

מזימה אגדתית ופנטזיה
Player's Guide to the
World of Xoth

המגוון והמפואר של העולם של Xoth



Venture in the footsteps of Conan the Cimmerian, Satampra Zeiros of Uzuldaroum, Imaro of Nyumbani, and other fabled thieves, reavers and slayers!

Enter the City of Stone and slay the high priest of Jul-Juggah! Plunder the ancient gold of Namthu! Seek the fabled jewel of Khadim Bey, but beware the nameless horrors of the Al-Khazi desert! Fight the dread adepts of the ape-god, or succumb to the pleasures of the Moon-Juice of Yaatana! Or perhaps you will perish by the curses of Ur-Kharra, the long-dead sorcerer-king of Elder Kuth?

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Xoth Publishing

<http://xoth.net/publishing> המגוון והמפואר של העולם של Xoth

Introduction

אֲנִי הָיִיתִי מְשֻׁבָּבִים וְעַכְשָׁיו אֲנִי מְשֻׁבָּבִים וְעַכְשָׁיו אֲנִי מְשֻׁבָּבִים

Welcome to a world where men are mighty, women are voluptuous, kings are cruel, and hidden terror lurks in every brooding ruin! It is an age of splendid but decadent kingdoms, where armies clash at the whims of depraved nobles, and the bloody sword of an adventurer can topple empires.

The World of Xoth is a campaign setting inspired by the exciting pulp fiction of such great authors as Robert E. Howard, Clark Ashton Smith, Fritz Leiber, Michael Moorcock, and Charles R. Saunders.

Read on, and prepare for high adventure, as your player characters cut a crimson swath through savage jungle kingdoms and thronged desert cities. From the forbidden catacombs of Belthaar to the sunken temples of Namthu, a world of adventure awaits you!



Sword and Sorcery

The worlds of sword and sorcery adventures are quite different from the «high fantasy» environment assumed by the core rules. In sword and sorcery, the world is dominated by human races; other races (usually degenerate survivors of an earlier age) and supernatural monsters exist only in hidden or lost enclaves far from human civilization. Combat is bloody and brutal, and magical healing does not exist or is very limited. The use of real magic or sorcery is uncommon, and when used its effects tend to be subtle. Sorcerers are almost always villains, tainted by cosmic evil. Permanent magical items are extremely rare, and never for sale.

To establish the proper atmosphere for the adventures in the World of Xoth, the following adjustments to the core rules are in effect. Ask your Game Master for campaign specifics.

Out With Alignment

«Torches flared murkily on the revels in the Maul, where the thieves of the east held carnival by night. In the Maul they could carouse and roar as they liked, for honest people shunned the quarters, and watchmen, well paid with stained coins, did not interfere with their sports. (...) In one of these dens merriment thundered to the low smoke-stained roof, where rascals gathered in every stage of rags and tatters -- furtive cut-purses, leering kidnappers, quick-fingered thieves, swaggering braves with their wenches, strident-voiced women clad in tawdry finery. Native rogues were the dominant element -- dark-skinned, dark-eyed Zamorians, with daggers at their girdles and guile in their hearts.»

— Robert E. Howard: The Tower of the Elephant

A common high fantasy concept, that of inherently evil races (such as orcs and drow) doesn't make much sense in the mainly humanocentric World of Xoth.

While the sword and sorcery genre certainly has its own set of clichés, it differs from high fantasy in that there is no delicate balance between good and evil, with fair and noble elves valiantly fighting against stupid, evil orcs. Rather, it is a grim world where might makes right; a world of cruel kings, barbarous fighters, beautiful but seductive women, and ambitious sorcerers and foul demons lurking in the shadows.

Individuals within this world are defined by their motivation, culture, and personal ambitions and ethics. Having characters act according to their own motivation creates much more interesting plots and storylines than simply «I'm good, you're evil» plotlines.

As a consequence, characters and creatures have no listed alignment value (to retain compatibility with the standard d20 statblocks, the alignment entry is included, but all characters are simply listed as Neutral). As a player character, you will have to judge for yourself whether an NPC is «evil» based on his or her actions!



That said, there are certain supernatural creatures and monsters, such as demonic outsiders and most undead, whose alignments can be labeled as «cosmic evil» (CE). A *protection from evil* spell works against these kinds of monsters.

Note that while cosmic evil may exist, there is no such thing as «cosmic good». This is one of the major differences between high fantasy, where some sort of balance of power between good and evil usually exists, and sword and sorcery worlds, where the outlook is bleak and the heroes usually fight against overwhelming odds, every man for himself.

Monsters Are Monstrous

«Only a sudden (...) premonition of danger saved Imaro from the talons of the beast that sprang down from the trees. Despite Imaro's lightning-swift leap to the side, those claws raked across one naked shoulder, adding to the scarlet wounds decorating his dark skin. Thrown off-balance by the glancing blow, Imaro stumbled to the ground. Quickly he leaped to his feet and whirled to meet his attacker. His eyes widened in surprise then, for the beast facing him was like none he had seen before, on the Tamburure or elsewhere. It was a great cat, leanly built, halfway between a leopard and a lioness in size. Its fur was scarlet in hue, spotted like a leopard's with rosettes of a deeper crimson shade. Its glittering claws were fearsome weapons, but more dangerous still were the dagger-like fangs that curved an inch below the cat's tufted chin. The long tail lashed in frustration. Not often did the red panther miss its prey.»

— Charles R. Saunders: *The City of Madness*

Good sword and sorcery tales include a certain element of brooding horror. The monsters encountered by the protagonists are often unique or exist in isolation. Many monsters are simply giant or prehistoric versions of natural animals such as snakes, apes, and bats.

Game Masters are advised to avoid designing dungeons stocked with different monsters in each room, since it quickly breaks atmosphere and strains credibility.

Whenever a monster or unusual animal is encountered, it is treated as having the Frightful Presence extraordinary ability.

Frightful Presence (Ex): This special quality makes a creature's very presence unsettling to foes. It takes effect automatically when the creature performs some sort of dramatic action (such as charging, attacking, or snarling). Opponents within 30 feet who witness the action may become shaken for 1 minute (10 rounds). This ability affects only opponents with fewer Hit Dice or levels than the creature has. An affected opponent can resist the effect with a successful Will save (DC 10 + ½ frightful creature's racial HD + frightful creature's Cha modifier).

If multiple creatures of the same type appear simultaneously in the same encounter, opponents only have to make a single saving throw against the fear effect. An opponent that succeeds on the saving throw is immune to the frightful presence of monsters of the same type for 24 hours. For example, if the PCs are attacked by a pack of five ghouls, each player character makes a single saving throw. Those who make the save do not need to save again if more ghouls are encountered within 24 hours.

Magic Is Mysterious

«My name is Pharpetron, among those who have known me in Poseidonis; but even I, the last and most forward pupil of the wise Avyctes, know not the name of that which I am fated to become ere tomorrow. Therefore, by the ebbing silver lamps, in my master's marble house above the loud, ever-ravensing sea, I write this tale with a hasty hand, scrawling an ink of wizard virtue on the grey, priceless, antique parchment of dragons. And having written, I shall enclose the pages in a sealed cylinder of orichalchum, and shall cast the cylinder from a high window into the sea, lest that which I am doomed to become should haply destroy the writing. And it may be that mariners from Lephara, passing to Umb and Pneor in their tall triremes, will find the cylinder; or fishers will draw it from the wave in their seines of byssus; and having read my story, men will learn the truth and take warning; and no man's feet, henceforward, will approach the pale and demon-haunted house of Avyctes.»

— Clark Ashton Smith: The Double Shadow

While almost every sword and sorcery tale seems to include a foul demon, an ancient wizard risen from the dead, or a cult of snake-worshipping priests, these settings are usually referred to as «low magic», at least when compared to the typical high fantasy, quasi-medieval settings so common in roleplaying games.

The major difference is that in sword and sorcery stories, magic is not used as a replacement for technology. Spells and magic items are not used to perform every little task and to make life more convenient for the caster. Rather, magic is a corrupting force that can be dangerous to both health and sanity; it is only used when the sorcerer deems it absolutely necessary.

Common people working their shops or fields, and the majority of soldiers, thieves and merchants, have likely never seen a true magician or seen a spell cast or held a magical item. Magic is generally feared, and most magicians (but not all) are associated with dark curses, evil gods and unbearable secrets which «Man Was Not Meant To Know». Even priests are usually feared and held in awe by the common man.

In savage areas, magic is widely feared and misunderstood, the province of tribal witchdoctors and shamans, who claim to protect the rest of the tribe from the vengeful spirits and demons that surround them.

The select few who are able to use magic and cast spells guard their secrets jealously and attempt to use it to their advantage, often to the detriment of others, and sometimes also to themselves.

Magical items are rare and are almost never for sale, though on rare events one will turn up in a market, unrecognized for its true value. Spellcasters might be willing to cast some spells for pay, depending on the individual's motivation or greed.

See the Sorcery chapter for more information about recommended changes to the magic system in the World of Xoth.

Combat Is Deadly

«Jehungir did not try again. That was his last arrow. He drew his scimitar and advanced, confident in his spired helmet and close-meshed mail. Conan met him halfway in a blinding whirl of swords. The curved blades ground together, sprang apart, circled in glittering arcs that blurred the sight which tried to follow them. Octavia, watching, did not see the stroke, but she heard its chopping impact and saw Jehungir fall, blood spurting from his side where the Cimmerian's steel had sundered his mail and bitten to his spine.»

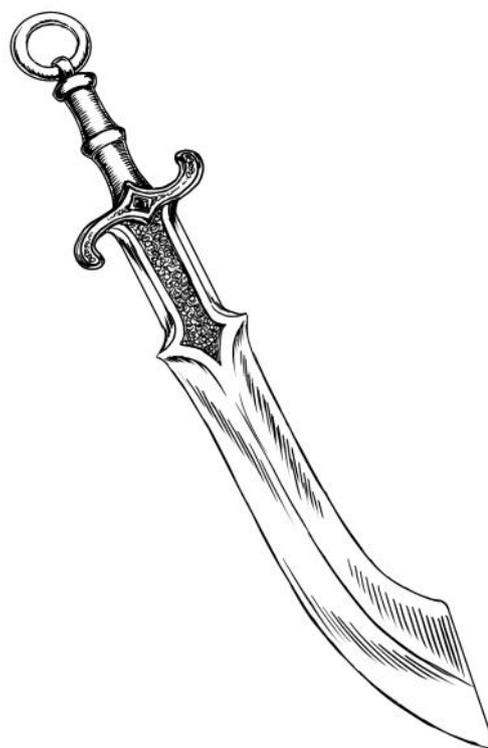
— Robert E. Howard: The Devil In Iron

In sword and sorcery stories, the protagonists regularly kill their foes with a single well-placed hit. Altering the massive damage rule makes it possible to simulate such scenes. But it also makes combat much more deadly for the player characters! GMs should discuss with their players before adding this rule, to agree on the specifics.

Massive Damage: Several variations on massive damage thresholds and results are possible. The default assumed in this book is that a character's massive damage threshold is equal to his current Constitution score plus half his character level or Hit Dice (rounded down). Whenever he takes damage from a single hit that equals or exceeds his threshold, he must succeed on a DC 15 Fortitude save or suffer the effects of massive damage. For every 10 points of damage dealt by an attack in excess of a character's massive damage threshold, increase the Fortitude save DC by 2.

For example, a 6th-level character with a Constitution of 13 would have to make a DC 15 Fortitude save when taking 16 to 25 points of damage from a single attack, DC 17 for 26 to 35 points, DC 19 for 36 to 45 points, and so on.

Since there are no *raise dead* or *resurrection* spells, massive damage drops characters to -1 hp and in immediate danger of bleeding to death instead of killing them outright. Such characters can recover in the normal ways from negative hit points, but they are usually unable to act for the rest of the current encounter.



Wounds Heal Quickly

«The ax cut through, the cross reeled on its splintered base and toppled backward. Conan made his whole body a solid knot of iron-hard muscle, jammed his head back hard against the wood and held it rigid there. The beam struck the ground heavily and rebounded slightly. The impact tore his wounds and dazed him for an instant. He fought the rushing tide of blackness, sick and dizzy, but realized that the iron muscles that sheathed his vitals had saved him from permanent injury.»

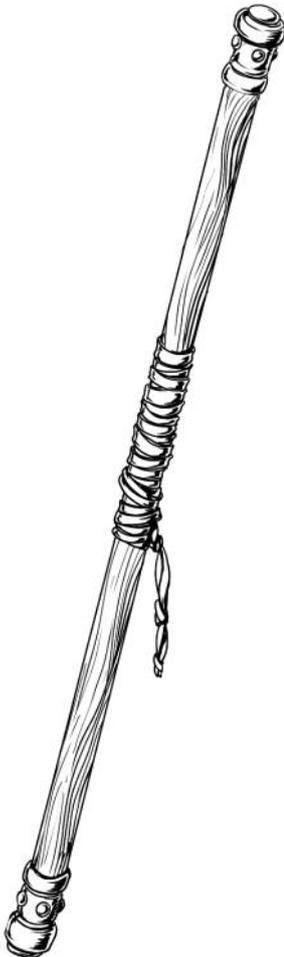
— Robert E. Howard: A Witch Shall Be Born

To make up for the scarcity of healing spells and restorative magic, the natural healing rate should be accelerated in a sword and sorcery setting.

Natural Healing: With a full night's rest (8 hours of sleep or more), a character recovers hit points equal to 3 + character level + Constitution bonus. Any significant interruption during the character's rest prevents the character from healing that night. If the character undergoes complete bed rest for an entire day and night, he recovers twice the normal amount.

With a Heal skill check (DC 15) that takes 1d6 minutes to perform, a character may provide short-term care for a wounded creature, restoring a number of hit points equal to 3 + character level + Constitution bonus. A creature can only benefit from such care once per day.

Ability Damage: Ability damage is healed at a rate of 1 point per hour of rest for each damaged ability score, except when the ability damage is suffered through a disease, in which case the lost ability points return only after the character has recovered from the disease.



Treasure Should Be Spent

«Undreamable wealth lay before the eyes of the gaping pirates; diamonds, rubies, bloodstones, sapphires, turquoises, moonstones, opals, emeralds, amethysts, unknown gems that shone like the eyes of evil women.»

— Robert E. Howard: The Queen of the Black Coast

Player characters will inevitably find and accumulate treasure during their course of their adventures. In a world without magic items for sale, they need something else to spend their gold on.

The following «training rules» allow the PCs to spend time and money to gain permanent bonuses to ability scores, saving throws, and armor class. Training must be supervised by an appropriate NPC mentor (as determined by the GM) and takes at least 1 week per +1 bonus gained.

The cost of training is as follows:

- Ability score increase: 4,000 gp (+2), 16,000 gp (+4), 36,000 gp (+6)
- Bonus to Armor Class: 2,000 gp (+1), 8,000 gp (+2), 18,000 gp (+3), 32,000 gp (+4), 50,000 gp (+5)
- Bonus to all saving throws: 1,000 gp (+1), 4,000 gp (+2), 9,000 gp (+3), 16,000 gp (+4), 25,000 gp (+5)

If the PC continues training in the same field later, he pays only the difference between his current training bonus and the new training bonus.

Note: Training bonuses do not stack with enhancement bonuses.

The GM should also encourage the players to buy land, hire mercenaries, bribe corrupt officials, or even just waste money through gambling and feasting. These are all fine ways to spend treasure, any of which could lead to further adventures.

The Tale Is Its Own Reward

To focus on a good story rather than mindless monster-slaying, consider giving XP awards for objectives the player characters achieved during a session. This XP replaces the experience points gained from killing monsters. The DM should consider setting up specific story goals that the PCs can achieve, with an associated XP reward.

Alternatively, the DM could just hand out a suitable amount of experience points for each completed session, making sure the player characters advance in levels at an enjoyable rate.

Summary of Character Creation

Step 1—Determine Ability Scores: Start by generating your character's ability scores. These six scores determine your character's most basic attributes and are used to decide a wide variety of details and statistics. Some class selections require you to have better than average scores for some of your abilities.

Step 2—Pick Your Race: Next, pick your character's race, noting any modifiers to your ability scores and any other racial traits (see the Races of Xoth chapter). There are 20 races to choose from, although your GM might have others to add to the list. Each race lists the languages your character automatically knows, as well as a number of bonus languages. A character knows a number of additional bonus languages equal to his or her Intelligence modifier.

Step 3—Pick Your Culture: Next, pick your character's culture, taking note of the cultural traits associated with your selection (see the Cultures of Xoth chapter).

Step 4—Pick Your Class: A character's class represents a profession, such as fighter or rogue. If this is a new character, he starts at 1st level in his chosen class. As he gains experience points (XP) for defeating monsters, he goes up in level, granting him new powers and abilities. There are a number of special rules for existing classes, as well as many new class variants, described in the Classes of Xoth chapter.

If you intend to play a spellcaster, you should familiarize yourself with the Sorcery of Xoth chapter. If playing a character with an allegiance to a temple, read the Cults of Xoth chapter.

Step 5—Pick Skills and Select Feats: Determine the number of skill ranks possessed by your character, based on his class and Intelligence modifier (and any other bonuses, such as the bonus received by the Civilized cultural trait). Then spend these ranks on skills, but remember that you cannot have more ranks than your level in any one skill (for a starting character, this is usually one). After skills, determine how many feats your character receives, based on his class and level, and select them from those presented in Feats.

Step 6—Buy Equipment: Each new character begins the game with an amount of gold, based on his class, that can be spent on a wide range of equipment and gear, from chainmail armor to leather backpacks. This gear helps your character survive while adventuring. You cannot use starting money to buy magic items, since true magic items are unique and never for sale in the World of Xoth. You can buy certain alchemical items, though, as described in the Swords of Xoth chapter.

Step 7—Finishing Details: Finally, you need to determine all of a character's details, including his starting hit points (hp), Armor Class (AC), saving throws, initiative modifier, and attack values. All of these numbers are determined by the decisions made in previous steps. Aside from these, you need to decide on your character's name and physical appearance. It is best to jot down a few personality traits as well, to help you play the character during the game. The Miscellanea of Xoth chapter provides some inspiration in this regard.

Races of Xoth

תאריכי הארץ הקדומה והמזרחית של העולם של חות

This chapter describes the various races found in the World of Xoth. The races are all human; there are no elves, dwarves, halflings or other demi-human races in this world. Survivors of older, pre-human races, such as the sons of the giant-kings of Kuth and the Yalothan snake-men, exist only in small numbers and are primarily intended as non-player characters and villains.

As humans, all races have the following common traits: Medium size, base speed of 30 feet, automatically speak their own language and gain 1 additional bonus language (in addition to any bonus languages due to high Intelligence), and may select any class as a favored class, without suffering any XP penalties for multiclassing.

Languages: There is no Common language in the World of Xoth. Each race speaks its own language, and most people know at least one or two additional languages (usually the languages of neighbouring countries), based on their Intelligence score as usual.

Many merchants and sailors speak a mix of Susrahnite and Taraamite, as trade has spread these languages far and wide.

Of the languages of the desert lands, Khazrajite and Khazistani are virtually identical, and Jairani and Zadjite at least similar enough to allow for some degree of understanding between its speakers. The language of Yar-Ammon is distinct from all neighbouring lands.

The dead languages used by sorcerers and some sages are first and foremost the dead tongue of the giant-kings, Elder Kuthan. Ptahaanan is another ancient language, but known to only very few scholars. Even more rare is knowledge of Yalothan, the reptilian sounds of which are largely unpronounceable by humans.



Azimban

Also known as the «dwellers in the cities of stone» by their tribal neighbours, the Azimbans have an old culture centered around their stone fortresses and bird-worship.

Appearance: The black warriors of Azimba are tall, strong and proud, known for their discipline in formations with shield and spear. The men are usually shaven-headed, and the wearing of brightly colored robes and feathered plumes is common.

Religion: The god of the Azimbans is Jul-Juggah, a reptilian bird-god that must be propitiated with human sacrifice. His feather-cloaked priests know the secret spells to summon lesser winged lizards, survivors of a lost age.

Culture: Azimbans are almost invariably Civilized, with only some of the more jaded or depraved members of their upper class qualifying as Decadent.

Language: Azimban, plus Shoma as a bonus language.



Bhangari

The mysterious eastern realms of Laksha, Ghoma and Azjan are inhabited by a multitudinous people known for their fierce warrior castes, master craftsmen, skilled herbalists, and ranks of ascetic priests. The Bhangari live in great walled cities and build temples that soar to the sky.

Appearance: Of medium height, with golden skin and delicate features. The men keep their black hair cropped short and dress in simple cotton garments, while the women wear colorful silken gowns and weave their hair in long braids. The armies of Laksha, Ghoma and Azjan wear medium armor decorated with silver and gold; the officers have turbans set with feathers or gems to denote their station.

Religion: Not much is known about the cults of the east. The cult of the ape-god Simatala originated in the land of Laksha, and there are several cults that worship aspects of the elephant.

Culture: The Bhangari are a mix of Civilized and Decadent. Some mystics among them are Enlightened.

Language: Bhangari, plus Taikangian as a bonus language.



Djaka

The Djaka are the pygmies inhabiting the Silver Isles of the Eastern Ocean. They live in jungle caves and know the secrets of the rare lotus herbs that grow only on their islands.

Appearance: Short of stature (even adults are rarely 5 feet tall) with curly black hair and dark, wrinkled skin; dressed in loincloths and jewelry of feather and bones, and armed with hunting bows and blowpipes.

Religion: The Djaka worship as gods the monstrous slugs of colossal size that inhabit the marshes and swamps of the Silver Isles.

Culture: All known Djaka are Savages, but there might be the remote possibility that their swamps harbour small communities of Degenerates.

Language: Djaka, plus a smattering of Zadjite as a bonus language.

Special: All Djaka are size Small (+1 size bonus to their AC, a +1 size bonus on attack rolls, a -1 penalty to their Combat Maneuver Bonus and Combat Maneuver Defense, and a +4 size bonus on Stealth checks).



Ghazorite

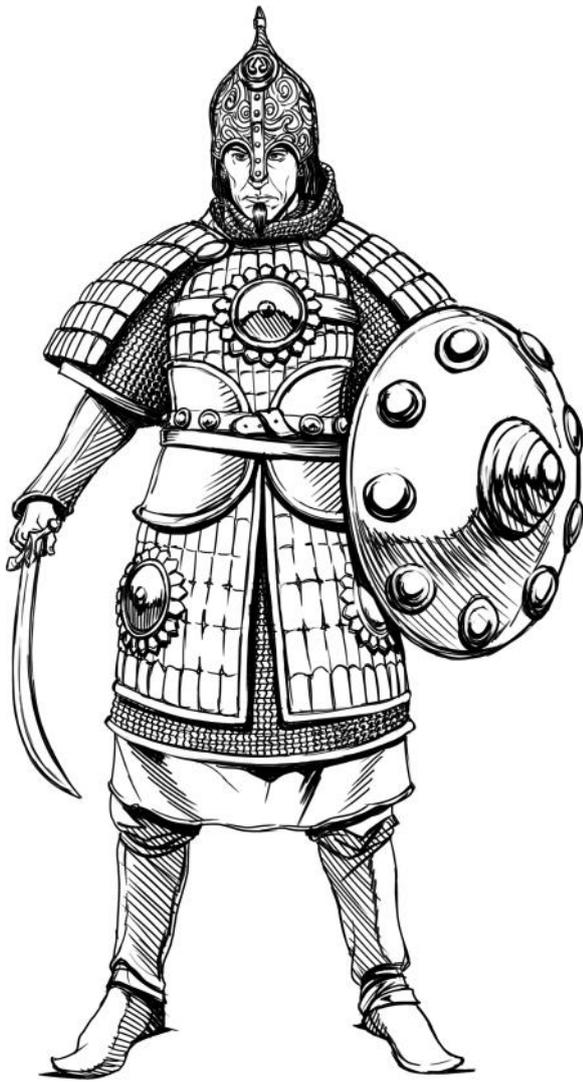
The Ghazorites are a sub-race of the Susrahmites, who dwell in and around the great port-city of Ghazor on the coast of the eastern ocean. The Ghazorites are known both as avaricious merchants, ruthless warriors, and excellent sailors.

Appearance: Slightly smaller of stature than their plains-dwelling brethren, Ghazorite men and women often have some foreign blood, the result of intermingling of races. Such crossbreeding usually manifests as a flat nose, blond hair, green eyes, swarthy skin, or some other unusual feature.

Religion: The Ghazorites worship the gods of Susrah, in addition to many strange gods brought to the city by foreign sailors, mercenaries and merchants.

Culture: Like their cousins the Susrahmites, the Ghazorites are a people both Civilized and Decadent. While Decadents are more commonly found among the upper classes, they are in no way confined to it, nor are they composed uniformly of them.

Language: Susrahnite, plus Nabastissean and Zadjite as bonus languages.



Khazistani

Conquering horsemen of the northwestern steppes, the Khazis or Khazistanis are a proud people, and justly so. From humble nomadic roots, they have established an empire with glittering cities stretching from the Eastern Sea to the deserts of Jairan, with caravans bringing tribute and loot to the proud nobles of Khazabad. The ruling warrior caste consists of mounted archers riding magnificent purebred horses.

Appearance: Tan-skinned, brown-eyed and black-haired. The Khazis are generally lithe of build, although large individuals certainly exist. The men sometimes wear turbans and grow long moustaches or beards. The women usually wear veils and robes.

Religion: The Khazis primarily worship Yadar and Nhakhramat, neither of which are native Khazistani gods, but whose cults have replaced former elemental and ancestor worship.

Culture: Almost all Khazistanis are Civilized, with the small portion clinging to a more traditional, ancestral lifestyle still being Nomads. As a still vigorous, only recently conquering people, almost none of their upper class are as of yet Decadent.

Language: Khazistani, plus Yar-Ammonite as a bonus language.



Khazrajite

The nomadic tribes of the northwestern desert are descended from Khazistani stock. Calling themselves the Khazraj, they are a free-willed, fierce and stubborn lot; a constant menace to caravans and travelers.

Appearance: The Khazrajites are physically identical to the people of Khazistan, but of a slightly darker tan due to their exposure to the desert sun. Adult men usually grow thick, black beards, and wear white khaftan robes and silver-hilted scimitars.

Religion: Chief among the gods of the desert is Al-Tawir, the Ancient One, although his name is more often used in curses than in prayer. Still, the nomads fear the Lord of the Empty Wastes and make small offerings to avoid getting lost or suffering from hunger and thirst.

Culture: These fierce desert tribesmen, the more rustic brothers of the Khazistanis, are invariably Nomads.

Language: Khazistani, plus Yar-Ammonite as a bonus language. Khazrajites and Khazistanis speak almost identical dialects.



Khoran

The Isles of the Sea Reavers are inhabited by dangerous men and cunning women from many nations, and their couplings have brought forth many who are born as natives of the isles, in the fortified pirate-city of Khora. Such children usually inherit the worst traits of both parents.

Appearance: The skin-tone of Khorans range from the icy white of Tharag Thulans to the night-black of Ikunas, but is usually somewhere in-between. They dress in gaudy pantaloons and adorn themselves with gold earrings and ivory-hilted knives pilfered from burning merchant-vessels.

Religion: The gods are more feared than worshipped in the lawless port of Khora, but even the Sea Reavers occasionally offer sacrifice to the gods of the sea and the sky. Akhlathu, the god of twisted fate, is also a popular patron of many pirate crews.

Culture: The mongrel Khorans are mostly Civilized or Decadent, but encompass a small stratum of Nomads and an even smaller one of Degenerate throwbacks.

Language: Khorans don't speak a proper language of their own, but a dialect of Susrahnian, with a few words from various languages thrown in for good measure. Roll randomly for bonus language.



Lamuran

The men of Lamu are regarded as a degenerate and evil people by other nations, a belief that mainly springs from ignorance, but is strengthened by the fact that some Lamurans have unnaturally keen eyesight in the dark, and that they worship many weird and loathsome gods in the isolation of their remote hill kingdom.

Appearance: Gaunt of build and pale-skinned, with long flowing hair, although the priests are often shaven-headed. Decadent Lamurans dress in flowing robes and wear distinctive tall caps, often wound around with turbans, while the more wholesome Civilized men prefer simpler clothing and sturdy armor.

Religion: The cult of Yot-Kamoth is best-known, but a multitude of other deities is worshipped.

Culture: The Lamurans, corrupted by their worship of sinister Yot-Kamoth, are mostly Decadent, but retain both a significant Civilized stratum in and around their cities and of Degenerates in the more remote parts of their realm.

Language: Lamuran, plus Susrahnite as a bonus language.



Mazanian

Deep in the southern jungles rise the moss-grown palisade walls of the Mazanians, a matriarchal society whose female warriors raid into the surrounding lands for male slaves. The jungle kingdom is ruled by the black sorcerer-queen of Boma-Ya, the forbidden city of the amazons.

Appearance: Female Mazanians are all stunningly beautiful, since all girls with the slightest physical flaw are quickly abandoned in the jungle. These copper-skinned warriors are not shy about using their charms to distract male opponents.

Religion: The gods of the Mazanians are not well-known. Some say they worship female snake-beings, others that their queen is the thrall of a male demon-god.

Culture: Mazanians are invariably Savages, but some Civilized individuals might exist among their upper classes.

Language: Mazanian, plus Shoma as a bonus language.



Nabastissean

The sun-drenched land of Nabastis consists of a collection of city-states ruled by petty kings with their own armies of bronze-armored pikemen. While the interior terrain is dominated by rolling hills and forest-covered mountains, the coast has sandy coves nestled amid jagged cliffs. The trade cities along the coast are protected by fleets of trireme galleys. The great city of Khargamum is well-known for the temple of Apsis, with its vast library-halls.

Appearance: Bronze-skinned, with gleaming white teeth and curly black hair, and short of stature. The Nabastisseans dress in brightly colored robes, and don breastplates and full helmets when going to war.

Religion: The Nabastisseans have few gods of their own, but tolerate the temples of foreign gods to be built in their cities. The coastal peoples usually make small offerings to the gods of the sea before setting out on voyages of trade or war.

Culture: Nabastisseans are usually Civilized, but a sizeable and increasing proportion of their upper classes has become Decadent.

Language: Nabastissean, plus Taraamite as a bonus language.



Shoma

The kingdom of Shoma is rich in gold, to the extent that even the king's great herds of cattle wear golden ornaments. There are many skilled artisans and goldsmiths among the Shoma. Outside of the capital city of Katanga, the land is peopled by semi-nomadic tribes.

Appearance: Dark brown skin, with close-cropped curly black hair. The tribal Shoma dress in simple loincloths. City-dwellers wear more elaborate clothing, such as brightly colored robes and cloaks; even commoners are often adorned with golden jewelry.

Religion: Nataka, the ivory woman, is worshipped among the nobles and upper class, while various tribal gods are revered by commoners.

Culture: City-dwelling Shomas are a mix of Civilized and Savage people, while most of the tribal pastoralists are Nomads.

Language: Shoma, plus Azimban as a bonus language.



Susrahnite

The fertile plains of Susrah are home to a race renowned for their skill in war and their religious devotion.

Appearance: Broad-shouldered, with hooked noses and black, curly hair, the Susrahnites are dressed in flowing robes. The men braid their long beards. The women are lithe, wearing golden armbands and necklaces of pearl; they are prized as slaves in Taraamite seraglios.

Religion: Nowhere, except perhaps in Yar-Ammon, can there be found as many gods as in the city-states of Susrah. Above the hundreds of lesser gods arise the names of greater deities such as Baal-Khardah, Belet-Lil, Maggash, and Yammosh.

Culture: Susrahnites are a people both Civilized and Decadent, although Decadents are more commonly found among the upper classes. Some men and women of Susrah are Enlightened.

Language: Susrahnite, plus Taraamite as a bonus language.



Taikangian

The realm of Taikang is near-mythical, a land of teeming yellow masses, bamboo towers, and serpentine dragons. Few westerners have ventured here, but merchants who brave the unknown can make a fortune when they return with caravans of silks, lotus flowers and painted ceramics.

Appearance: Lithe and yellow-skinned, with slanted eyes and long, black hair. Both men and women dress in silk if they can afford it, although the commoners often wear little more than a loincloth.

Religion: The chief god of the Taikangians is Wa-Ying, the so-called «Emperor of Hell».

Culture: Taikang is a legendary land, but judging by what legends are told of it in the west and by what Taikangians have ventured forth from their homeland, they seem to be a wicked and almost uniformly Decadent people. But who knows? Maybe they still retain a few more wholesome, Civilized individuals – or some utterly Degenerate ones...

Language: Taikangian, plus Bhangari as a bonus language.

Taraamite

The plains and highlands of Taraam are inhabited by a people known both for the sophistication of their culture and their talent for intrigue. A caste of mounted warriors is the backbone of their army, which threatens the lesser cities of Susrah and Nabastis with destruction unless tribute continues to flow into the thousand-columned palace of Achad. Taraam's royal palace is also a place of thousand intrigues, filled with eunuchs and astrologer-priests of the court.

Appearance: Male Taraamites usually favor short, trimmed beards. Warriors carry straight short swords and lances, and dress in robes decorated according to their status, with the king's personal guard wearing gold-trimmed robes and circlets of gold, in the fashion of princes.

Religion: Ahyada, the «High God», is the chief god of the Taraamites, served by an influential priesthood of astrologers and omen-readers.

Culture: Taraamite commoners are almost invariably Civilized, just as the upper classes of this people are almost invariably Decadent. Exceptions to this generalisation do exist, but are very rare.

Language: Taraamite, plus Susrahnite as a bonus language.



Tharag Thulan

Also known as Tharagians, these northern tribesmen inhabit the cold wastes at the edge of the world. In each generation, there are always some northerners who leave their ancestral lands to escape the ancient blood-feuds of their clans and explore the decadent empires of the south.

Appearance: Dressed in wolf-skin cloaks and tall boots of wolverine-fur, these barbarians of the north have long, yellow beards, white skin, and piercing blue eyes.

Religion: The Tharag Thulans revere the Moon-God, the Wolf-God, and the Skull-God.

Culture: These remote northern barbarians are mostly Savages. Some clans and individuals are Nomads, and as well as rare Civilized half-breeds.

Language: Tharag Thulan, plus Lamuran as a bonus language.



Yar-Ammonite

Also known as the «kingdom of tombs», Yar-Ammon is a land covered with desert and haunted by ancient sorceries. The silent streets and broad ceremonial avenues of black-templed Amenti is an awesome sight to behold. The papyrus used by the scribes and sorcerers of Yar-Ammon is harvested from the inland marshes of Fakhuum.

Appearance: Tall and slender, with bronze skin, dark hair and black eyes. The nobles and priests wear golden pectorals and masks carved with beastly visages, while commoners dress in simple garments of white linen.

Religion: Yar-Ammon is well known for its large pantheon of beast-headed were-gods. The land is littered with giant statues and weathered sphinxes carved in their image. But the ancient practices of the beast-cults were outlawed a generation ago, when the royal house of Amenti established the cult of Zothur, the First One. Yet, there are many among the common folk who still follow the old ways.

Culture: Children of an old culture steeped deeply in sorcerous mysteries, Yar-Ammonites are a mixture of Civilized, Decadent and Enlightened people.

Language: Yar-Ammonite, plus Khazistani as a bonus language.



Zadjite

The turbaned fire-worshippers of Zadj are an offshoot of the Jairanian race in the west. They have exploited the riches of their new homeland well, and grown rich as spice merchants and slave-traders. Having brought with them a high level of culture from Jairan, the Zadjites are skilled artisans and Iraab, the marble capital by the sea, is a center of learning as well as rich trade and exquisite craftsmanship. The interior plains and forests of Zadj are dominated by the fortress-city of Al-Qazir, also known as the City of Slave Sultans, for it is held by a council of slavelords who only pay lip service to the emir of Iraab.

Appearance: Swarthy, turbaned, wearing colorful robes and gold-hilted curved daggers. The raven-haired Zadjite women are famed for their sensual beauty; they are often scantily clad and adorned with glittering jewelry.

Religion: The Zadjites hold «the Sacred Flame», a nameless elemental god, above all others.

Culture: This wealthy and callous people of traders is mostly Decadent, with only a smattering of Civilized individuals remaining, virtually none of them among the upper classes.

Language: Zadjite, plus Old Jairanian as a bonus language.



Zorabi

These tribesmen inhabit the Zorab mountains that jut up between Lamu and Khazistan. The southernmost tribes have accepted the overlordship of the Khazistanis, at least in name, while the rest are opportunistic raiders who feud incessantly among themselves.

Appearance: These mountain wolves wear white turbans and heavy cloaks, and are armed with scimitars and shortbows. They have long black beards, and their brown skin is wrinkled by the sun and mountain winds.

Religion: There are few priests among the Zorabi, but worship of certain Lamuran gods is probable.

Culture: Zorabi are invariably Nomads.

Language: Susrahnite, plus Lamuran as a bonus language.



Cultures of Xoth

תפישת תרבות וסגנון תפישת תרבות וסגנון תפישת תרבות וסגנון תפישת תרבות וסגנון תפישת תרבות וסגנון

In a typical sword and sorcery campaign such as the World of Xoth, the traditional demihumans do not exist, and the majority of player characters and non-player characters are human. The following broad cultural archetypes can be used to further distinguish between characters who would otherwise have the same racial abilities.



Savage

Savages include warriors from the frozen north and witch-doctors from the snake-infested jungles of the south. Savages tend to have a close connection with nature, but remain ignorant of many developments that more civilized people take for granted.

Savages have the following cultural traits:

Ability Adjustment: +2 to Strength

Sturdy: Permanent benefit as per the *endure elements* spell (select either cold or heat, as appropriate based on the origin of the savage), and a +1 natural bonus to Armor Class.

Feral: Savages gain a +2 racial bonus to Perception checks.

Superstitious: Savages suffer a -4 penalty on saving throws against creatures with the frightful presence ability. Exception: If the character has more levels in spellcasting classes than non-spellcasting classes, the character instead casts spells with a +1 bonus to effective caster level.

Nomadic

Nomads roam the empty wastes beyond the civilized cities; quick to strike and bound by no laws. Nomads live with their animals and usually ride into battle with them; they feel ill at ease without them.

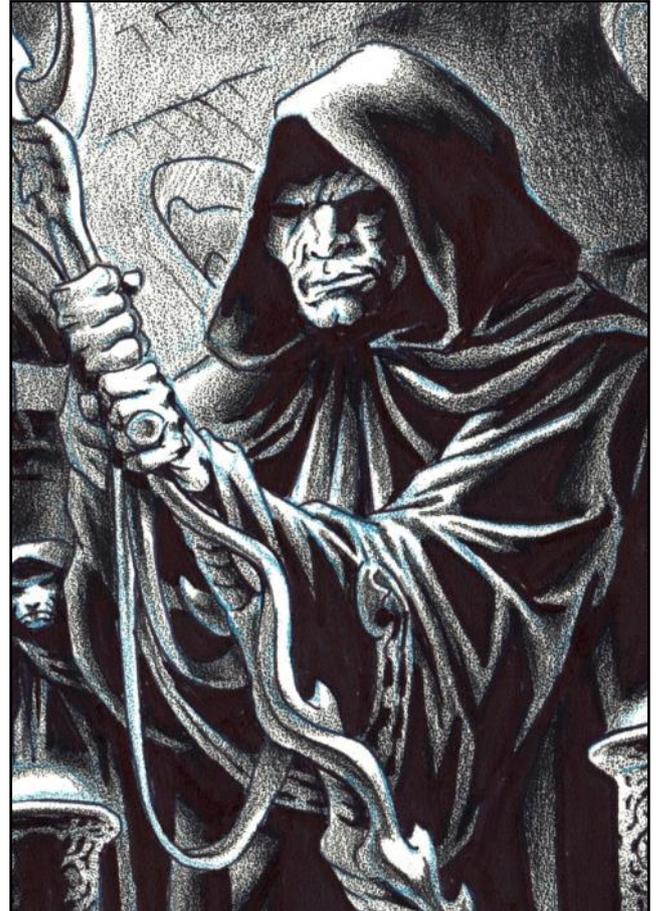
Nomads have the following cultural traits:

Ability Adjustment: +2 to Dexterity

Proud: Iron Will as bonus feat.

Unpredictable: The character gains a «wild card» feat. As a standard action, the character can select any feat for which he meets the prerequisites. The selected feat remains active for the rest of the day. After the character rests for eight hours, the wild card feat slot resets to empty.

Bowlegged: Base land speed 20 ft.



Civilized

Savages and nomads eventually gather together to cultivate the land, build great cities, develop trade, and study medicine, mathematics and languages. In the civilized lands dwell noble knights, wise kings, and learned sages — as well as greedy merchants and cunning thieves.

Civilized people have the following cultural traits:

Ability Adjustment: +2 to one ability score:

Civilized characters get a +2 bonus to one ability score of their choice at creation to represent their versatile nature.

Educated: Gain 1 extra feat and 4 extra skill points at 1st level, and 1 extra skill point at each additional level.

Frail: Civilized people have a -2 penalty to saving throws against poison and disease.

Enlightened

A few great civilizations rise above others and gain half-mythical status. Learned beyond normal men, people of enlightened cultures are builders of cyclopean pyramids and towers that pierce the skies. Their magnificent buildings can last forever, and likewise the flesh of the enlightened ones can withstand the passage of time like no other mortals.

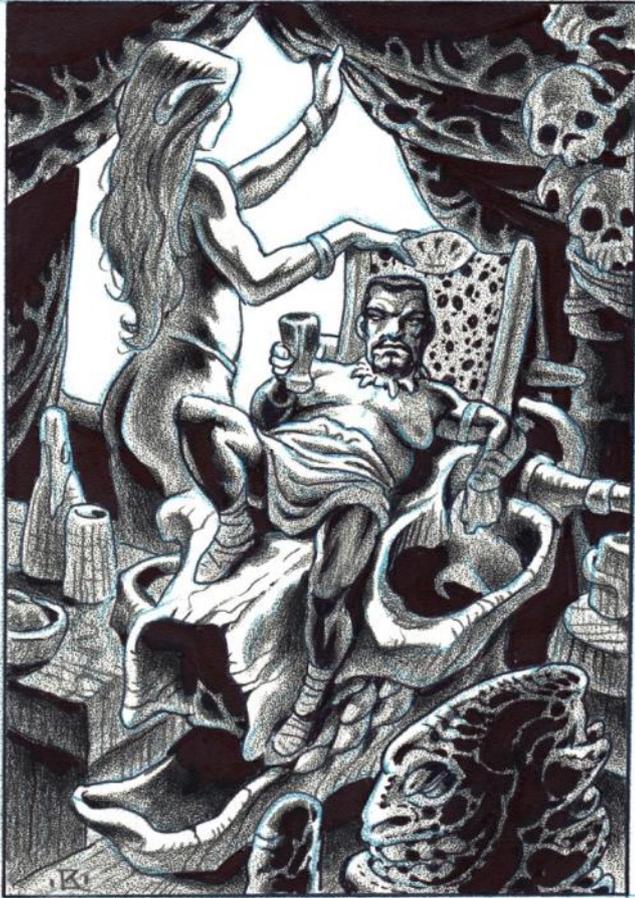
Enlightened people have the following cultural traits:

Ability Adjustment: +2 to Wisdom

Uncanny: Once per day, the enlightened can re-roll any dice roll, but must keep the second result, regardless of the outcome. Also, enlightened characters who reach at least 2nd level before the normal human Middle Age (35 years) gain longevity and use the following age categories instead: Middle Age (100 years), Old (200 years), Venerable (300 years), Maximum Age (300 + 3d100 years).

Expert Builder: Enlightened ones receive a +2 bonus on Perception checks to potentially notice unusual stonework, such as traps and hidden doors located in stone walls or floors. They receive a check to notice such features whenever they pass within 10 feet of them, whether or not they are actively looking.

Conceited: Too confident in their own abilities, enlightened ones often underestimate their enemies. They suffer a -4 penalty to Initiative checks.



Decadent

Great civilizations reach their peak and eventually start to decline. Such fallen empires are ruled by jaded nobles, corrupt priests and wicked slave-traders. Demon-worship, human sacrifice and drug abuse is all too common in these cultures.

Decadent people have the following cultural traits:

Ability Adjustment: +2 to Charisma

Insidious: +2 bonus to Bluff, Knowledge and Stealth checks, and an additional +1d6 of sneak attack damage if the character has the sneak attack class ability.

Arcane Adept: Add +1 to the DC of any saving throw when casting spells.

Corrupt: -2 penalty to Will saving throws.



Degenerate

The last survivors of decadent civilizations start to feud over dwindling resources, or are driven away by stronger cultures. Fleeing into the wilderness, or deep underground beneath their ruins, they start to inbreed and devolve into something no longer entirely human. Degenerates may outwardly resemble savages, but they carry the evil taint of fallen empires.

Degenerates have the following cultural traits:

Ability Adjustment: +2 to Constitution

Nocturnal: Degenerates can see twice as far as normal humans in conditions of dim light.

Ferocious: Once per day, when a degenerate is brought below 0 hit points but not killed, he can fight on for one more round as if disabled. At the end of his next turn, unless brought to above 0 hit points, he immediately falls unconscious and begins dying.

Unwholesome: Degenerates always have a physical deformity or a mental illness, caused by inbreeding, that sets them apart from other humans. This unwholesomeness can never be fully concealed. Degenerates suffer a -4 penalty on Bluff and Diplomacy checks (except when interacting with other degenerates), and the initial reaction of other cultural archetypes will never be better than Unfriendly.



The following archetypes from the APG are appropriate for druids of Xoth: Aquatic Druid, Arctic Druid, Blight Druid, Cave Druid, Desert Druid, Jungle Druid, Mountain Druid, Plains Druid, Swamp Druid, and animal shamans, such as Bear Shaman, Eagle Shaman, Lion Shaman, Serpent Shaman, or Wolf Shaman. In addition, this book includes the Witchdoctor archetype.

Fighter: Fighters fill the ranks of armies and mercenary companies in the lands of Susrah, Khazistan, Yar-Ammon, Zadj, Taraam, Nabastis, and elsewhere. They are expertly trained in the art of war and include swordsmen, archers, pikemen, and cavalry. Nobles are often of the fighter class. Occasionally, fighters and mercenaries abandon the army and turn to a life of banditry along with rogues.

The following archetypes from the APG are appropriate for fighters of Xoth: Archer, Free Hand Fighter, Mobile Fighter, Phalanx Soldier, Polearm Master, Roughrider, Savage Warrior, Shielded Fighter, Two-Handed Fighter, Two-Weapon Warrior, and Weapon Master.

Monk: While monks are quite rare in the West, they are common in the mysterious lands of the East, such as Laksha, Ghoma, Azjan and Taikang. Some travel across the ocean or overland to the West, either as lone seekers of wisdom, or as agents on a secret mission from their monastic order. Some cities in the West even have secret underground temples dedicated to the strange Eastern philosophies.

The following archetypes from the APG are appropriate for monks of Xoth: Drunken Master, Hungry Ghost Monk, Ki Mystic, Monk of the Empty Hand, Monk of the Four Winds, Monk of the Healing Hand, Monk of the Lotus, Monk of the Sacred Mountain, Weapon Adept, Zen Archer.

Paladin: Paladins do not exist in the World of Xoth. The cavalier class from the APG fills the paladin's role as valiant, mounted knight.

Ranger: Rangers of Xoth are men and women who thrive in the savage wildernesses, from the dark jungles of Yalotha and Mazania to the scorching deserts of Yar-Ammon and Khazistan. Many are nomads who can quickly travel vast distances on their horses and camels. The ranger class is also suitable for lone hunters, assassins and slayers.

Special Rules: When selecting «Humanoid (human)» as a favored enemy, rangers of Xoth must also specify a culture (see the Cultures of Xoth chapter). The favored enemy bonuses apply only to members of that culture. Rangers can have multiple cultures as favored enemies.

The following archetypes from the APG are appropriate for rangers of Xoth: Beast Master, Guide, Horse Lord, Infiltrator, Skirmisher, Spirit Ranger, and Urban Ranger. In addition, this book includes the Amazon and Slaver archetypes.

Rogue: Every city or town of some size, from the slaver-fortress of Al-Qazir to thousand-columned Achad of the Taraamites, is filled with thieves and assassins, gamblers, kidnapers, and lotus-traders. Plains and mountains are plagued by bandits, slavers and highwaymen, and pirates and reavers are the scourge of the seas; the latter even have their own «kingdom» centered on the impregnable sea-citadel of Khora.

The following archetypes from the APG are appropriate for rogues of Xoth: Acrobat, Burglar, Cutpurse, Poisoner, Rake, Scout, Sniper, Spy, Swashbuckler, Thug, and Trapsmith. In addition, this book includes the Torturer archetype.

Sorcerer: The sorcerer class does not exist in the World of Xoth, at least not for the human races. There may be some prehuman races or unique creatures that have innate sorcerous abilities similar to sorcerers.

Wizard: The wizard class does not exist in the World of Xoth. The witch class from the APG fills the wizard's role as arcane spellcaster.

Additional Classes

The base classes from the APG have the following characteristics in the World of Xoth:

Alchemist: In every city in the World of Xoth, there are individuals who dabble in alchemy, creating potions, powders, and explosives. But the real masters of this art are those that supply the raw materials; the Biramites, a sub-tribe of the Khazrajites, roam the lands west of Jairan and harvest resins from rare plants, mine the pits of Naphat for its black viscous liquid, and extract various salts from dry river beds in the desert.

The Biramites are traders of myrrh (the Yar-Amonites purchase it for use in mummification), frankincense (used in the rituals of all cults), bitumen (used for waterproofing seagoing vessels anywhere from Zadj to Nabastis), and naphtha (the main component of alchemists' hurled bombs). The myrrh and frankincense provided by the Biramites is also used in healing potions and medicine.

Special Rules: Alchemists of the Biramite nomad tribe gain the Infusion discovery as a bonus discovery, representing their use of herbs, plants and incense to create balms and powders that others can use.

Cavalier: Mounted knights in heavy armor are found in particular in the lands of Lamu, Taraam and Khazistan, where they are commonly used as shock troops and imperial bodyguards.

Inquisitor: The Inquisitor class does not exist in the World of Xoth.

Oracle: The Oracle class does not exist in the World of Xoth, but the mechanics of the class are used in the new Cultist class, detailed in this book.

Summoner: The Summoner class does not exist in the World of Xoth. It is possible that there are lost tomes of forbidden knowledge waiting to be rediscovered that would open this path of sorcery for humans; such summoners must use the Star-Spawn Prophet archetype (not included in this book).

Witch: Witches and warlocks are the most powerful arcane spellcasters of the World of Xoth. The men and women who take this path are few indeed, for it means making a pact with an unknown entity.

The witch's familiar, an animal far more intelligent than normal beasts, is the bond between the witch and this nameless patron. Without the familiar, the witch is powerless and unable to learn or memorize spells. Some sages even speculate that the familiar is some sort of parasite that uses the witch to grow more powerful and intelligent...

Special Rules: The witches of Xoth do not know the real identity of their patrons. Instead of selecting a bonus patron spell from a theme-based list, the witch can choose any level-appropriate spell (chosen from the cleric, druid or wizard spell lists, and subject to the game master's approval) whenever she is due to gain a new patron spell.

Cultist

«Mordiggian is old and omnipotent as death. He was worshipped in former continents, before the lifting of Zothique from out the sea. Through him, we are saved from corruption and the worm. Even as the people of other places devote their dead to the consuming flame, so we of Zul-Bha-Sair deliver ours to the god. Awful is the fane, a place of terror and obscure shadow untrod by the sun, into which the dead are borne by his priests and are laid on a vast table of stone to await his coming from the nether vault in which he dwells. No living men, other than the priests, have ever beheld him; and the faces of the priests are hidden behind masks of silver, and even their hands are shrouded, that men may not gaze on them that have seen Mordiggian.»

— Clark Ashton Smith: The Charnel God

The Cultist class is a variant character class, based on the Oracle class from the Advanced Player's Guide (APG).

A Cultist is a member of a religious organisation devoted to the worship of a powerful entity, such as a god or demon. The Cultist starts out as an acolyte, whose duties include studies of the cult's secret texts, as well as guarding the cult's temple and protecting its interests. As he rises in the ranks of the cult, the Cultist becomes a teacher of acolytes, standing at the center of rituals of worship and sacrifice. Eventually, he may become high priest of the cult, with full and undisputed control over its temples, treasures, relics and priests.

Class Features

The Cultist class is identical to the Oracle class, except for the differences described below.

Cult Membership (Ex): At 1st level, you must select a cult. Assuming that you pass the Initiation Rite (see below), you become an acolyte of the cult. As an acolyte, you receive free food and shelter in the cult's local temple, and receive a +2 circumstance bonus to Diplomacy and Intimidate checks in areas where your cult holds power, as long as it is apparent that you belong to the cult.

At 7th level, you become a cult priest. You gain Leadership as a bonus feat, with followers drawn from the cult's acolytes. You can stay as long as you want in any temple belonging to your cult, and you can also bring up to one guest per Cultist level, who will receive basic food and shelter for free. Your circumstance bonus to Diplomacy and Intimidate rises to +4.

If you leave the cult, you lose all cult-specific benefits, including Cult Spells and Cult Secrets. If you try to join another cult, you are declared anathema and no member of your old cult will rest before you are dead.

This class feature replaces Mystery.

Initiation Rite: Before you can become a proper Cultist, you must undergo the cult's initiation rite. This is different for every cult; see the cult's description for details. Until the rite has been successfully completed, you cannot use any Cultist class features, except the hit dice, base attack bonus, saving throw bonuses, weapon and armor proficiencies, and class skills that are not cult-specific.

At the end of the initiation rite, a sufficiently high-level cult leader has the option of casting a *mark of justice* spell upon you, to ensure your loyalty to the cult.

This class feature replaces Oracle's Curse.

Cult Secret: As you advance in levels as a Cultist, you learn new secrets that grant you powers and abilities. At 1st level, 3rd level, and every four levels thereafter (7th, 11th, and so on), you select a new secret from the list of cult secrets listed in the cult's description. Unless otherwise noted, activating the power of a cult secret is a standard action.

This class feature replaces Revelation.

Cult Spells: At 2nd level, and every two levels thereafter, you learn an additional spell taught by your cult. These spells are in addition to the number of spells given on the Spells Known table. They cannot be exchanged for different spells at higher levels.

This class feature is similar to the Bonus Spells feature of the Oracle's Mystery.

Cult Hierarchy (Ex): At 20th level, you become the leader of your cult, with full control of the cult's temples, treasures and relics, and you can command the lesser cult members as you desire. As a cult hierarchy, the social circumstance bonuses you receive on Diplomacy and Intimidate checks increase to +8.

If there is already a 20th-level Cultist in your cult, you must defeat him to gain your title and privileges. Likewise, you must be prepared to defend your position against those that rise in the ranks below you.

This class feature replaces Final Revelation.

Cults

Each cultist must choose a cult. For examples of cults, and their initiation rites and secrets, see the Cults of Xoth chapter.



Amazon (Ranger archetype)

«As she stood before me without moving, she might have been a woman of Rome or Pompeii, sculptured in black marble by a statuary of the Latin decadence. She wore a look that was both demure and sensual, an expression full of cryptic poise allied with great sweetness.»

— Clark Ashton Smith: The Venus of Azombeii

Amazons are female warriors hailing from a matriarchal society. Famed for their beauty, they keep men as servants and slaves. In the World of Xoth, the jungle kingdom of Mazania is a well-known home of such amazons.

Manslayer (Ex): An amazon can (and must) choose «(Human) Males» as her first favored enemy.

Terrible Charge (Su): When mounted and wearing a dress of peacock feathers, the amazon can scare her opponents' horses during a charge. This works as a *scare* spell, usable once per day (affects a minimum of 1 target). This ability replaces Wild Empathy.

Distracting Beauty (Ex): When unarmored and unencumbered, the amazon adds her Charisma bonus (if any) to her AC and her CMD. These bonuses to AC apply even against touch attacks or when the amazon is flat-footed. She loses these bonuses when she is immobilized or helpless, when she wears any armor, when she carries a shield, or when she carries a medium or heavy load. This ability replaces Hunter's Bond.

Slaver (Ranger archetype)

«The rest marched beside the staggering slaves, urging them along with shouts and curses and with long, cruel whips which brought spurts of blood at almost every blow. These slavers were fools as well as rogues, reflected Kane -- not more than half of them would survive the hardships of the trek to the coast.»

— Robert E. Howard: The Footfalls Within

Slavers are vile men and women who make a profit on the suffering of others. The infamous Slave Sultans of Al-Qazir rule an entire city-state and control the southern slave trade through vast armies of slavers, mercenaries and other minions.

Weapon and Armor Proficiencies: Add proficiency with bolas, lasso, mancatcher, net, and whip. Remove proficiency with martial two-handed melee weapons.

Skills: Replace Handle Animal with Disguise, and Knowledge (Nature) with Knowledge (Local).

Intimidating Presence (Ex): The slaver adds half his slaver level (minimum 1) to all Intimidate skill rolls. This ability replaces Wild Empathy.

Whip Mastery (Ex): At 2nd level, the slaver deals lethal damage and can affect any AC with a normal whip. At 6th level, the slaver does not provoke attacks of opportunity when he uses a whip. At 10th level, the slaver threatens 5 feet with a whip. At 14th level, the slaver threatens 10 feet with a whip. At 18th level, the slaver threatens 15 feet with a whip. This ability replaces Combat Style Feats.

Player's Guide to the World of Xoth

Spells: The slaver uses the following spell list, which replaces the normal ranger spell list.

1st - *alarm, animal messenger, cause fear, command, disguise self, entangle, keen senses, longstrider, tireless pursuit*

2nd - *bloodhound, darkness, daze monster, hold person, hunter's eye, scare, snare, spike growth, whispering wind*

3rd - *crushing despair, dispel magic, fear, lesser geas, glibness, scrying, slow, tireless pursuers*

4th - *dominate person, hold monster, locate creature, modify memory, nondetection, sleepwalk*

Spymaster (Bard archetype)

«*Wei Chung-hsien*», he explained, *'is an honored eunuch and advisor of the munificent Wan Li. All unworthy, I speak the names of such great men. The home of Wei Chung-hsien is in the province here, and it is said he is head of the spies of the Dragon Throne, besides being one of the clouds of Heaven. He has the trust of Wan Li -- a mighty eunuch.'*»

— Harold Lamb: *The Star of Evil Omen*

Found in the cities and courts of every civilized and decadent land, the spies and spymasters are masters of diplomacy as well as deceit.

Web of Intrigue (Ex): The spymaster has a vast network of contacts, spies and informants that he can call upon for information as well as favors. The benefits he can gain are similar to NPC Boons (see the Game Mastery Guide). The spymaster can attempt to gain a boon up to once per month per bard class level. The GM sets a DC (typically between 10 and 30, depending on the situation and the attitude of the NPC) against which the spymaster rolls a Charisma check and adds his class level. Success means that the boon is granted, and the spymaster must work out the exact details with the Game Master. This ability replaces Bardic Performance.

Bearer of the Scorpion Chalice (Ex): The spymaster has a bonus on saving throws against poison equal to half his bard class level. Spymasters never accidentally poison themselves when using or applying poison. This ability replaces Versatile Performance.

Keen Mind (Ex): The spymaster gains a +4 bonus on saving throws made against enchantment effects. This ability replaces Well-Versed.

Temptress (Bard archetype)

«*Her features were regular as a white woman's, and her speech was not that of a common wench. Yet she was barbaric, in the open lure of her smile, in the gleam of her eyes, in the shameless posturing of her voluptuous body. Every gesture, every motion she made set her apart from the ordinary run of women; her beauty was untamed and lawless, meant to madden rather than to soothe, to make a man blind and dizzy, to rouse in him all the unreined passions that are his heritage from his ape ancestors.*»

— Robert E. Howard: *Black Caanan*

The temptress (or tempter) uses the power of sensuality to attract and control others. Her charm is used to get men and women to do her bidding; her seduction techniques are her weapons, as keen and deadly as any blade.

Veiled Wickedness (Ex): The temptress gains Improved Feint as a bonus feat at 1st level. This ability replaces Bardic Knowledge.

Secret Scents (Su): The temptress employs subtle perfumes that dull the minds of all nearby. All creatures within 30 feet of the temptress suffer a -2 penalty on saves against mind-affecting effects. Close associates of the temptress become immune to this effect through long-term exposure. This ability replaces Countersong.

Ecstatic Embrace (Ex): When providing long-term care via the Heal skill, the temptress doubles the normal recovery rate of hit points and ability scores. The temptress can also provide long-term care to herself. This ability replaces Versatile Performance.

Distracting Beauty (Ex): When unarmored and unencumbered, the temptress adds her Charisma bonus (if any) to her AC and her CMD. These bonuses to AC apply even against touch attacks or when the temptress is flat-footed. She loses these bonuses when she is immobilized or helpless, when she wears any armor, when she carries a shield, or when she carries a medium or heavy load. This ability replaces Well-Versed.

Delicate Flower (Ex): Attacking the temptress with a melee or ranged attack provokes an Attack of Opportunity from all allies of the temptress who threaten the attacker. This ability replaces Lore Master.

Torturer (Rogue archetype)

«*Of that which was done to Fulbra for the wicked pleasure of King Ildrac and his people, it were not well to speak fully. For the islanders of Uccastrog had designed innumerable torments, curious and subtle, wherewith to harry and excruciate the five senses; and they could harry the brain itself, driving it to extremes more terrible than madness; and could take away the dearest treasures of memory and leave unutterable foulness in their place.*»

— Clark Ashton Smith: *The Isle of Torturers*

While mercenaries, rogues and reavers know how to rape and kill, the torturer has made it his profession to keep his opponents alive and harass them with subtle torments, so terrible that most of his victims would wish for an easy death instead.

False Friend (Su): The torturer knows how to break the mind and the body, but also to temporarily repair it if need be. Once per day per four class levels (minimum once per day), the torturer may provide benefits equal to an *aid* spell to a target creature. This ability replaces Trapfinding.

Appraise Agony (Su): The torturer can judge the health condition of any creature, as per a *deathwatch* spell, usable at will. This ability replaces Evasion.

Wicked Pleasure (Ex): Once per day, by spending 10 minutes to torture a helpless creature with an Intelligence score of 3 or higher, the torturer gains a +1 bonus to damage

rolls for 10 minutes per Hit Dice of the victim. The bonus rises to +2 when the torturer reaches 6th level, to +3 when he reaches 9th level, to +4 when he reaches 12th level, to +5 at 15th, and to +6 at 18th level. This ability replaces Trap Sense.

Torment of Oblivion (Su): By torturing a helpless target for 1 hour per Hit Dice of the creature, the torturer can attempt to alter the victim's memories, as per the *modify memory* spell (with caster level equal to torturer class level). In addition to any other effect inflicted, the torturer can also choose to eliminate the victim's memory of being tortured, if so desired. This ability replaces Uncanny Dodge.

Torment of Madness (Su): By torturing a helpless target for 1 day per Hit Dice of the creature, the torturer can attempt to inflict madness upon the victim, as per the *insanity* spell (with caster level equal to torturer class level). This ability replaces Improved Uncanny Dodge.

Witchdoctor (Druid archetype)

«My brother had not painted a skull black for you and hurled it into the fire that burns for ever on Gullah's black altar. He had not whispered your name to the black ghosts that haunt the uplands of the Dark Land. But a bat has flown over the Mountains of the Dead and drawn your image in blood on the white tiger's hide that hangs before the long hut where sleep the Four Brothers of the Night. The great serpents coil about their feet and the stars burn like fire-flies in their hair.»

— Robert E. Howard: Beyond the Black River

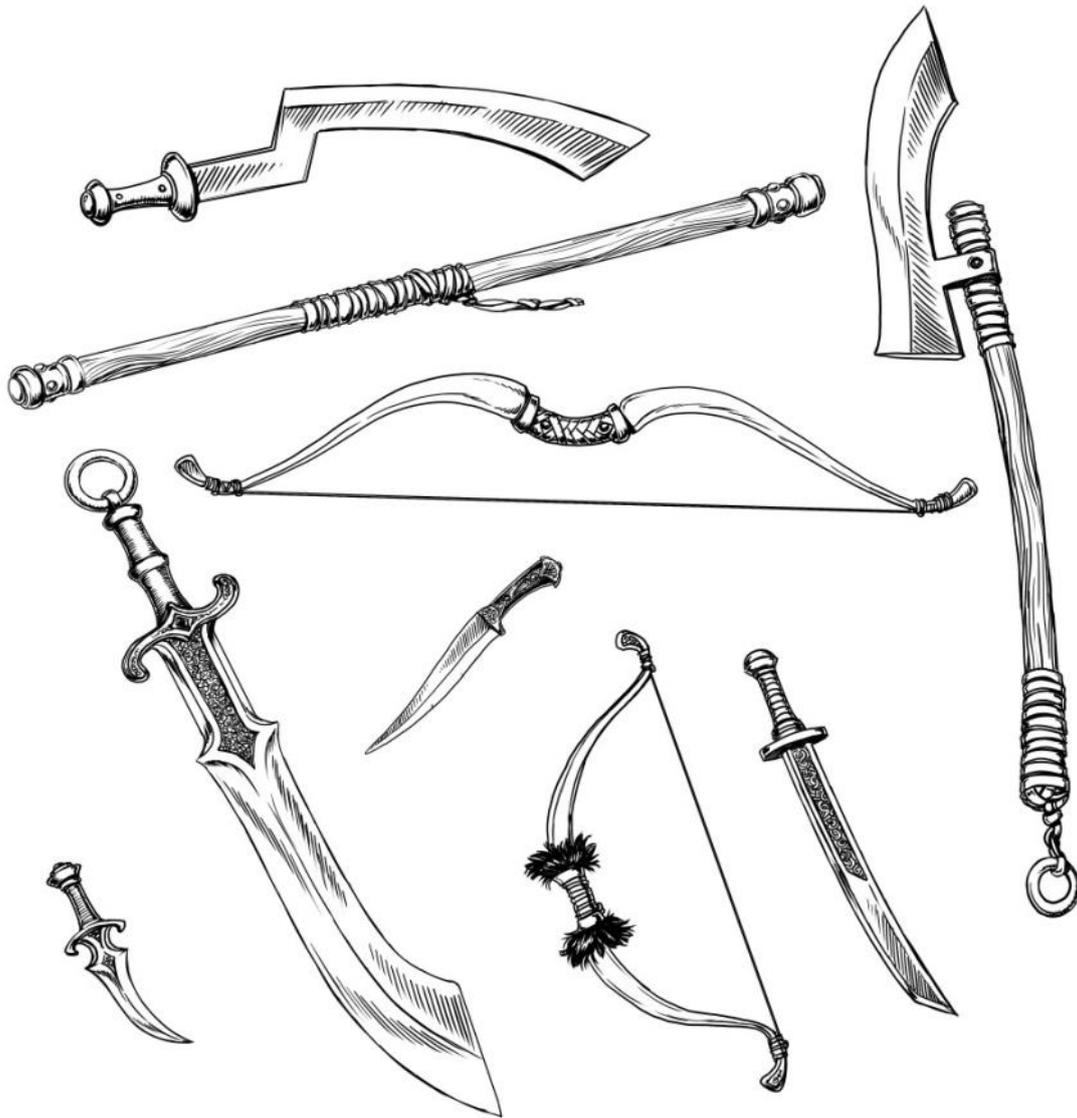
Among savage tribes, from the frozen wastes of the north to the steaming jungles of the south, the witch-doctor speaks with ancestor spirits and spirits of the mountains, commands animals and the souls of the dead, and curses his enemies with powerful juju. He declares taboos and crafts masks and drums to terrify his enemies; he beseeches the powerful beast-gods of the wilderness for aid; and he knows the secrets of strange herbs and deadly poisons.

Protection from Spirits (Su): The witchdoctor adds *hide from undead* to his spell list. This ability replaces Wild Empathy.

Will of the Ancestors (Su): The witchdoctor adds *speak with dead*, *bestow curse* and *remove curse* to his spell list as 3rd level spells. This ability replaces Resist Nature's Lure.

Shamanism (Su): The witchdoctor adds one spell from the necromancy school (chosen from the cleric, wizard or witch spell lists) to his spell list for each spell level the witchdoctor is able to cast spells from. This ability replaces Wild Shape.

Fetish Mask (Su): By crafting and wearing a horrid mask, the witchdoctor can perform songs, dances or speeches in front of large crowds and affect them as per the *enthrall* spell, usable at will. This ability replaces A Thousand Faces.



Money and Wealth

The economy of the World of Xoth is based on copper, silver, and gold coins. Each country has its own names and shapes for these coins.

Money-changers do a brisk business, but coins from neighbouring realms are usually accepted at least in the cities. In uncivilized areas, bartering with livestock, slaves, ivory, gems, and similar items is more common than using coins.

Iron weapons are the campaign standard, and are used by most cultural groups. The exceptions are the Zadjites, who craft superior steel weapons; the ancient Yar-Ammonites, who wield archaic weapons of bronze; and the people of the jungle kingdoms, who fashion weapons primarily from wood, bone, or flint.

Swords of Xoth tend not to be straight, but curved – every blade longer than a short sword is always bent; the weapons of the barbarian Tharag Thulans being the only exception to this rule. It is possible to wield some of the swords of Xoth with both hands, but they are mainly intended to be used with just one, and no swords exist intending mainly two-handed use. The most common types of armor are chain, lamellar, and scale; brigandine and plate exist but are fairly rare. With the possible exception of distant Taikang, crossbows are unknown, but all other types of bows see widespread use.

New Weapons

The following weapons are new and particular to the World of Xoth. Some are regional items, produced in one region but due to their excellent craftsmanship or unique properties are often purchased or stolen by foreigners, finding their way into far-away lands. Outside of their native region, the asking price might be considerably higher than the listed cost.

Axe, Elephant: Two-handed exotic weapon (melee); cost 50 gp; damage 1d12 (M); critical 20/x3; weight 25 lbs.; type: slashing. This is a huge axe with a crescent-shaped blade, used by the warriors of Azimba to hamstring elephants. It can also be used with devastating effect against lesser foes, of course. Some ivory-hunters among the Zadjites also carry these weapons. The elephant axe has reach; the wielder can strike opponents 10 feet away with it, but cannot use it against an adjacent foe.

Dagger, Curved: Light simple weapon (melee); cost 4 gp; damage 1d4 (M); critical 18-20/x2; range increment —; weight 1 lbs.; type: piercing or slashing. Also known as the *jambiya* or *khanjar*, this weapon is favored by nomads and cultists alike. It usually comes with a curved scabbard, sometimes inlaid with silver, gold, or ivory. The curved dagger is produced primarily in Jairan and Khazistan. It cannot be used as a ranged weapon.

Dagger, Stabbing: Light simple weapon (melee); cost 4 gp; damage 1d4 (M); critical 20/x3; range increment 15 ft.; weight 1 lbs.; type: piercing. This slightly curved dagger, also known as the *pesh kabz*, has a massive handle but ends in a sharp point. With its good solid grip and perfect balance, warriors of Susrah and elsewhere value this dagger for its ability to pierce armor and its increased range when thrown. The *karud* is a straight-bladed variation of the *pesh kabz*, with similar statistics.

Knife, Ikuna: One-handed martial weapon (melee); cost 6 gp; damage 1d6 (M); critical 20/x4; range increment 10 ft.; weight 6 lbs.; type: slashing. The name of this heavy sword-knife is something of a misnomer, since they are in fact iron blades from an unknown civilization that predates the Ikunas by several centuries. The weapons are highly prized among the savage Ikunas, who have not yet mastered the art of forging metal weapons, but who occasionally find these knives in ancient ruins in the Hills of the Dead.

Longbow, Susrahnite: Two-handed exotic weapon (ranged); cost 125 gp; damage 1d10 (M); critical 20/x3; range increment 120 ft.; weight 4 lbs.; type: piercing. The archers of Susrah are famed for their mighty composite longbows, which can kill a man from great range. All Susrahnite longbows have Strength ratings.

Scimitar, Great: Two-handed exotic weapon (melee); cost 75 gp; damage 2d6 (M); critical 19-20/x2; weight 8 lbs.; type: slashing. Also known as the *tulwar* or *kilij*, this mighty curved sword is frequently used by palace guards, eunuchs, and officers of Khazistan and Zadj. The great scimitar grants an additional +2 bonus to opposed rolls when attempting to sunder an opponent's weapon or shield.

Shortbow, Khazistani: Two-handed exotic weapon (ranged); cost 100 gp; damage 1d6 (M); critical 18-20/x2; range increment 70 ft.; weight 2 lbs.; type: piercing. This small but powerful weapon is wielded by the horsemen of Khazistan, as well as the nomads of the Khazraj clans. All Khazistani shortbows have Strength ratings.

Staff, Long: Two-handed simple weapon (melee); cost —; damage 1d6 (M); critical 20/x2; weight 4 lbs.; type: bludgeoning. The long staff has reach; the wielder can strike opponents 10 feet away with it, but cannot use it against an adjacent foe.

Sword, Sickle: One-handed martial weapon (melee); cost 20 gp; damage 1d8 (M); critical 19-20/x2; weight 7 lbs.; type: slashing. A shallow-curved blade, the sickle sword or *khopesh* is an ancient weapon used first and foremost in Yar-Ammon, as well as certain parts of Susrah. The hooked shape of a sickle sword provides the wielder with a +2 bonus on opposed attack rolls when attempting to disarm an opponent (including the roll to keep the user from being disarmed if he fails to disarm his opponent).

New Armors

The following armors are new. As for the new weapons listed above, many of these armors are regional variants, but are less often found in foreign lands than regional weapons. The asking price outside the native region may still be much higher than the listed cost, due to the trophy value of such items.

Fur Armor: Light armor; cost 3 gp; armor bonus 1; maximum Dex bonus 8; armor check penalty 0; arcane spell failure chance 5%; speed 30 ft./30 ft.; weight 5 lbs. This armor, while no more than a heavy fur cloak, still provides some measure of protection against blows. It is a very common item, worn by northern barbarians, Khazistani horsemen, Zorabi hillmen and Ikuna savages, and others.

Crocodile Hide Armor: Light armor; cost 35 gp; armor bonus 4; maximum Dex bonus 4; armor check penalty -3; arcane spell failure chance 20%; speed 30 ft./30 ft.; weight 25 lbs. This armor, common only in Yar-Ammon, provides medium protection yet is light and flexible.

Alchemical and Herbal Items

Characters with the appropriate Craft skills can create quasi-magical alchemical items such as alchemical powders and herbal drugs. Such items require time, money, rare ingredients, and a properly-equipped laboratory to craft.

Powders

The following powders can be created in an alchemical laboratory. Powders can be thrown up to 20 feet from the wielder. The dust spreads in a 20-foot radius cloud, affecting all creatures within the area.

Berserking-Powder: This blue-white powder causes madness. Creatures who fail a Fortitude save (DC 15) enter a rage (as per the barbarian class ability) and attack the nearest creature for 1d6 rounds. Craft (alchemy) DC: 25. Market Price: 400 gp.

Blinding-Powder: This thick black dust causes temporary blindness. Creatures who fail a Fortitude save (DC 15) are blinded for 3d6 rounds. Craft (alchemy) DC: 15. Market Price: 500 gp.

Dreaming-Powder: This pale yellow powder causes hallucinations and strange visions. Creatures who fail a Fortitude save (DC 15) are affected as per a *confusion* spell for 1d8 rounds. Craft (alchemy) DC: 20. Market Price: 350 gp.

Fire-Powder: This deep red powder ignites upon contact with air, and is therefore always kept in some kind of container, made from glass, ivory or clay. The explosion causes 5d4 points of damage (Reflex DC 15 for half) to all affected creatures. Craft (alchemy) DC: 15. Market Price: 300 gp.

Smoke-Powder: A sooty, grey powder that obscures all sight, including darkvision, beyond 5 feet. A creature 5 feet away has concealment (attacks have a 20% miss chance). Creatures farther away have total concealment (50% miss chance, and the attacker cannot use sight to locate the target). The cloud dissipates in 2d4 rounds. Craft (alchemy) DC: 15. Market Price: 100 gp.

Herbal Drugs

The following herbal drugs can be prepared from natural plants using the Craft (herbalism) skill. Herbal drugs are treated as a special form of poison that have beneficial effects but require saving throws against the harmful side effects. Ability damage caused by such herbs does not begin to heal naturally until after the (beneficial) effects of the drug wear off. At the DM's option, repeated use of any of these drugs may cause addiction.

Grey Desert Lotus: The powdered leaves of the Grey Lotus is a popular drug among the Khazraj nomads of the al-Khazi Desert. A creature that drinks a concoction of water mixed with the powdered leaves gains a +2 alchemical bonus to Strength for 1d3 hours, but must make a Fortitude save (DC 15) or suffer 2 points of Wisdom damage. Another save must be made 1 minute later, and if failed the creature becomes nervous and skittish (treat as shaken). Craft (herbalism) DC: 20. Market Price: 75 gp.

Red Lotus of Ghoma (Ghoma-Weed): This herb, with its characteristic red leaves, is calming both for the body and the mind. It is harvested by ascetic priests in the tropical realm of Ghoma. A creature that chews on the red leaves gains the benefits of the Diehard feat as well as a +4 alchemical bonus to saving throws against fear for 1d4 hours, but must make a Fortitude save (DC 18) or suffer 2 points of Dexterity damage. Another save must be made 1 minute later, and if failed the creature becomes nervous and skittish (treat as shaken). Craft (herbalism) DC: 25. Market Price: 75 gp.

Silver Lotus: Found only in the dark depths of certain caves on the Silver Lotus Isles in the Eastern Ocean, guarded by hostile pygmies, the fragile leaves of this lotus are destroyed by direct exposure to sunlight. This potent herb induces sleep, grants pleasurable dreams (but sometimes strange visions and nightmares), and for magic-users, it boosts and restores magical power. A creature that inhales the smoke produced by burning the dried and crushed silver leaves must make a Fortitude save (DC 20) or suffer 2 points of Wisdom damage. Another save must be made 1 minute later, and if failed the creature falls unconscious for 1d6 hours. Craft (herbalism) DC: 30. Market Price: 100 gp.

Other Alchemical and Herbal Items

Barafa-Grape: Found only in the deep jungles of the south, the bright yellow berries of the barafa-tree can be used to coat blades and arrow-tips. Anyone struck by such weapons must make a Fortitude save (DC 18) or be *slowed* for 1 minute. Like other poisons, a new dose must be re-applied to the weapon whether the saving throw fails or not. Craft (herbalism) DC: 20. Market Price: 200 gp.

Green Fire-Resin: This sticky resin is prepared from several plants and mixed with secret alchemical ingredients first discovered by the priests of Yar-Ammon. Any torch soaked with the resin burns three times longer than a normal torch, but gives off a weird green light. One dose is enough to treat 10 torches. Craft (alchemy) DC: 15. Market Price: 2 sp.

Khanquah-Fungi: Picked from the sheer cliff walls of the Zorab mountains, this fungus is the bane of sorcerers when dried and mixed with blood to produce a thin, clear soup. Spellcasters who imbibe this concoction must make a Fortitude save (DC 22) or be unable to concentrate properly for 2d8+8 hours, which effectively prevents the affected creature from casting spells. This herbal brew is often force-fed to captured sorcerers, or served to master wizards by ambitious apprentices. Craft (herbalism) DC: 25. Market Price: 500 gp.

Purple Leaves of Uthjar: The utility of this rare plant is well-known far outside its native realm, but has never been successfully cultivated elsewhere. A creature that chews on the purple leaf gains a +4 alchemical bonus to saving throws against mind-affecting magic for 3d10 minutes. Craft (herbalism) DC: 25. Market Price: 150 gp.

uncharted waters. Neither should *dimension door* and other short-range teleportation spells be allowed, because they make it too easy to circumvent defenses and penetrate castle and city walls. In a low-magic world, there are simply no adequate countermeasures against such spells.

Life-Restoring Magic: Death is final, and characters cannot count on being *raised* or *resurrected*. In the extremely rare cases where someone is brought back from the dead, it will always be through black magic (probably requiring blood sacrifice), and always as some hideous mockery of their former selves, whether a soulless zombie, wizened mummy, or restless, mad spirit.

Powerful Low-Level Divinations: *Detect magic* might seem innocent enough, but in the hands of power-gamers it tends to be used as a “radar” to scan areas for anything interesting (such as magical items or traps). The game plays better if there is no such clear distinction of what is magical and what is not. *Detect evil* does not apply to a world without alignments. *Comprehend languages* is a mere 1st-level spell, but allows you to understand all written languages. That might not seem very important when dungeon-crawling, but if such a spell exists, there is little point in learning ancient and forgotten languages, and the role-playing aspects of trying to decipher ancient grimoires are lost.

Shapeshifting: No spellcasters are able to change shape (via *alter self*, *polymorph*, *elemental body*, *beast shape*, *shapechange*, *enlarge person*, etc.) in the World of Xoth.

It is said that the Ur-Druids, priests of the ancient goddess Xu-Neb-Ur-Hat, were able to take on a variety of shapes, but modern druids do not have the wild shape ability.

“Superhero” Spells: Flying (through the *levitate*, fly or wind walk spells) and turning invisible (through *invisibility* and *improved invisibility*) or gaseous (via *gaseous form*) are examples of powers rarely seen in sword and sorcery stories. These abilities are especially powerful (and therefore unbalancing) in low-magic settings, where there are few countermeasures available.

Magical items that duplicate these types of spells should also be removed from the game, of course.

Note that skills become more important for characters when magic spells are restricted. Skills such as Climb, Heal, Sense Motive, Swim, Survival, and the various Knowledge skills are good substitutes for many of the spells listed above.

Restricting Magical Items

Characters should rely on their abilities, not their equipment, which could be destroyed, lost or stolen at any time. In stark contrast to a high fantasy campaign, magical weapons, armor and wondrous items in a sword and sorcery setting should be extremely rare. The very concept that these items can be created through a mechanistically simple process seriously undermines the wondrousness of magic. In a typical campaign using the core rules, the rulebook is nothing more than a shopping catalogue of items, since everything has a price and can be bought or manufactured by the player characters.

In the World of Xoth, most permanent magical items are unique, many being left-overs from earlier ages when spellcasters were presumably more powerful. All such items should have evocative names and detailed background stories. For example, a *gem of brightness* might be called the *Jewel of Lar-Karakshat*; it will probably be the only gem of its kind in the campaign world and finding it will be an adventure in itself. In short, treat permanent magic items as if they were artifacts or relics in high fantasy campaigns. Such items will never be for sale.

As a consequence, item creation feats are not available to characters. The only exception is Craft Potion and Scribe Scroll.

Summoning Spells

Summoning spells are modified as follows in the World of Xoth:

The only creature types that can be summoned with *summon monster* or *summon nature's ally* are animals, vermin, and elementals.

Summoned animals must always be appropriate to the current environment and climate (for example, summoning a tiger in an arctic climate is not possible), and no animals can be summoned inside a wholly «artificial» (man-made) structure.

Vermin can be summoned anywhere.

Summoning elementals requires the presence of a certain amount of elemental material: For air elementals, there must be at least a Moderate wind force in the area. For earth elementals, there must be natural soil, sand or dust, not rocks or worked stone or metal. For fire elementals, there must be a fire larger than a torch, such as a brazier or a bonfire. For water elementals, there must be a pool, river or lake.

Outsiders can be summoned via the *planar ally* and *planar binding* spells. In the World of Xoth, outsiders are not demons and devils as described in the core rules, but abominations from the black gulfs of the cosmos.

The Sign of Xoth

Since there is no alignment system in the World of Xoth, *protection from evil* is called *protection from witchcraft*, and is also known as the *sign of Xoth*.

The spell is identical to the description in the rulebook, except replace all instances of «evil creatures» with «magic-using creatures and supernatural creatures». Note that any spellcaster is a «magic-using creature» under this definition. A «supernatural creature» is a creature that has one or more supernatural (Su) or spell-like (Sp) abilities.

Magic circle against evil is called *magic circle against witchcraft* (or simply *magic circle* or *circle of Xoth*).

New Spells

Altar-Fire

Enchantment (Compulsion) [Mind-Affecting]

Level: Cultist 4

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./level)

Area: All allies and foes within a 60-ft.-radius burst centered on the altar-fire

Duration: 2 rounds/level

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell brings into being a small pillar of green or purple flame that burns without consuming the surface it emits from. As long as they stay within the fire's 60-foot radius, the caster and his allies gain a +2 luck bonus on attack rolls, weapon damage rolls, saves, and skill checks, while each of his foes in the same area takes a -2 penalty on such rolls.

The altar-fire cannot be distinguished by normal means, but can be negated with a dispel magic spell.

Material Component: A pinch of flammable herbs.

Black Fist of Ptahaana

Transmutation

Level: Cultist 3

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Target: One humanoid creature

Duration: Concentration (see text)

Saving Throw: Will negates; see text

Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell, originally invented for the sacrificial blood-rites of sunken Ptahaana, uses weak telekinetic force to slowly rip the victim's heart out of his chest.

While the caster concentrates, the target suffers a heart attack, becoming paralyzed and freezing in place. It is aware and breathes normally but cannot take any actions, even speech. The target suffers 1d4 points of damage per round of excruciating pain.

Each round on its turn, the target may attempt a new saving throw to end the effect. (This is a full-round action that does not provoke attacks of opportunity.)

If the target is slain by the spell, the victim's still-beating heart is transported to the caster's outstretched hand.

Curse of Double Death

Necromancy

Level: Witch 5

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Touch

Target: Living creature touched

Duration: Permanent

Saving Throw: Will negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

When cast, this spell creates a permanent necromantic bond between the caster and the target. When the caster dies, whether from old age, disease or violence or by any other means, the target immediately also dies, apparently from the same cause as the caster. The reverse is not true, so if the target creature dies, the caster is unaffected.

This spell can only affect a single target. If the caster attempts to cast the spell on another creature, the spell no longer affects the previous target.

Curse of Green Decay

Transmutation

Level: Witch 4

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./level)

Target: One living humanoid creature

Duration: 1 round/3 levels

Saving Throw: Fortitude negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

This loathsome spell slowly turns the victim's body into a quivering mass of green slime. If the target fails the saving throw, he begins to suffer 1d4 points of Constitution damage per round while his flesh is devoured. If the victim's Constitution score reaches zero, he dies. The decay can be stopped by a *dispel magic* or *remove curse* spell.

Drums of Panic

Enchantment (Compulsion) [Mind-Affecting]

Level: Druid 4

Components: V, S, F

Casting Time: 1 round

Range: Personal

Area: All enemies in a 30-ft. radius burst, centered on the caster

Duration: Concentration (maximum 1 round/level)

Saving Throw: See text

Spell Resistance: Yes

To cast *drums of panic*, the caster must have at least one rank in the Perform (drums) skill. All applicable targets within 30 feet of the caster must make a Will save with a DC equal to the result of a Perform (drums) check or become panicked for 1d4 rounds.

If a target successfully saves, the caster can continue to play the drums for a maximum of 1 round per level, re-rolling the Perform (drums) check and requiring a new Will save from those within the area each round.

Focus: A set of masterwork drums.

Fertility Charm

Transmutation

Level: Druid 1

Components: V, S, F

Casting Time: 10 minutes

Range: Touch

Target: Adult creature touched

Duration: 1 hour/level

Saving Throw: Fortitude negates (harmless)

Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

For the duration of the spell, fertility charm allows any adult subject to father children (if male) or become pregnant (if female), regardless of physical condition, old age, or disease. The spell works on any creature capable of sexual reproduction, be it humanoid, animal, or other. Though the spell makes conception possible, it does not guarantee it or a live birth.

As a side effect, the subject also gains the free use of the Endurance feat for the duration of the spell.

Focus: A small, anatomically correct carving representing the subject's species and gender.

Hand of Revelations

Divination

Level: Cultist 1

Components: S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Touch

Targets: One touched object

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

By simply touching the covers of a closed book or a rolled-up scroll, the caster of this spell can read the contents normally. The caster must still know the language used on the written material, and he reads the contents with the same speed as if reading from a normal book. The spell triggers any spells or traps placed on a book or scroll, just as if the book had been opened.

Incantation of the Broken Limb

Necromancy

Level: Witch 2

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Target: Living creature with an internal skeleton and limbs

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: Fortitude partial

Spell Resistance: Yes

The target of the spell suffers 1d4 points of damage per level of the caster (maximum 5d4), and suffers from an arm or leg injury (caster's choice). If an arm injury, the target has a -2 penalty to all rolls that involve use of the arm (attack rolls, Swim checks, etc.). If a leg injury, the target has a -2 penalty to all rolls that involve use of the leg (Jump checks, Reflex saves, etc.). The penalties remain until all the damage caused by the spell is fully healed through either magical or mundane means.

A target who makes a successful Fortitude save takes only half damage, and does not suffer a limb injury.

Material Component: The arm or leg bone of a small animal.

Lifeleech

Necromancy

Level: Cultist 5, Witch 5

Components: V, S, XP

Casting Time: 10 minutes

Range: Touch

Target: Creature touched

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: No

Spell Resistance: No

This spell is frequently used by evil sorcerers and death priests to achieve a limited form of immortality. Casting the spell requires the sacrifice of a sentient creature of the same race as the spellcaster. The creature to be sacrificed must be helpless and/or bound while the spell is being cast.

Player's Guide to the World of Xoth

At the culmination of the spell, the caster kills the victim, and the victim's life force is transferred to the caster (or another target within touch range of the caster). The target does not age naturally for 1 month per Hit Dice or level of the creature sacrificed.

A creature slain by this spell can only be restored to life through the successful casting of a *resurrection*, *true resurrection*, *wish*, or *miracle* spell. *Raise dead* has no effect on a creature slain by the lifeleech spell.

XP Cost: 10 XP per Hit Dice of the victim.

Lover's Curse

Enchantment (Charm) [Mind-Affecting]

Level: Witch 5

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Target: One creature

Duration: Permanent

Saving Throw: Will negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

This is a reverse charm spell, causing other individuals to regard the target as a hated enemy. All Charisma checks and Charisma-based skills used by the target suffer a -10 circumstance penalty while under the influence of this spell. In addition, no NPC can have a reaction better than Indifferent toward an individual so cursed. Individuals who have a Hostile reaction usually attack the target on sight.

Raise the Ancient Lizard-Gods

Necromancy

Level: Druid 7

Components: V, S, M, XP

Casting Time: 1 day

Range: Touch

Target: One prehistoric, fossilized creature (up to 1HD per caster level)

Duration: Permanent

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

This mighty ritual animates the bones of a creature that has been in the earth for thousands or millions of years. The animated creature acquires the skeleton template. The creature obeys the commands of the caster.

Creatures created by this spell do not count against the number of undead you can create and control using *animate dead*.

Material Component: The skull and at least 20% of the bones of a prehistoric creature.

XP Cost: 2,000 XP

Snake Staff

Transmutation

Level: Cultist 5, Druid 5

Components: V, S, F

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Touch

Target: Magical or non-magical quarterstaff

Duration: 1 round/level

Saving Throw: Special (see text)

Spell Resistance: No

This disturbing spell causes the caster's staff to partially animate, transforming the head into that of a poisonous snake. A staff enchanted by this spell cannot be used as a double weapon. However, a successful hit by the snake staff inflicts 1d8 points of piercing damage and poisons the target. This poison deals 1d6 Constitution damage per round for 4 rounds. Poisoned creatures can make a Fortitude save each round to negate the damage and end the affliction.

The snake staff does not run out of venom and can be used any number of times before the spell's duration ends. *Dispelling magic* can transform the weapon back into a normal staff, but the poison is non-magical and must be treated normally. It is not possible to "milk" the staff and extract the poison for later use.

Focus: A quarterstaff.

Sorcery of the Skull

Necromancy

Level: Druid 7

Components: V, S, M, XP

Casting Time: 1 day

Effect: One skull

Duration: See text

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

By means of this grisly spell, the severed head of an opponent is enchanted by peeling off the skin and sewing up the lips and eyelids to trap and paralyze the deceased's spirit within. The skull itself is discarded, while the head is simmered in an iron pot filled with juices extracted from secret herbs until it is reduced to about half its natural size.

The shrunken head is then placed on a shelf, or worn along with other trophies in the caster's belt or necklace. Up to once per day, the caster can interrogate the enchanted head as if

using *speak with dead*. Furthermore, once per day, as a standard action, the caster can temporarily release the captured soul to do his bidding for up to 1 round per caster level. Such souls are similar to wraiths, except that they do not suffer from daylight powerlessness, and do not create spawn when killing opponents.

The enchanted head has Hardness 2 and 15 hit points. If it is destroyed, the victim's wraith-spirit is released and immediately seeks out and attacks the caster. However, a released spirit only has 10 rounds to exact its revenge before it fades and disappears to whatever hell it has been denied while being the caster's prisoner.

The spell must be cast within 3 days of the victim's death.

Material Component: The severed head of a captured enemy.

XP Cost: 1,000 XP

Soul Vulture

Conjuration (Summoning)

Level: Witch 7

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Effect: One summoned creature

Duration: 1 day/level

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

This evil spell summons an ethereal vulture that the caster can send out to attack a humanoid target. On the physical plane, the vulture attacks with its beak attack, which ignores Armor Class except for deflection, sacred, luck, divine or ability score-based AC bonuses. The attack does no damage, but drains 1d6 Wisdom on a hit. When the target is brought down to 0 Wisdom, the victim falls into a nightmare-filled sleep, and the vulture has captured a portion of his essence.

It then returns to its master and spits the essence out in the form of a worm. If the caster swallows the worm, the victim's lost Wisdom is instantly restored, however, the caster then has established a sensory link and complete control over the individual, as if the victim were subject to a *dominate person* spell.

Outside of a *wish* or *miracle* spell, the only way to reverse the control established by the spell is to remove the worm from the belly of the caster (where it otherwise remains) to be fed to the essence's owner.

The vulture pursues the target for the duration of the spell. The vulture's stats are as follows:

Ethereal Vulture: SZ M Outsider; HD 1d8+2; hp 7; Init +2 (+2 Dex); Spd 10 ft., fly 80 ft. (average); AC 14 (+1 size, +2 Dex, +1 natural); Atk +0 melee (bite, 1d4+2) and +4 melee (claws [x2], 1d3+2); SA drain 1d6 Wisdom with successful bite attack, ignore material armor; SQ incorporeal, darkvision 60 ft.; AL CE; SV Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +2; Str 14, Dex 15, Con 15,

Int 5, Wis 18, Cha 4. Skills: Listen +8, Spot +8, Survival +5. Feats: Flyby Attack, Weapon Finesse (claw, bite).

Material Component: Powdered diamond dust (worth 2,500 gp) mixed with earth from a tomb.

Sticks to Serpents

Necromancy

Level: Cultist 6, Druid 6

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Effect: 1 swarm per 4 caster levels

Duration: 1 round/level

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

This spell allows the caster to send the spirits of dead snakes into pieces of wood, bringing them to life. The caster can create 1 venomous snake swarm per 4 caster levels, provided sufficient material components are available. The caster can command the creatures as he wishes. The creatures act normally on the last round of the spell, and disappear at the end of their turn, leaving only a pile of twigs behind.

Material Component: One twig or small branch for each snake swarm animated.

Witch-Fire

Evocation

Level: Witch 1

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: See text

Target: See text

Duration: 10 minutes/level, or until discharged

Saving Throw: Reflex half

Spell Resistance: No

A small flame springs into life in one of the sorcerer's hands. It sheds a sickly green or purple light in a 20-foot radius, and dim light for an additional 20 feet.

The sorcerer can use this light as a torch for the duration of the spell. Although the sorcerer is not burned by the flame, he cannot carry weapons or items in the same hand as the witch-fire.

The caster can end the spell by hurling the flame at an opponent within 15 feet. The sorcerer hits automatically, causing 3d4 points of fire damage. The target is allowed a Reflex save for half damage.

Al-Tawir, the Ancient One, the Sleeper Beneath the Sands

Some say that Al-Tawir dwells in the black gulfs between the stars, others that he sleeps in a sealed and forbidden tomb beneath the desert sand. Al-Tawir is one of the Old Gods. The nomads hear his voice in the howling of the desert winds, and they see his face in the rage of sandstorms. He is the emptiness of the desert, associated with getting lost, with thirst and hunger, with darkness, and with sandstorms.

Initiation Rite: Gouge out your own eyes, as a sign of respect to Al-Tawir, whose true form it is forbidden to behold.

Class Skills: A cultist of Al-Tawir adds Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (Arcana) (Int) and Survival (Wis) to his list of class skills.

Cult Spells: *Unseen Servant* (2nd), *Whispering Wind* (4th), *Deeper Darkness* (6th), *Crushing Despair* (8th), *Nightmare* (10th), *Find the Path* (12th), *Control Weather* (14th), *Whirlwind* (16th), *Antipathy* (18th)

Cult Secrets: Air Barrier, Wind Sight, Dweller in Darkness, Guiding Star, Interstellar Void, Lore Keeper, Nature's Whispers, Lifesense



Belet-Lil, the Moon-Goddess of Susrah

Voluptuous mate of Baal-Khardah, and earth-mother, Belet-Lil is a goddess of fertility, revelry, and beauty. She is very popular among the Susrahmites, not least due to the large numbers of temple prostitutes found in every city.

Initiation Rite: Offer your virginity to a member or patron of the cult.

Class Skills: A cultist of Belet-Lil adds Acrobatics (Dex), Handle Animal (Cha) and Knowledge (Local) (Int) to his list of class skills.

Cult Spells: *Charm Person* (2nd), *Delay Poison* (4th), *Neutralize Poison* (6th), *Restoration* (8th), *Dominate Person* (10th), *Antilife Shell* (12th), *Heal* (14th), *Sympathy* (16th), *Dominate Monster* (18th)

Cult Secrets: Combat Healer, Mantle of Moonlight, Moonlight Bridge, Delay Affliction, Enhanced Cures, Healing Hands, Life Link, Safe Curing, Spirit Boost



Yammosh, the Sea-God of Ghazor

The greatest temple of this Susrahnite sea-god is located in the sinful port city of Ghazor, although sailors from many nations offer sacrifice to him before setting out on long ocean voyages.

Initiation Rite: Survive ritual drowning.

Class Skills: A cultist of Yammosh adds Escape Artist (Dex), Knowledge (Geography) (Int) and Swim (Str) to his list of class skills.

Cult Spells: *Touch of the Sea* (2nd), *Fog Cloud* (4th), *Water Breathing* (6th), *Black Tentacles* (8th), *Suffocation* (10th), *Control Water* (12th), *Control Weather* (14th), *Seamantle* (16th), *World Wave* (18th)

Cult Secrets: Guiding Star, Star Chart, Lore Keeper, Friend to the Animals (aquatic creatures only), Speak with Animals (aquatic creatures only), Fluid Nature, Water Sight, Thunderburst



Yaathra Yok, the Wise One

This is an elephant-headed god of the east, revered for its great strength and wisdom. Temples of the cult contain rich treasures of ivory.

Initiation Rite: Solve the Sacred Riddle before your head is crushed underfoot by an elephant.

Class Skills: A cultist of Yaathra Yok adds Appraise (Int), Knowledge (Dungeoneering) (Int) and Linguistics (Int) to his list of class skills.

Cult Spells: *True Strike* (2nd), *Calm Emotions* (4th), *Explosive Runes* (6th), *Locate Creature* (8th), *Telepathic Bond* (10th), *Legend Lore* (12th), *Vision* (14th), *Repel Metal or Stone* (16th), *Foresight* (18th)

Cult Secrets: Iron Skin, Resiliency, Life Link, Lifesense, Arcane Archivist, Brain Drain, Focused Trance, Think On It



Other Cults

Ahyada, the High God of Taraam

Ahyada is the bringer of truth and protection to the people of Taraam, and the patron of the royal house of Achad as well. He grants visions and omens to the king, which are interpreted by astrologer-priests and soothsayers. Amulets of Ahyada are said to be effective wards against demons.

Aklathu, the God of Twisted Fate

Figurines of this god, who has few temples and no priests, depict Aklathu as a deformed dwarf, whose facial features even show a hint of retardation. Many Susrahmites swear "By Aklathu's Beard!" when in trouble. This is also a god of thieves and gamblers.

Baal-Khardah, the Sun-God of Susrah

The lord of the sky, protector and judge of humankind, Baal-Khardah is a distant god, usually worshipped only by nobility. The common people tend to favor the more earthly passions of his mate, Belet-Lil. His lavish temples are filled with ram-headed statues, golden sun-discs, and sacred swords.

Ia-Azutlatl, the Blood-God of Sunken Ptahaana

The true form of Ia-Azutlatl is unknown, but he is one of the Old Gods; some even claim that he is the greatest and oldest of those ancient ones. It is known that the blood-druids of now-sunken Ptahaana worshipped him with ceremonies of mass slaughter atop their stepped pyramids of green stone. Today, his name survives only in the rituals of primitive savages and mad hierarchs.

Maggash, the Brazen God of Zhaol

Abominable are the brass idols of Maggash, the fire-god of Zhaol, and even worse are the rites of the priesthood, which include the burning of infants as sacrifice. The priests of Zhaol accept no other god than their own, and worship of other gods is strictly forbidden and punishable by death.

Maggash is sometimes depicted as a bull, or a bull-headed humanoid.

Nhakhramat, the Six-Armed Goddess

The ivory woman, said by some to be the mate of Yadar, is worshipped largely by Khazistanis who disapprove of Belet-Lil's open sensuality, which is a source of conflict between the Khazistanis and the Susrahmites.

Nwanga Zhaal, the Lord of Beasts

Known and feared across the Jungle Kingdoms, this bloodthirsty god is master of the beasts that howl at the moon. His shamans are always served by flocks of bonded animals.

Othabbhon, the Guardian of the Gates

Depicted as a horse-headed humanoid clutching a bronze key, this mysterious god is a protector of homes and vaults, as well as the guardian of secret and hidden places.

Simatala, the Ape-God of Laksha

Turbaned priests strangle sacrificial victims on the white jade altars of this grim ape-god of the east, whose cult has even begun to spread to the west.

Yadar, the Lord of Death and Secrets

The mysterious high god of the Khazistanis, Yadar, is said to live in the desert and to collect the souls of every living man and woman when they give up their final breath.

Yadar is associated with scorpions and bats. Many carry charms and amulets in the image of Yadar, said to ward against disease and violent death.

Such worship is often personal and unorganized, since the locations of Yadar's temples are generally kept secret and known only to the priests. The cult is suspected to have subterranean shrines in cities, and temples in desert ruins. The nomads stay well away from such ruins, since any who stray too close disappear without a trace.

Yibboth, the Sacred Toad of Fakhuum

Despite having its cult-centre deep within the poisoned marshes of Fakhuum, whether Yibboth is part of the true Yar-Ammonite pantheon is uncertain; some claim he is one of the Old Gods. The priests of Yibboth are reputed to worship a golden «frog-thing», along with mummified crocodiles and all manner of water lizards and giant toads.

Yot-Kamoth, the Spider-God of Lamu

The Lamurans bow before black idols of Yot-Kamoth, the monstrous eight-legged god worshipped for centuries in the mountain fastness of Lamra, the capital city. In truth, the priests of the spider-god are the royalty of Lamu, for they wield considerable influence and for a common man to resist their demands is a certain death sentence.

Zanthiss, the Great Serpent

The ancient demon-serpent of Yalotha, in some worlds known as Satha or Hassith-Kaa, is the father of various ophidian races and a master of sorcery. Zanthiss is currently believed to be confined to an extradimensional prison, or perhaps banished to a remote star, after the downfall of the serpent-empire of Yalotha.

However, cults of Zanthiss still lair in ancient temples, with pits filled with writhing serpents, giant slithering temple snakes, malachite altars stained with the blood of centuries of sacrifice, and demon-guarded vaults wherein lie hidden the lost papyri of jungle-lost Yalotha.

The Gods of Tharaq Thule

Among the gods worshipped in the cold wastes of the north are the Moon-God, the Wolf-God, and the Skull-God.

The Moon-God is served only by female priestesses; old hags and crones are respected omen-readers and oracles among the Tharagians.

The Wolf-God is a god of strength, war, and bloodlust. Tribal chieftains are often also priests of the Wolf-God.

The Skull-God is the lord of the dead and the king of ghosts; this god has no priests or followers, but each village has a hut set up with a skull-adorned altar where he is placated with offerings.

The Beast-Gods of Yar-Ammon

Until very recently, the Yar-Ammonites worshipped an ancient pantheon of beast-headed man-gods, disturbing fragments of a lost age. These gods, said to have brought knowledge and wisdom to the first civilization of Yar-Ammon, were usually depicted as humanoids with the heads of hyenas, rams, goats, vultures, and other animals. The priests of Yar-Ammon often wore masks in imitation of their gods. The cult consisted of several sub-cults, each devoted to a particular beast, although there was supposedly a secret grand hierarch controlling them all.

The ancient practices of the beast-cults were outlawed a generation ago, when the royal house of Amenti established the cult of Zothur, but there are many among the common folk who still follow the old ways.

Zothur, the First One, the Star-God of Yar-Ammon

Before his death two decades ago, the High King of Yar-Ammon instituted the worship of an (until then) unknown god, called the First One, and known variously as Zothur, Zoth-Ur, or Xoth-Ur. Taking the title of Kingpriest and Prophet of the First One, the king sent his new priests from Amenti to all the lesser cities of the land, and demanded that the old ways of beast-worship be abandoned.



Lamu, the Mountain Fastness

THE CITY OF LAMRA: In the city of Lamra, in the land of Lamu, the dreaded priests of Yot-Kamoth have built a temple to house their terrible god, which is a colossal eight-legged spider-idol, carved from the black stone of a fallen star. Great is the power of the spider-priests of Lamu, for they outnumber even the austere priestesses of Nhakhramat and the muffled priests of Yadar, and they ride as kings through the shadowed streets of Lamra.

But though the iron-fisted rule of the priests is largely uncontested, such ruthless men and women as worship Yot-Kamoth are often at war with each other, driven by ambition and power-thirst.

The cunning rule of wily old Hamadara, High Priest of Yot-Kamoth, is uncontested, but his priestly cohorts are in a constant struggle for predominance. Utilizing a extensive network of spies and informers, Hamadara keeps well abreast of temple intrigue and fuels priestly rivalries; as long as his minions are busy infighting, his position is unassailable.

Susrah, Land of Warring City-States

THE CITY OF YAATANA: There are many depraved cities in the land of Susrah, such as red-walled Zhaol where children are burned as sacrifice to Maggash the fire-god, and the cesspool of vice that is the harbour city of Ghazor.

But Yaatana, at the headwaters of the Ophrat River, is said to be the most wicked city of them all, and so all manner of debased folk flock to it, like insects attracted to a greasy torch.

This wealthy trading post along the route from the city-states of Susrah to Khazistan and Jairan in the west is noted for its sinful back alleys and nefarious inhabitants. It is a city of furtive sorcerers, strange and depraved cults, and a place where the most perverted desires can be fulfilled by the arrangements of fat merchants eager to sell anything.

The city is old and surrounded by ancient clay walls faced with colourful glazed tiles. Tarnished golden domes and marble minarets are visible beyond the walls as one approaches the city. The massive main gate is over 600 years old and receives a constant stream of visitors entering and leaving. With somewhat over 14,000 inhabitants, Yaatana has over hundred temples (and probably double that number of hidden or secret underground shrines), a dozen public bath-houses, and almost 6,000 houses, most of which are several stories high, topped with flat roofs, and decorated with elaborate friezes and intricately carved windows.

Yaatana is ruled by an elected governor, but the real power is said to be in a council of seven men drawn from the ranks of wealthy merchants, sorcerers, and high priests. The armed forces of the city are mostly comprised of mercenaries; law is enforced haphazardly and most laws are ignored as long as money from trade keeps flowing into the city. The local magistrates are notoriously corrupt and rule in favour of the biggest bribe.

In the central souk (market), a variety of goods, including meat, spices, cotton, silverware, copper, and pottery can be bargained for. There are a number of smaller, more specialized souks dealing with slaves, weapons and drugs scattered throughout the city.



THE CITY OF GHAZOR: The harbour city of Ghazor is located strategically at the mouth of the Ophrat River. It has a large navy of galleys, which is used to protect the sea lanes from the raids of the sea reavers of Khora, as well as in occasional clashes with the Nabastissean fleet. As one of the Susrahnite city-states, Ghazor is ruled independently by the petty king Rahim-Dul, but is allied with the other cities of Susrah through treaties and intermarriage. The city has around 22,000 inhabitants.

Much trade flows through Ghazor, arriving by boats from the south, and carried inland by river barges or donkey caravans. The trade goods include Susrahnite wine, spices from Laksha and Azjan, dried fruit, slaves, and pearls harvested off the coast of Zadj.

The main ziggurat of the city is dedicated to Baal-Khardah, but the sea-god Yammosh is more popular among the many sailors and merchant-captains. Offerings of gold and animals are often made to the temple of Yammosh before any sea-voyage.

The southern quarters of the city, home to sailors, slavers, mercenaries and other foreigners, is well-known outside Ghazor for its many depraved vices and lawless atmosphere. The king and his nobles, busy with their own schemes and pleasures behind massive palace walls to the north, largely ignore the unruly docks. Thus the southern seafront is rarely patrolled by the city guard, but the naval docks to the northeast are well-guarded.

THE CITY OF BELTHAAR: This city, located west of the Ophrat river, is one of the smallest city-states of Susrah, with a population of only 12,000 people, yet its foundations are ancient and rest on a maze of catacombs, and its gloomy, serpentine streets wind their way between mighty monuments and hoary towers. There are temples and ziggurats dedicated to Belet-Lil, Baal-Khardah, Yadar, and a multitude of others.

Belthaar is currently ruled by the petty king Simashattar III, whose army of pikemen and charioteers are involved in a three-way war with its bigger neighbours, Zhaol and Ghezath. Despite his small army, Simashattar has avoided defeat by capturing a princeling of Ghezath and holding him hostage.

THE CULT OF THE KEEPERS: It is the custom and the law that all who die within the walls of Belthaar, from commoners to kings, are delivered into the hands of the silent priests of Yadar after their death. It is the sacred duty of these Keepers to remove the corpse, and to wash and purify the body. If the bereaved have left a well-filled purse for the Keepers, the corpse is usually preserved and embalmed with utmost skill by the priests; otherwise the corpse is burned and the ashes placed in urns of clay, bronze, or sometimes even gold.

The Cult of the Keepers also maintains and guards the extensive network of catacombs and crypts beneath the city, where urns and mummies are placed after the funereal ceremonies.

No one except the priests are allowed to enter the catacombs, but on certain days friends and family of the deceased may come to the Shrine of the Keepers and place offerings on the altar of Yadar to ensure the well-being of lost ones. It is even said that when such offerings are plentiful, the priests may unlock the doors to the catacombs and allow brief visits to private crypts. Others whisper that the mute, cowed priests are actually ghouls, who carry away and eat the dead, and that they guard only empty urns and coffins in the catacombs.

The Zorab Mountains

The foothills of the mighty Zorab Mountains separate the plains of Susrah from the steppes and deserts of Khazistan. The feuding clans of the Zorabi inhabit impregnable stone towers carved into the mountain-sides. From here, they sally forth to raid each other and the neighboring people of Lamu and Susrah, and also their nominal sovereign Khazistan. These mountain-men wear cloaks of wolf fur, white turbans, and all warriors have full beards bristling with curly black hair.

KHARJAH PASS, GATEWAY TO EMPIRE: The Kharjah Pass is the only crossing traversable other than on foot (although several secret passes, known only to the Zorabi mountain peoples, are rumoured to exist), and is guarded by mountain tribes loyal – at least in name – to the Padishah of Khazistan.

The tribesmen collect taxes from caravans passing through the pass. They claim one-tenth of the value of trade goods carried (the majority of this tax is in turn supposed to be brought as tribute to Khazabad), as well as a fixed amount for each man, horse or camel making the passage. However, the tribesmen are not above demanding much more if they think they can get away with it.

The Al-Khazi Desert, the Howling Waste

The wastelands of the al-Khazi Desert are harsh and inhospitable to city-dwellers, ignorant of the secrets of the nomads. The al-Khazi is very hot (the average daytime temperature is around 40 degrees Celsius), and the majority of this desert is covered with vast sand dunes, broken up here and there by areas of stony desert with hills, jagged rocks and wind-worn cliffs.

THE KHAZRAJ, WOLVES OF THE DESERT: At the fringes of the Khazistani Empire, the wild Khazraj nomads (themselves descended from the same racial stock as the Khazistani peoples) are a constant menace to caravans and travellers; sometimes even outlying villages and towns of Khazistan, Yar-Ammon and Jairan are subject to raids from these free-willed nomad clans.

These Khazraj raiders are lean, wolfish men dressed in gleaming white khalats and green turbans. Their skin is a wrinkled bronze. The nomads sit easily atop their camels, striking down foes with curved swords, but prefer to attack from a distance, using their bows from atop their war camels.

Khazistan, the Golden Empire

The Padishah of Khazistan is currently the most powerful monarch of the western continent of Xoth. Showing little signs of complacency, the power of Khazistan seems to be still growing, and its shadow looms large over Jairan and Yar-Ammon and is felt also in Susrah. Khazabad, city of glittering domes, is the residence of the Padishah, and with easily more than 150,000 inhabitants, the largest city of western Xoth.

THE CITY OF ZUL-BAZZIR: Zul-Bazzir is the western metropolis of Khazistan and the largest city of the desert, located amidst lush palm trees in the sprawling oasis of Zul. It was founded five centuries ago by Yar-Ammonite traders from

the south and grew quickly into a major center of trade, a stopover for all major caravan routes through the al-Khazi desert.

In the last century, Zul-Bazzir was conquered by the Khazistani horsemen coming out of the western steppes. Sizeable populations of Yar-Ammonites remain, along with people from Susrah, Jairan and elsewhere, and the city remains a thriving place of commerce, housing a population of maybe as much as 33,000 people.

Located on the westernmost edge of Khazistani influence, the city is often threatened by foreign invasion and raids. Despite this, Zul-Bazzir is unwallled, although the bey's sprawling palace-citadel is protected by a tall inner city wall.

Khadim Bey, the governor of the city, depends heavily on mercenaries to defend against occasional Yar-Ammonite intrigues, Jairanian ambitions, and the raids of wild Khazraj nomads. He maintains an army of about 5,000 men, two thirds of which are foreign mercenaries, mostly from Yemar in Jairan.

Typical houses are two-story buildings with flat roofs. Nobles and wealthy merchants live in walled mansions with lush gardens and artificial pools. Between the outer districts where foreigners and slaves throng, and the golden minarets and spires of the inner citadel, are bustling markets, souks and bazaars. Lesser streets wind their way through the maze-like districts of the city, where beggars and thieves skulk and revelers feast at night.

The Jungle Kingdoms of the South

KATANGA: Katanga is the only town of any importance in the kingdom of Shoma; the lesser «towns» are merely crude villages scattered across the grassy plains. South and east of Katanga are the Shining Hills, jungle-covered highlands that abound with gold.

Approaching the town, great herds of cattle can be seen; these belong to the king himself and many of the animals wear ornaments of beaten gold. The cattle in each herd number in the hundreds, but are guarded closely by scores of spearmen.

Katanga itself is surrounded by a wooden palisade, inside which over 8,000 people huddle together in wretched huts. The average citizens of Katanga are poor, but free, for the rulers of the Shoma do not keep slaves. However, people don't live to be old, so almost two thirds of the population are children and young adults. Most live in buildings of sun-dried mud with roofs of straw along with their animals, mostly goats and fowl.

The spacious inner city, forbidden to commoners, is ringed by a great mud-brick wall. Its gates are adorned with massive ivory tusks taken from the greatest specimens of elephants. A guard of spearmen at each gate makes sure that only nobles, royal guards, priests, merchants and foreign dignitaries are allowed entry to the inner city, which houses the royal palace and cattle pens, the temple of Nataka, and the workshops of the goldsmiths.

The current king is Mashota, a middle-aged man with many wives and several young heirs, all fighting for the king's attention and favours.

AZIMBA AND THE CITY OF ZIMBALLAH: The terrain of northern Azimba is dominated by savannah, while the southern regions are covered by jungle. Throughout the land are hundreds of stone statues in the likeness of Jul-Juggah, a great lizard-bird carved with monstrous features and outstretched, leathery wings. The statues range from three to ten meters in height. They are sacred and offerings, sometimes including blood sacrifice, are regularly placed in front of the statues by the priests of Jul-Juggah. To touch the statues or steal the offerings is an offense punishable by death.

The main city, Zimballah, is situated to the west, in the foothills of the Shining Hills. Although there are dozens of lesser stone-walled settlements within Azimba's borders, concentrated mostly in the northern savannah lands, whoever holds Zimballah dominates the region and can claim to be king of Azimba.

However, the king must be on good terms with the influential cult of Jul-Juggah, whose high priest formally appoints new kings and provides advice and auguries to the royal house.

Zimballah is sometimes simply called «the City of Stone» by virtue of its size and importance. Surrounded by hills, the city has massive walls, towers, and multiple interior gates. No one knows who reared Zimballah's massive, concentric walls and circular towers. The outer walls are ten meters tall and four meters thick, and are fitted seamlessly together without the use of mortar.

Close to 18,000 inhabitants throng Zimballah's inner districts, with several hundred merchants, animal-herders, peasants, mercenaries and beggars living in semi-permanent caravan camps outside the city walls. Foreigners are free to roam the market and residential districts, although all must return to the foreign district at night, when the gates are closed.

At the top of the hillside in which Zimballah nestles is the noble district, which houses the royal palace, the houses of the nobles, the barracks of the king's guard and the city's granaries, and finally the temple of Jul-Juggah. It is a testament to the cult's influence in Zimballah that the shrine of Jul-Juggah is more grand and imposing than the palace's throne room.

The city is an important trading center in the jungle kingdoms region. Cattle and ornaments of beaten gold from Shoma, steel swords and cut gems from Zadj, jungle herbs and animal-skins from Mazania, carpets and peacock feathers from Jairan, and even silks and ceramics from far-off Taikang finds its way here.

In a desolate valley north of the city walls are the «Caverns of Bone», ancient burial-places for the Azimban dead. The high priest of Jul-Juggah has placed a taboo on the valley, preventing people from worshipping their ancestors, claiming the caverns are haunted by the restless and malign ghosts of the dead.

Yar-Ammon, the Kingdom of Tombs

The mysterious land of Yar-Ammon continues many ancient traditions harkening back to Elder Kuth and other, even more obscure prehuman roots. For its people, the afterlife seems to be more real than their mortal existence. High and low alike are buried as they can afford, making the country rightfully known as the «Kingdom of Tombs». The grandest of these are the pyramids, immemorially ancient man-made mountains of stone erected along the marshy banks of the Purple River.

AMENTI, CITY OF STAR-TEMPLES: Yar-Ammon's capital and only seaport is Amenti, located slightly inland in the northern part of the Purple River's delta. It is an old and alien city, as majestic as it is forbidding, dominated by the High King's palace, broad ceremonial avenues, and – most of all – the pylon-flanked, black temples dedicated to Yar-Ammon's mysterious Star-Gods, whose chief priest is the High King himself.

PI-FAKHUUM, CITY IN THE SWAMP: In the marshy delta where the twin rivers run down from the Tomb Hills, sits the city of Pi-Fakhuum with its great temple of Yibboth, the golden toad-thing, and the lesser shrines dedicated to all the aquatic creatures that slither and croak in the night. Besides being an important cult-center, the city also controls the supply of stone from quarries upriver, as well as the production of papyrus from the marsh reeds.

KHADIS AND THE PEOPLE OF THE RED SPHINX: Another important population centre is the oasis city of Khadis to the far north. With some 8,000 permanent inhabitants, Khadis is one of Yar-Ammon's smaller cities, but important as the gateway to Khazistan, who grows ever more covetous of it as Khadis' king, old Akhtesh, shows signs of slipping into dementia.

As with all towns of Yar-Ammon, Khadis has one god who is its patron and revered above all others. In Khadis, this is the hyena-god. Its idol, a colossal faceless sphinx, towers above the streets of Khadis. It is said to be older than humanity, and to guard soul-blasting secrets. Some also whisper about half-men slinking in from the desert during moonless nights and howling in worship of the Red Sphinx.

Into the Eastern Ocean

KHORA AND THE ISLES OF THE SEA REAVERS: Hopefully you will have entered of your own free will and not as a slave, either to a person or to a vice. Regardless, few will have little or no idea the scale of debauchery and villainy that waits in these infamous dens of iniquity. The folk of the isles as a whole are seducers and harlots, torturers and slavers, assassins and kidnappers, zealots and thieves. The denizens of Khora, however, are even worse...

Khora is the largest city of the isles, said to have over 5,000 residents; and is also the most lawless. Its strategic location has made it an excellent hideout for its conglomeration of merchants, thieves, bandits, soldiers, renegades, assassins, mercenaries, outlaws, cut-throats and ne'er-do-wells. Bar fights, riots, protests and general chaos are normal and common. Because of this, Khora has earned the nickname «the City of Blood».

From Khora, the various brotherhoods of the Reavers sail forth and raid those wealthy merchant vessels traversing the ocean between the isles and the coast. When they flee back to their sanctuary, no warship dares enter Khora in pursuit, for it is zealously guarded by four forts of immense size, giving this den of murderers one of the best defended ports in the world, and the most feared.

Men of all races and cultures came to this port to trade their treasures and booty, most looted on the high seas from ships flying the flags of Nabastis, Susrah, and Zadj.

THE CANNIBAL COAST: The coastal Ikuna tribes are known to their neighbors as «man-eaters». Those forms of cannibalism include both resorting to human flesh during times of need, and ritual cannibalism, the latter usually consisting of eating a portion of an enemy warrior.

When warriors from one tribe slew 1,000 enemies they remained on the battlefield «eating the vanquished until they were driven off by the smell of decaying bodies». It is said that when a witch or shaman dies all members of the community will eat a portion of the eldritch one's heart.

Considered a great triumph, the Ikuna greatly enjoy eating their captives. They treat such captives with great cruelty and often break their legs to prevent them from attempting to escape before being eaten, while still keeping them alive so that they may brood over their impending fate. Female captives are always in great demand.

SILVER LOTUS ISLES: These isles are the haunt of the pygmy Djaka, who dwell within the deep jungle caves that dot the islands. There the Djaka cultivate delicate Silver Lotus for their hidden rituals. The islands are a warren of swamps, marshes, quicksand, and predatory wildlife, chief of which are the many enormous man-eating slugs long used to ritually feed on those who would trespass against the Djaka.

The swamps themselves are a perilous place for the inexperienced or unwary. The few dry paths through these marshes are all kept privy by the Djaka. Dense clouds of swamp gas, marsh fog, and an endless tangle of drooping moss tends to make everything look the same. Many become hopelessly lost, go crazy, or circle for days before the end comes... usually a grisly one.



In the far distant, mythic past, the World of Xoth is said to have been dominated by monstrous, primal beings with godlike powers. Little is known about these Old Gods, but some say that their dominion ended when great sheets of ice enveloped their lands and buried them in frozen tombs beneath the Endless White Land. In warmer lands, lesser servitor races survived, among them a number of foul reptilians who worshipped the memory of the Old Gods and used primitive ape-men as food, slaves and sacrifice.

The ancient empire of the reptilians was finally overthrown when from among the ranks of early men rose a mysterious group of giants, who taught their lesser brethren the arts of science, sorcery and war. Known as the Young Gods, they defeated the abominations of old, banished the monstrous races into the night, and after their victory became the legendary first giant-kings of Kuth.

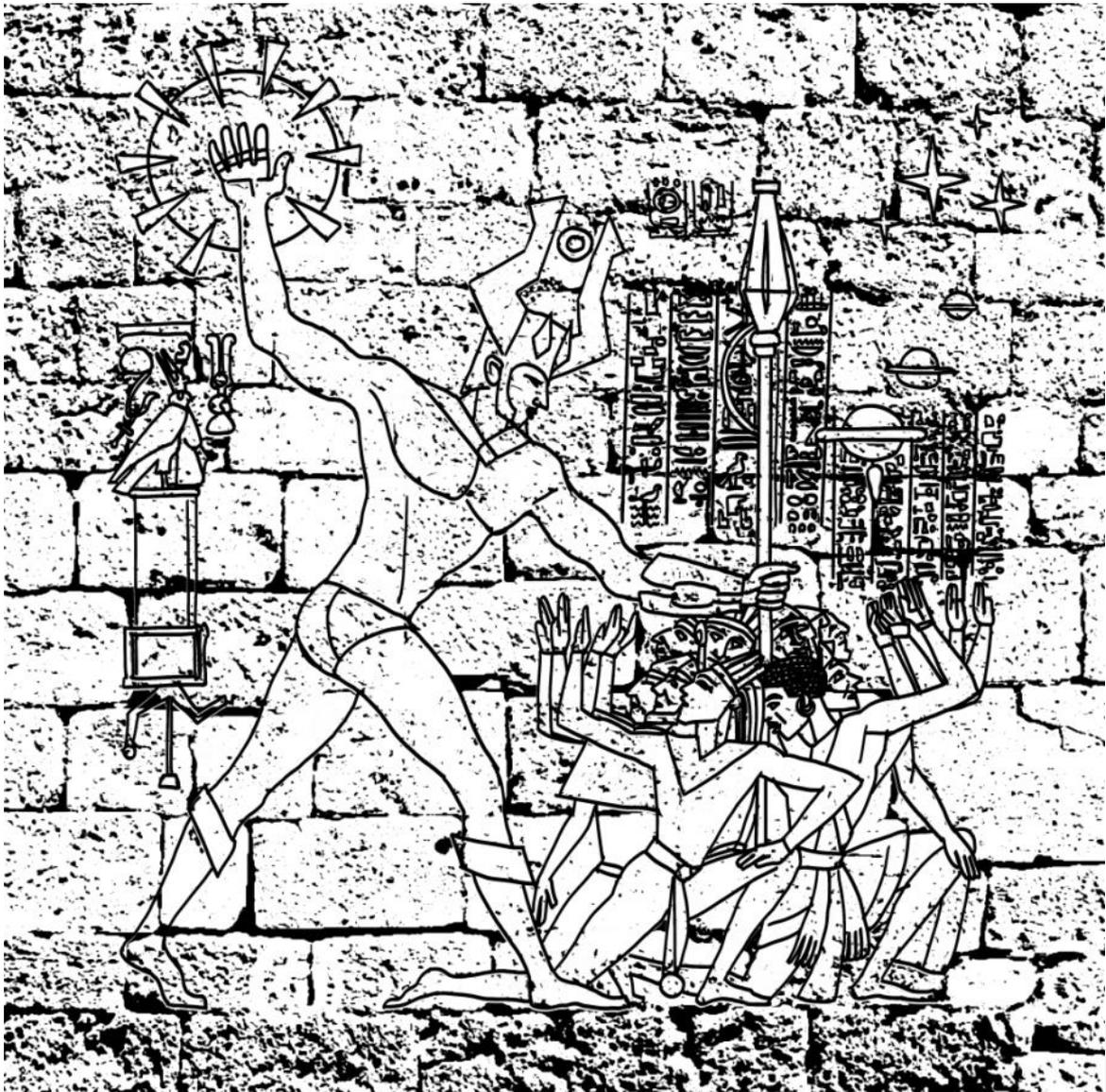
Though the largest kingdom by far and also the most powerful and advanced one, Elder Kuth was not the only realm. There was also evil, blood-drenched Pthahaana that sunk beneath the waves, and doubtlessly other mythic empires in the east. Decadence, civil strife, barbarian incursions, and, some say, the secret machinations of surviving servants of the Old Gods, did, after a period of greatness, finally bring about the downfall of Elder Kuth. The giant Kuthans passed into the realm of legend, but the decayed ruins of their cyclopean cities can still be glimpsed in the western wastes.

With the march of the centuries since the ruin of Elder Kuth, realms rose and fell. In the current age, the most powerful realm is the recently risen desert empire of Khazistan, followed by warlike Taraam in the northeast. Though already past the apogee of its greatness and wracked by intrigue, imperial Taraam receives tribute from Susrah and Nabastis, two loose confederacies of city-states rent by constant infighting and beset by their powerful northern neighbor. Isolated and protected by its mountain fastness, spider-haunted Lamu keeps to itself.

In the desert lands, Khazistan overshadows all other kingdoms and threatens both hoary Yar-Ammon with its mystery-shrouded tombs, and far western Jairan. Only distant Zadj is free from the shadow of powerful Khazistan, its ships and caravans bringing wealth from all corners of the World of Xoth to marble-pillared Iraab.

In the deep south, Azimba, land of the cities of stone, is the most advanced of the jungle kingdoms, and swamp-riddled Ikuna with its cannibal tribes the most primitive. Shoma, renowned for its mines and gold-adorned cattle herds, may be primitive, but is still far from savage.

The matriarchal jungle realm of Mazania is more myth than reality, even more so than wolf-haunted Tharag Thule in far frigid north. The realms of the distant east; Laksha, Ghoma, Azjan, and most of all distant Taikang, are hidden behind an even denser veil of legend and mystery.



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The Dwellers Below

The true name of this once-great race of reptile-men has now been lost. Their empire spanned many lands, dotted with great ziggurats, and they used primitive ape-men as slaves, sacrifice and food. With the rise of man, they were gradually driven underground, where they became stunted, pale and lethargic.

Appearance: White-skinned albinos with grey scales on their shoulders and flat heads. The warriors are adorned with bone necklaces, while the sorcerer-priests wear grisly robes of human skin.

Religion: The reptilian Dwellers Below are sworn servants of the Old Gods, and worship all manner of abominations in their dark underground shrines.



The Sons of the Giant-Kings

The pureblooded giant-kings of Elder Kuth took human concubines, and the result of these unions were halfbreeds, exceptional humans who would usually (but not always) serve as loyal agents of their powerful masters.

Appearance: Inhumanly tall and heavily muscled, with booming voices. The warriors among them wielded huge swords crafted by the giant-kings, though some were also known to be sorcerers.

Religion: Believing themselves the sons of demigods, the Kuthan halfbreeds often served as high priests of their progenitors.



The Children of the Great Serpent

Also known as the Yalothans, the serpent-men were former masters of the jungles of the south. Many are sorcerers.

Appearance: The true form of the serpent-men is a tailed humanoid body topped with a snake head. But this race has the sinister ability to change shape, blending into human societies and manipulating them to further their own secret goals. When killed, a serpent-man always reverts to his true form.

Religion: The lord and creator of the serpent-men is known by many names, including Zanthiss, Satha and Hassith-Ka.



The Longskulls of Sunken Ptahaana

The bulk of the Isles of Ptahaana sunk beneath the waves in ancient times, perhaps as a result of failed sorceries. Small groups of Ptahaanans are believed to remain in the ruins of this bloodstained empire, scattered across the archipelago.

Appearance: Reported sightings of surviving Ptahaanans describe them as short of build, with bronze skin, and slightly slanted eyes. The Ptahaanans practice cranial deformation, binding the heads of infants in honor and imitation of their mysterious and godlike rulers. These rulers, presumably destroyed along with the Isles, were tall, with elongated skulls and fingers, and clad in voluminous robes that concealed blasphemously mutated bodies.

Religion: The ancient Ptahaanans are said to have worshipped Ia-Azutlatl, the «Blood-God» and «Opener of the Void», atop their stepped pyramids. No doubt traces of such eldritch sorcery can still be found in the primitive rituals of their current tribal beliefs.

Random Sword & Sorcery (Table II)

- oath or honor
- blood
- mammoth or elephant tusks
- legend or lie
- dying or inherited curse
- betrayal or deception
- temple prostitute or temple virgin
- plague
- servitude or captivity
- banishment or exile
- king of kings
- desert or wasteland
- corruption
- dragon or giant reptile from a lost age
- moon or moonlight
- tentacled monstrosity
- arcane or sacred ritual
- snake-people
- heir or chosen one
- childbirth

Races

- Azimban
- Bhangari
- Djaka
- Ghazorite
- Ikuna
- Jairanian
- Khazistani
- Khazrajite
- Khoran
- Lamuran
- Mazanian
- Nabastissean
- Tharag Thulan
- Yar-Ammonite
- Zadjite
- Zorabi

Cities

- Mazad
- Achad
- Khargamum
- Khadar
- Ghezath
- Hamgatana
- Lamra
- Onar
- Ghezath
- Belthaar
- Zhaol
- Ghazor
- Yaataana
- Dipur
- Jhaddar
- Khazabad
- Zul-Bazzir
- Yemar
- Ibar
- Shan-Addah
- Khadis
- Amenti
- Akhet
- Pi-Fakhuum

- Iraab
- Al-Qazir
- Khariya
- Zimballah
- Katanga
- Boma-Ya
- Khora

Cults

- Al-Tawir
- Belet-Lil
- The Living Flame (Nameless God of Zadj)
- Jul-Juggah
- Yammosh
- Yaathra Yok
- Beast-Gods of Yar-Ammon
- Zothur (Zoth-Ur, Xoth-Ur)
- Ahyada
- Aklathu
- Baal-Khardah
- Ia-Azutlatl
- Maggash
- Nhakhramat
- Nwanga Zhaal
- Othabbhon
- Simatala
- Yadar
- Yibboth
- Yot-Kamoth
- Zanthiss
- Gods of Tharag Thule (Moon-God, Skull-God, Wolf-God)

Occupations

- artist
- assassin
- astrologer
- bandit
- beggar
- city guard
- commander
- concubine
- courtesan
- courtier
- craftsman
- cultist
- doctor
- drunken reveler
- entertainer
- eunuch
- gambler
- healer
- laborer
- madman
- mercenary
- merchant
- messenger
- noble
- nomad
- palace guard
- priest
- prostitute
- sage
- scribe
- servant
- slave
- slaver
- smuggler
- soldier

- soothsayer
- torturer
- thief
- thug
- trader

Punishments

- drawn and quartered
- impaled or beheaded
- hanged
- tortured
- flayed
- imprisoned
- whipped
- gauntlet
- enslaved
- impressed to civil or military service
- jailed
- humiliated
- stocks
- apprenticed
- finned
- probation
- court costs
- case dismissed
- favorable judgment
- beneficial judgment

Hit Locations (Humanoids)

- head/neck
- chest
- abdomen
- groin
- left hand
- left leg
- lower left arm
- lower right arm
- right hand
- right leg
- upper left arm/shoulder
- upper right arm/shoulder

Hit Locations (Monsters)

- head/neck
- left appendage
- left leg
- torso
- right appendage
- right leg
- tail
- internal organ
- tentacle, tusk or proboscis
- wing

Trade Goods

- ale
- arms
- armor
- dried fish
- dried fruits
- exotic cloth
- exotic feathers

- exotic goods
- fine lumber
- furs
- gems (rubies, emeralds, pearls, etc)
- gold
- grain
- incense
- ivory
- leather
- lotus
- lumber
- oil or tar
- raw metal
- regional cloth
- regional goods
- semi-precious stones (lapis lazuli, opals, topaz, etc)
- Susrahnite wine
- silk
- silver
- slaves
- spices
- wine
- special

Names (Table I)

- Jahwar
- Taziz
- Kamytzes
- Varazes
- Othbanes
- Ifuka
- Yetara
- Mwanza
- Gasparus
- Ranuga
- Zama
- Serathu
- Jabdar
- Nofruset
- Yatim
- Rashat
- Yasima
- Turim
- Narun
- Azif

Names (Table II)

- Akhtesh
- Yog Sodhi
- Methras
- Galan
- Ringur
- Kadima
- Laugra
- Melphas
- Hor-Tef
- Behruz
- Fu Teng
- Amkur
- Yasna
- Hasin
- Farad
- Arius
- Mu-Ram
- Yilak Mal
- Phocas
- Kemthradates

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XP1: The Spider-God's Bride

A critically acclaimed collection of ten blood-red sword and sorcery adventures, inspired by the pulp era tales of Robert E. Howard and Clark Ashton Smith. Suitable for character levels 1-10.

XP2: Song of the Beast-Gods

Intrigue and dark sorcery in the deserts and catacombs of Yar-Ammon, the Kingdom of Tombs. A mix of wilderness travel, palace intrigue, and delving into forbidden underground vaults -- a chance for every character class to shine! Suitable for character levels 2-3.

XP3: The Citadel beyond the North Wind

As a regional sandbox, the module details the never-before-seen northern lands and races of the World of Xoth. Suitable for character levels 8-10.

XP4: Land of the Silver Lotus

Narcotic plants, hostile pygmies, giant slugs, and ancient evils — face them all in this mini-campaign! Suitable for character levels 4-6.

