *leaping*, *mimic*, *speak language*, *speed*, *summon beast* (apes and monkeys only).

**Trappings:** None with any game mechanics. Most simply enhance the target's natural abilities.

the outside world spawned several new business ventures. Located in the caravanserai, the guild offers *speak language* alchemical devices for a mere 95 dinars. For 300 dinars, the guild will handle all trade negotiations for a client, saving him the burden. The guildmaster is Salgi alim-Eralkan, a cakali counselor wizir who serves the caravanserai's owner.

**Yeowri's Springs:** Local folklore claims the springs that bring life to the city were created by Yeowri, who scratched several deep holes in the earth. The water supplies not only the citizens' drinking needs, but irrigates the orchards and pastures inside the city. A separate pool, isolated from the main water sources, is used to launder clothing.

## PERSONS OF NOTE

This section details a small number of Jubbah's residents and frequent visitors.

### GORDI

A leading light in Jubbah's mercantile activities, Gordi is regarded by his peers as a haggler without equal. A shrewd judge of character, knowledge in the true value of all manner of goods, and as stubborn as a mountain, he knows every trick in the book (and may have invented a few). Visiting merchants hate dealing with him, but the baba have come to realize that he secures the best deals for them, and so demand he act as their negotiator in all large financial transactions. He may charge well for

his services, but everyone ends up a winner (except the visitor, of course).

Gordi is an oddity. Despite his obvious wealth, he never wears fancy clothes, disdains jewelry, lives in a modest house, and eats only frugally. Many baba have begun to wonder exactly where his income goes.

### SCRIBE ARAM BINT-İYAS

Dispatched to Jubbah from Hufrah, City of Idols, to record the baba's history, Aram is a frustrated woman. The lack of accurate dates, use of the same regal name by the city's monarchs, and a tendency to merge fact with myth for even recent events has left her with no clearer understanding than when she first arrived here three years ago. Her investigations have located a number of previously uncharted ruins outside the city walls. No adventurer, she is hoping she can convince visitors to undertake a cursory examination of them—the baba won't leave their city. If the ruins have any link to Jubbah, no matter how tenuous (she is desperate to secure some sort of result), she hopes to convince her superiors in the Caliphate to fund a major expedition.

### THREE-FANG TORGO

A hulking babi (by their standards), Torgo is a major underworld figure in Jubbah. His gang favors intimidation and violence over theft, and runs a successful protection racket. Torgo has recently moved into drugs, and is the city's sole supplier of hashish. Considerably smarter than his minions, Torgo has managed to evade prosecution simply by covering his tracks and ensuring liberal application of threats against witnesses and hefty donations to the cult of Yeowri. He takes his nickname from a broken upper fang, which he lost in a fight in his youth. Rather than reducing the effectiveness of his dental display of authority, it makes him more intimidating.

### YARLI, FIRST FINGER OF YEOWRI

The senior priest after King Jubbah, Yarli is well into his twilight years. His fur has turned gray, and his back is so bent that when he walks he gazes at the ground.

Yarli is wrestling with his inner demons. On the one hand, he is a loyal subject of King Jubbah, as he was three of his predecessors. On the other, he is starting to doubt the king's infallibility, believing that outside influences have corrupted his spirit. He cares little for the king's chosen lifestyle, but his adoption of a human harem and his relaxing of the law demanding the death sentence for worshipping foreign gods is a step too far.

Still devoted to his king, Yarli has come to the opinion that the only way to save the king is to reintroduce the former isolationism of Jubbah. To that end, he has orchestrated a number of attacks against visitors, while publicly blaming outsiders for the aggression. He takes great care not to besmirch the king, for not even his position in the cult will save him from execution.