

ZENOBIA



ZOZER

Z E N O B I A

ZENOBIA

Fantasy Roleplaying in the Desert Kingdoms





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Revised in 2004

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*To whom should I present this
little book so carefully polished
but to you, Cornelius, who have always
been so tolerant of my verses,*

*you
who of us all has dared
to take the whole of human history
as his field*

*- three doctoral and weighty volumes!
Accept my book, then, Cornelius
for what it's worth,
and may the Muse herself
turn as tolerant an eye upon these songs
in days to come*

- Catullus, 1st century BC

ZENOBIA is the fantasy roleplaying game of adventure and magic in the ancient world. It is a world where the deserts are home to fierce Saracen tribes, lost cities, sphinx and scorpion-men. And where the cities are home to scheming princes, bandit kings and sinister cults. Opportunity and adventure are everywhere. There are centuries-old tombs to be robbed (if their fiendish residents can be defeated), ancient underground complexes full of obscure traps and breath-taking treasures that were left behind by the gods, palaces owned by fabulously wealthy kings, and temples dedicated to the gods - temples whose physical defences cannot compare with their magical enchantments. From hundred-gated Thebes to the oasis city of Palmyra, from the wealthy caravan city of Carrhae to the strict religious city of dusty Hierosolyma, adventure awaits the brave, the foolhardy and the greedy. And for those who fail, the Afterlife beckons, or worse - perhaps slavery on a rowing bench in a Tyrian war galley, or a life in the Turquoise mines of Sinai.

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I WELCOME TO ZENOBIA

ZENOBIA is a fantasy vision of the ancient Near East during the darkest days of the Roman Empire, circa 260 AD. It is not historically accurate. But then, what *is* historically accurate? Modern scholars still debate matters of truth, context and events. **ZENOBIA** takes the familiar and not so familiar aspects of the ancient world and puts a fantasy twist on things. It's no longer a strange land, and players can jump straight in wielding a gladius and lounging in the heated baths as if they were born to it.

The game focuses on the eastern fringes of the Roman Empire, however - giving the gamemaster the advantage of bringing independent kingdoms, tribes and empires into the game. Epic-style conflict - something absent from most of the Roman provinces for centuries - is available here in jarfuls!

Mirroring the historical reality that it is based on, the world of **ZENOBIA** is dominated by the Empire, a harsh militaristic tyranny ruled by an unending number of soldier-emperors. Parts of the Empire have split off to form independent kingdoms of great power. The east is dominated by the desert kingdom of Palmyra, ruled from this oasis city by the exotic Queen Zenobia. She is determined to enlarge her kingdom and rule an empire as large as any that have yet existed. Across the desert she faces the fantastic might of the Persian Kingdom, a land of great antiquity and incredible resources. In the west the Gallic Kingdom has emerged as a serious rival to the Empire, and is faced with defending itself from the destructive raids of the northern barbarians. Between and

amongst these four great powers are a number of smaller, but still vibrant lands.



Planned for many years and finally seeing light in the autumn of 1999, **ZENOBIA** was designed to satisfy *my* lust for adventure without the obstacles of class, skill level and character level. I wanted my characters to be good at everything and not have to calculate percentage chances or 'to hit' probabilities. I wanted to throw a couple of d6 and get on with the epic story line. And I didn't want to alienate my players with new and sophisticated cultures - I wanted to mix familiarity with something more exotic, but something based in the hard-nosed realities of history. **ZENOBIA** was the result.

It takes much of its inspiration and many significant details from the historical canvas that was the eastern Roman Empire. Written well before 'Gladiator' ever hit the screens, **ZENOBIA** blends all the familiar cultural props of the Roman Empire with a rich and exotic setting of religious city-states, nomad encampments, powerful eastern kingdoms and mysterious desert queens. The date is 260 AD - a time when the Empire split into several independent kingdoms, each a smaller but still unique version of that mighty original. My universe is not a slavish recreation,

but a blurring of dates and themes to create a living world as seen through the eyes of the hardy souls dwelling there. I believe it is a vision of the Roman Empire with the feel of Robert E. Howard's wistful Hyperborean world, home to Conan the Barbarian and King Kull. **ZENOBIA** breeds heroes and villains in the grand tradition of 1930's pulp fantasy. The world is a colourful backdrop, rich in the familiarities of daily life, coinage and language, but still a world away - a place of power and magic. This game divides the world into three broad adventuring regions, and each region has a distinct 'flavour' which is suitable for certain types of adventure. The three broad regions are:



The Classical Civilisations: The heartland of the Empire, which includes the grand and decadent Eternal City, the rest of Latium, Ionia and the fully-Imperialised province of Hispania. The region boasts wealthy cities and a rich urban life, with all the prospects for city adventures, political conspiracies and skulduggery that this implies. Ionia and Latium have seen incursions by raiders of late, casting a dark shadow over these proud lands.

The Desert Kingdoms: The Desert kingdoms encompass a vast region, from the Imperial provinces of North Africa to ancient Ægypt, the Desert of Lost Souls, Solyma, the Decapolis and the dusty mountain city-states of the Taurus Mountains. Queen Zenobia dominates the scene here, and with a combination of desert raiders, ancient

and buried civilisations, walled cities as old as time, a resurgent Persian kingdom, and exotic religious cults, the Desert Lands have a huge potential for all kinds of adventure. The existence of age-old tombs and long-dead civilisations provides plenty of opportunities for labyrinth adventures as well as many kinds of city and wilderness adventures.

The Northern Forests: The dark forests and cold rain-shadowed mountains of the north have always been the source of unease for the Imperials. Today many areas have been settled with cities as tribal centres and villas for the chieftains. But other barbarians have not been civilised and continually harass, raid and invade the more settled areas of the northern region. The Gallic Kingdom dominates this northern scene as it consolidates its military might to push back the barbarian tribes. This region includes Gaul, Britannia and the numerous Imperial provinces stretched out along the River Danube: Raetia, Noricum, Pannonia, Dalmatia, Moesia, Dacia and Thrace. The region is a tough, 'Wild West' of threatened and besieged communities - one that breeds tough and militaristic individuals. Of course, the region also encompasses the barbarian chiefdoms beyond the Empire - forest kingdoms ruled by savage barbarian chiefs and their warriors, and the endless swamps and grasslands inhabited by Gothic and Sarmatian tribes. In a land without large towns or cities, wilderness adventures come to the fore here. Labyrinths consist mainly of the more natural features and barrow mounds left behind by more ancient peoples.

ZENOBIA presents adventure ideas and a fully-detailed gaming background for roleplaying in the Desert Kingdoms - the world dominated by Queen Zenobia and Palmyra. It consists mainly of the game rules, including character generation, magic, combat and monsters. It begins with a historical and social introduction to the world of **ZENOBIA**, and is all that is really needed to set-up and run an adventure. The game continues to provide the referee with plenty more advice and useful information that makes creating and running successful adventures easier. More detailed information on the setting of the Desert Lands is given, along with articles on campaigns, adventure design and non-player characters.

Adventures will often spring from the wide gulfs separating the major kingdoms. Traders, sailors, nomads, mercenaries and refugees are the people who link these empires together, they are the player characters. Rootless, self-reliant and resourceful, these 'adventurers' are continually on the move from city to city, kingdom to kingdom trying to make a reputation and a fortune for themselves. If legitimacy does not interest them, they can turn bandit and steal from the caravans, or roam the land fighting for those who pay, and robbing tombs and ancient treasures when business is slack. The hope is that players will rise above the usual game concepts of 'hack 'n' slash' and 'swords-for-hire' and will actually become somebody important. It is quite possible for an adventurer to become a bandit chief, a mercenary captain, a priest or cult champion, a

caravan leader or merchant-prince. If the sea interests him, he may even become the captain of a merchant ship - or a pirate chief!

Academic vs. Atmosphere

There are two possible approaches to the naming of cities, cultures and kingdoms. One is to use the modern archaeological names, the second is to use the contemporary names used by the ancient folk. The latter is atmospheric and realistic and this is the method we use, since it separates our world from the dry history-book world of real life. It makes our lands more ambiguous and gives us a little more leeway in our interpretation of places, institutions and personalities.

The mechanics of **ZENOBIA** were specifically designed for it. They stylishly mirror the grand epic feel and the cultivation of real heroes - heroes that are always capable of all kinds of actions. To this end the simple d6 system dispenses with the limitations of skill values. It concentrates on only a few abstract stats; on a handful of special skills that indicate acquaintance rather than quantify ability; simultaneous combat resolved by difference in die rolls with effective and speedy abstractions of injury; and the attribute called 'Fate' that acts as a setting-specific device indirectly linking mortals & gods, will & luck, mundane action & magic. The rules system is not overly complex, designed as it is to be very fast to play and to make the referee's job easier. It is the amazing world that is the focus here, not the mechanics of the game. Lots of rules tend to restrict options, I want to give every adventurer the chance to go anywhere and do anything.

~ Paul Elliott

II THE WORLD OF ZENOBIA

Overview of History

The Rise of Persia

'Elated with an easy conquest, and presuming on the distresses or the degeneracy of the Empire, Shapur obliged the strong garrisons of Carrhae and Nisibis to surrender, and spread devastation and terror on either side of the Euphrates'.

The Decline and Fall of the

Empire

It is the year 1014 AUC * and in the hot desert lands of the east, two great powers have emerged to face each other across the shimmering desert sands. A generation ago Artaxerxes overthrew the horse barbarians who had invaded his country to become the first king of a renewed Persian kingdom. This ancient and glorious land immediately began to challenge the might of the Empire, the vast western tyranny that had conquered many of the desert lands previously owing fealty to Persia. The struggle was on.

For four decades the Empire failed to check the growing might of the resurgent Persian military. The Imperial province of Mesopotamia was conquered and numerous emperors marched east at the head of their legions to try to recover it. Emperor Alexander Severus attempted a re-conquest in 985 AUC, and the boy-emperor Gordian later marched east in 996 AUC but was murdered by his own troops. His treacherous successor Emperor Philip paid off the Persian king Shapur with a down-payment of half a million denarii, something which did not endear him to the citizens of the Empire. It was in Philip's reign that the Empire celebrated it's 1000th anniversary with a series of magnificent and bloody gladiatorial games.

The Emperor Valerian

'Valerian finally rose to such glory, that after holding all honours and offices with great distinction he was chosen emperor ... solely by right of his services, and, as it were, by the single voice of the entire world'.

Historia Augusta, Life of Valerian V

King Shapur attacked the eastern provinces of the Empire again in 1005 AUC and this time successfully conquered Syria and its glorious capital, Antioch. The rebellion of legions, barbarian invasions and a plague which had been sweeping the Empire for decades prevented the re-conquest of these valuable eastern lands. In 1007 a new emperor, Valerian, one of those unruly legionary commanders, arrived in the east to put in order once and for all the territorial claims of the Empire. He would spend the entirety of his brief reign fighting to return the smoking ruins of the eastern provinces to the Empire. One of Emperor Valerian's first acts was to suppress the unexpected rebellion of Uranius Antoninus, the priest-king of Emesa who had kept the Persian forces at bay from his city and then declared himself the legitimate ruler of the Empire. The Emperor then began to harry the Persian forces and was soon able to boast that he had set the Empire to rights. He arrogantly declared himself the 'Restorer of the World', since for its inhabitants, the Empire **is** the world.

Emperor Valerian's campaigns against Persia continued with victories won and lost on both sides until early in 1013 AUC. In this year of ignominy Valerian found his army trapped and besieged within the walls of the caravan city of Edessa. With plague decimating his

legions, food and water running low and the threat of a full scale Persian attack hanging over them, Emperor Valerian decided to bargain instead of fight. He rode to meet King Shapur accompanied only by his most trusted advisors and officials, as agreed. But the Persian leader found such a prize too tempting to pass up and seized them all. The Emperor of the known world bound and submissive like a common criminal! It is said that Valerian still lives and that to mount his war-horse Shapur steps on the back of the old man as he is forced to kneel in the dust. Such talk does nothing to calm the angers of his surviving son and the new emperor, Gallienus.

Gallienus, The Evil Prince

'Now let us pass on to the twenty pretenders, who arose in the time of Gallienus because of contempt for the evil prince'

Historia Augusta, Life of Gallienus XXI

Gallienus is struggling to hold the shattered Empire together. With Valerian's humiliating capture a number of dynastic challengers have stepped forward, determined to seize the imperial throne for themselves. Chaos and anarchy sweep the Empire. In the west a new kingdom has emerged where a number of provinces suffering from barbarian attacks have united to form the Gallic Kingdom, with its capital at Augusta Treverorum. Its leader, Postumus, has decided that the Empire can no longer look after the interests of the west and is preparing to defend his new kingdom from future attacks.

As expected, the capture of Valerian by King Shapur has not brought any stability to the east. The Persians mounted a second devastating invasion of Syria to capture Antioch and it seemed as if the Persians would actually push the Empire out of Asia once and

for all. But there were those determined not to see Persian domination of the entire east... The commander of Valerian's elite Praetorian Guard, a tough officer called Ballista, has rallied the eastern legions of the Empire. He defeated Shapur's forces in Cilicia and even managed to capture the king's harem. The Persians were forced back across the River Euphrates and were then forced to defend themselves against a desert army from the oasis city of Palmyra.

The Wrath of a Desert Queen

'She claimed her descent from the Macedonian kings of Egypt, equalled in beauty her ancestor Cleopatra, and far surpassed that princess in chastity and valour'.

The Decline and Fall of the Empire

The Palmyrene Queen Zenobia has long had an eye on expanding her territories, and the retreat of the Persian forces seemed too good a chance to miss. Her camel riders, legionnaires and cataphract cavalry also crossed the Euphrates and seized the old Imperial province of Mesopotamia. Her redoubtable general (some say lover) Odaenathus quickly followed up this success by marching on Emesa, an important holy city in Syria that had backed the rebellion of two officers of the Empire. Emesa was seized and the Empire lost yet more territory. But Zenobia had taken Emesa in the name of the Empire 'to crush a revolt' and without more money, more resources and more troops there was little that the Empire could do about it. Her ambitions were now given free reign, and as the Empire seemed about to crumble with the loss of Emperor Valerian, she launched an offensive against the remaining eastern provinces of the once mighty Empire.

As Gothic barbarians rampaged into northern Asia Minor, Zenobia sent out an army across the mountains to defeat them. It did not return until the ravaged provinces had acquiesced to the will of Palmyra. Queen Zenobia and her youthful son Vaballathus now stand at the head of a powerful and head-strong desert kingdom stretching from the high mountains of Cappadocia to the wealthy cities of Syria, down to the religious land of Solyma and south to Nabataea -

home of rich merchant princes. North-eastwards her kingdom crosses the desert to encompass the fabulous cities of Upper Mesopotamia. It is unlikely the Empire will ever find the strength to recover these exotic lands. A new age has dawned in the east ...

*AUC - Anno Urbis Conditaе - 'In the year of the foundation of the city', that city being the Eternal City, the capital of the Empire.



Annals of the Empire

0 AUC	Founding of the Eternal City, the future capital of the Empire
204 AUC	King Cyrus the Great founds the kingdom of Achaemenid Persia
244 AUC	The last king of the Eternal City expelled, start of the Republic
263 AUC	The Persians attempt to invade Ionia, the cities defend themselves. A repeat attack in 273 is also repulsed.
352 AUC	A huge mercenary army of Ionians is caught deep within Persia during a civil war and manages to fight its way back to Ionia.
419 AUC	Alexander, a heroic Ionian king leads an army against the Persian kingdom and topples it. His short-lived empire lasts until 452.
452 AUC	Following the Battle of Ipsus, Alexander's generals divide up his empire between them.
490 AUC	Start of a series of wars between the Republic and Carthage
584 AUC	King Mithridates of Parthia leads the domination of his people over the Persian heartland.
608 AUC	The Republic defeats its great rivals, Carthage and Ionia, to become the ultimate force in the Middle Sea
691 AUC	The Republic conquers huge areas of the east, turning them into provinces
696 AUC	The Republic begins to conquer barbarian territories in the north
701 AUC	A huge force sent eastwards by the Empire to crush the Parthians is defeated at Carrhae and its Imperial commander is killed.
723 AUC	At the climax of a great civil war, the general Octavian defeats his rival Marcus Antonius and his lover Cleopatra to become the first emperor of the Empire. The Republic was swept away. Egypt is invaded by Empire.
784 AUC	The Anointed One, a Solyman magician, is executed by the Empire for his activities as a cult leader.
817 AUC	The Eternal City is almost destroyed by a great fire, started by followers of the Anointed One.
870 AUC	The Empire reaches its greatest extent after incredible military successes in Dacia and Mesopotamia.
965 AUC	Citizenship is granted to all free inhabitants of the Empire.
971 AUC	The four year reign of youthful Emperor Elagabalus begins, he is an exotic high-priest from Emesa who tries to force his sun-god upon the people of the Empire.
979 AUC	The Persian Artaxerxes leads his people in the overthrow of their ancient enemies, the Parthians. The kingdom of Sassanid Persia is established.
983 AUC	Persian forces over-run the Imperial province of Mesopotamia to be repulsed two years later by Emperor Alexander Severus.
988 AUC	The young emperor, Alexander Severus is murdered while campaigning against northern barbarians. His death heralds an unprecedented period of chaos and anarchy throughout the Empire. For fifty years, assassination becomes the tool of succession. Many emperors and would be emperors will rise and fall.
994 AUC	Shapur, the son of Artaxerxes, leads the Persian army against the Empire's eastern provinces
997 AUC	Emperor Philip pays the Persian king 500,000 denarii to make peace
1000 AUC	Celebrations mark the 1000th anniversary of the Eternal City's founding.
1003 AUC	Persecution of the cult of the Anointed One by Emperor Decius. The High Priest of the cult is captured in the Eternal City and executed.

- 1004 AUC Goths and other barbarians begin invasions across the River Danube. Death of Emperor Decius fighting the Goths. The Empire is wracked by a terrible plague.
- 1005 AUC King Shapur of Persia renews his offensive against the eastern Empire.
- 1007 AUC The priest-king of Emesa, Uranius Antoninus declares himself ruler of the Empire. He is killed by the legitimate ruler, Emperor Valerian.
- 1010 AUC Valerian tries to root out cult-followers of the Anointed One that have risen to positions of power within the government of the Empire.
- 1012 AUC The barbarian tribe of the Jugurthi try to take the Eternal City.
- 1013 AUC Emperor Valerian is captured & killed by the Persians. Imperial authority in the east crumbles. Separate Gallic Kingdom of Britannia, Hispania and Gaul is declared. Queen Zenobia establishes the desert kingdom of Palmyra in Syria as she begins the conquest of the Empire's eastern provinces.

Geography

The Desert Kingdoms comprise a region of great variation, but in general terms the climate is warm, often hot, and dry. Waterless deserts and uninhabitable wilderness areas are never far away, wherever you find yourself. Across the northern boundary of the region, a vast mountain chain called the Taurus marches west to east. South of the Taurus are dry steppe lands and rocky desert. Societies south of these lofty mountains need something special to flourish. For some along the coast of the Middle Sea, trade and access to the ocean provides a living. The Syrians, Phoenicians and Solymans benefit from this position. Inland, the occasional oasis supports life and civilisation, but unruly Saraceni tribesmen are always ready to brush this civilisation away. Damascus, Palmyra, Petra and others flourish amongst the rock canyons and sandy wastes. Even further south, amid the awesome desolation of the Libyan desert, is the fantastic land of Ægypt, a place of temples and priests which flourishes on the verdant banks of the river Nile. On the upper reaches of the Nile, as it meanders through steppe-land and broken hills, a black civilisation takes over - the kingdom of Golden Meroe guards the entranceway into a vast mountain fastness called the

Mountains of the Moon. These peaks mark the southerly boundary of the East. Further south lay endless tracts of steaming jungle.

The Cities of the Taurus: The western end of the Taurus mountain chain divides into the northern Pontic chain and the more southerly Tauric chain. Dividing them is a high, dry plateau, windswept and barren save for occasional rivers and lifeless salt lakes. At their western tip they descend to broad plains and wide fertile river valleys that reach the Aegean Sea. The Taurus mountains have proved to be a cradle for some of the world's greatest and most cosmopolitan cities. Amongst the western river valleys cities such as Miletus, Smyrna and Ephesus have grown up. Further east and high in the mountains are later cities such as Laodicea, Aspendus, Iconium, Tarsus, Sebastia, Nicopolis and Artaxata. The difficult terrain has kept the cities apart and almost independent, ancient kingdoms here have always been very small. Today the cities of the Taurus are divided between independent kingdoms and larger empires. The Empire has turned several states (including Bithynia, Pontus, Pergamum, Lycia, Galatia and Cappadocia) into provinces.

In the south, the coastal plains of Cilicia have been seized by Queen Zenobia. Further east, as the Taurus rise to ever greater heights, the cities become sparser, until, across the river Euphrates, the kingdom of Armenia is reached. Armenia was established centuries ago, and despite being a part of several empires since, has always retained its distinctive eastern culture. Bordering the Armenian state to the north are two minor valley kingdoms, Colchis and Iberia. The eastern border of Armenia soon gives way to Lake



Urmia and the sprawling kingdom of the Sassanid Persians.

Beyond the Zagros: The Zagros mountains lay east of the Mesopotamian river valleys. Beyond them lies a powerful and militaristic kingdom - Sassanid Persia - ruled by an ancient lineage which once ruled the same desert lands many centuries before. The territories of the kingdom encompass fertile hills and valleys found south toward the Arabian Gulf and north amidst the Elburz Mountains. Agriculture here supports a rich and cosmopolitan city life. Between the Elburz and the gulf, the land rises to the harsh Dasht-e-Lut (Great Salt Desert), an inhospitable and barren waste. Further east the kingdom is composed of remote desert principalities, regions with traditions spanning a thousand years. To the far east lay the exotic Kushan principalities and Meluhha. The ancient Persian heartland is home to several fabulous cities, but more impressive cities can be found throughout the kingdom. Ancient roads connect these centres and Persian officials travel the routes to ensure that tribute flows toward the capital at

Seleucia. The most important of Persia's regions are Media, Sagartia, Drangiana, Arachosia, Aria, Hyrcania, Chorasmia, and Parthia. Once these regions supported varied tribes, but today Persian culture and religion dominate the inhabitants, although unique cultures still exist.

This culture is rich and sophisticated. Persians and tributary tribes wear exotic and multi-coloured robes and pray to a strange and remote god called Ahura Mazda. This sun deity is worshipped through the medium of fire - a holy element to the Persians. Devout Persians esteem honour, brotherhood and true speech above all things. In ages past the Persians seemed intent on conquering the world.

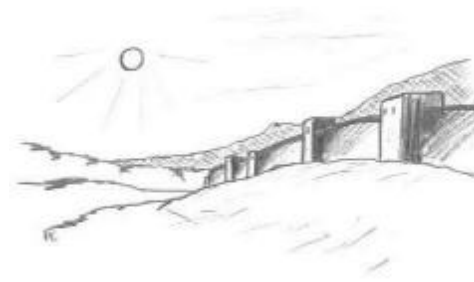
The eastern areas of the Persian kingdom are bordered by vast deserts and towering and seemingly impassable mountain ranges, such as the Pamirs, for example, and the Celestial Mountains. To the north, on the very limits of the civilised world, lay the Kushan principalities, ancient and remote states like Bactria, Sogdiana, Gandara, and Sattagydia, conquered by the Kushans, a wild and barbarous nomad tribe from some far distant realm called Kazgar. These Kushans have also seized the exotic jungle land of Meluhha.

The Fertile Crescent: From the coastal city of Gaza to ancient Uruk, a huge crescent of fertile, agricultural land has given rise to a number of flourishing civilisations. In the west, where the harsh Negev desert gives way to cultivation, the ultra-religious land of Solyma has dominated the vales and plains, scrub-land and hills for a thousand years. Centred in Hierosolyma, the Solyman state is ruled by a religious council. The peculiar religion of the people contends that the

only true god is the Nameless One, who has blessed the land of the Solymans in ages past. Their priests keep extensive records and archives. Solymans, because they refused to make sacrifice to the holy vows of loyalty to the Emperor, were deemed traitors. North of Solyma, beyond the Lake of Genneserat, lies Syria. Never an independent nation, Syria is comprised of numerous wealthy cities - foremost among them Antioch. The greatest of these trading cities long ago formed the Decapolis - the Ten Cities - a trading league designed to crush competition. The Decapolitans are hardy but pragmatic people, their gods of sun and wind have been generous for the people of Syria have long enjoyed prosperity, no matter who has ruled them. Syria is a land of well-watered vales backed by steep snow-capped mountains. Beyond are the dry rocky plains of the Stone Wastes merging quickly into open desert - the haunt of Saraceni tribesmen at the beck-and-call of Palmyra.

East of these great Syrian cities flows the great rivers of Mesopotamia, the Euphrates and the Tigris. Winding their way, as they do, through arid wilderness, both rivers have acted as life-giving oases to local people. For thousands of years the cities of the ancient Chaldeans have thrived here. These vast cities, each surrounded by incredible walls, cut by canals and laid out to some obscure city plan, hold tens of thousands of inhabitants. Babylon, the Chaldean capital, has long since been lost beneath the shifting desert sands, but other cities such as Carrhae, Nisbis, Dura-Europus and Seleucia have risen to take its place. The Chaldeans are amongst the learned and wise people of the entire world. Their records reach back to the first Flood, and it is said that some of their cities, and their ziggurat temple-pyramids go back even further.

The Chaldeans are now a serene and fairly peaceable people.



The Deserts: A vast and seemingly endless desert stretches away south-eastwards from the Decapolis and Solyma. This wilderness is called Arabia, and is filled with amazing creatures and stunning terrain. The coasts of Arabia are generally mountainous and the meagre upland rainfall has forced local Saraceni shepherds and farmers to scratch a living in the baking climate. In the south the rainfall is such that a magnificent trading kingdom thrives. Called Sabaea, the realm controls all trade in southern Arabia. Its greatest citizens are powerful merchants, owners of huge camel caravans and vast stocks of rare commodities such as frankincense, myrrh, gold, ivory, pepper and life-giving salt. In times past the most famous monarch of Sabaea (or Sheba) once visited a wise and learned king of Solyma named Solomon to establish the first trade caravans that persist to this day. Sabaeans are a Saraceni tribe that long ago settled in the lush mountain valleys and coastal plains in the south-west corner of Arabia. This bountiful land lies in the shadow of the well-watered Blessed Mountains. Its greatest city is Marib. Further inland in central Arabia the sands sweep across the rock wilderness to form impassable sand seas - a region named the Desert of Lost Souls. A hidden city acting as an emporium for caravans making the perilous crossing across the Desert of Lost Souls to the

Persian Gulf has been rumoured. This city is Irem, the City of Pillars, said to have been built by ancient King Ad. No Saraceni nomad will ever reveal the whereabouts of this fabulous oasis city. To the north-west, the sand seas give way to a wilderness of shattered rock or to winding desert canyons - the Stone Wilderness. This region of Arabia is home to a thriving kingdom called Nabatea, centred on a number of fabulous oasis cities including rock-cut Petra. Camel routes through the desert connect with Sabaea far to the south and with the grand oasis city of Palmyra further north along the 'King's Highway'. Palmyra, with its legions, its armoured cavalry and camel-riders currently dominates the cultures and cities of the Desert Kingdoms. The Palmyrenes are of Nabataean stock.

The nomads called Saraceni dominate life in Arabia. Where they settle they are skilful and thrifty, always able to turn a profit whatever it is they trade. In the rest of Arabia the bulk of the population live a nomadic life moving from oasis to oasis. They trade, graze their camels and raid settlements. The camel is not just a form of transport to the Saraceni but also a source of milk, food and wealth. Saraceni clan and tribal chiefs are called sheikhs.

On the Banks of the Nile: Between the deserts of Sinai and Libya, the fabulous river Nile emerges into the Middle Sea as a wide and swampy delta, filled with streams, rivers and water channels. The river has already cut through hundreds of kilometres of desert to reach the sea. The banks of the Nile are luxuriant with vegetation and annual floods keep the soil rich and fertile. This is Ægypt - a paradise, or so it used to be. Two hundred years ago the Empire took over and forced the last Pharaoh, Cleopatra, to commit suicide. Now this vast Garden of Eden is a run as a vast

Imperial plantation. The farmers are mercilessly taxed and taxed again. The ancient shaven-headed priesthoods carry on the age-old ceremonies within their fortress like temples. The animal cults thrive - giving hope to the hopeless. Meanwhile the pyramids stand silent watching the oppression of the people. Discontent, rebellion and banditry are rife. On the western tip of the delta stands Alexandria, capital of Ægypt, and the hub of the eastern world. The city is huge, and is home to a very cosmopolitan mix of people. The city has a great industrial economy and is also a centre of learning and study. Ionians gather here, as do Solymans, Imperials, Syrians and many others besides. Alexandria is a trade centre and has an impressive network of harbours, watched over by the famous Pharos lighthouse.

Further south along the Nile, the Imperial province borders a local kingdom, Golden Meroe, named after the rich gold mines found there. Meroe has been influenced by Ægyptian culture, but its people are native black Nubians, not Ægyptians. The culture is highly advanced, but holds some strange and sinister secrets amongst its rituals and customs. The wealthy dead are buried within small pyramid tombs. Bordering the Erythrean Sea in the neighbourhood of Meroe is the remarkable trading land of Axum. Centred on the city of Axum, the kingdom derives its wealth from its position on the trade route south. Its merchants of Sabaeen stock trade ivory, incense, perfumes and spices from beyond the Mountains of the Moon, from Sabaea and across the ocean from Melhuhha.

Africa: To the west of Ægypt lay the Imperial provinces of Africa; Mauritanian, Numidia, Africa Proconsularis, Tripolitania and Cyrenaica. Running

from west to east along the coastline of the Middle Sea these provinces have proven highly profitable for the Empire and Africa is a rich agricultural area. South of the major cities are the forbidding Atlas Mountains, and south of these, the vast and endless wastes of the Libyan Desert. Monsters and Libyan tribes are the only desperate inhabitants of these wild lands. Peace, stability and profitability are Imperial watchwords in Africa, but the encroaching desert and encroaching nomad raiders always threaten this peace. The wonderful array of wildlife in the grasslands and mountains of the region provide a continuous supply of wild beasts for the amphitheatres of the Empire and beyond, anything from leopards to lions, ostriches to elephants. Great cities here include Leptis Magna, Thamugadi, Cyrene and Cuicul.

Everyday Life

The Desert Kingdoms of the East are made up of many disparate lands, some of which have been in existence for many hundreds if not thousands of years. The great empires of the past and present have all left their mark on the societies that remain, and this means that many of the different societies share similar traits. The greatest influences have come from the Ionic empire of Alexander and more recently, the Empire of the Eternal City.

For the majority of the poor, life is basic. Dressed in just a simple kilt or tunic, the day starts early for the peasant and involves long hours in the fields under the burning sun, ploughing, sowing, harvesting, threshing, winnowing, digging irrigation ditches and tending cattle or sheep. For others the day is spent sat outside the workshop crafting pots, clothing, iron tools or whatever. Everyone owes a responsibility to the officials and tax

collectors who live in luxury within their walled villas or townhouses in the cities. These tax collectors might send round men twice each year, first to assess the taxes and then to collect.

Almost everyone lives in a village, a collection of little white-washed mud-brick houses with flat roofs and steps leading up to them. Several generations will live in only one or two rooms. The family animals will be kept outside, and stores of oil and grain will be kept in large jars within the house. The men gossip every day at the beer-house, the women at the well. Villages rarely have any need of silver denarii - everything is paid for in kind. Law and order is kept by the most senior man of the most respected family - and he will liaise with the tax collector and his men.

Government: The lands of the East are either ruled by a foreign power as a province, by a legitimate king or other overlord, or by a powerful ruling family. The provinces of the Empire, for example, are all ruled by provincial governors elected by the Imperial Senate. This man is a virtual king within his province, but his reign only lasts for two or three years before he is moved on. He has command of any legions stationed in his territory. Kings, on the other hand, rule Persia, Meroe, Axum, Armenia, Palmyra, Cimmeria, Colchis and Iberia. Depending on their relationship with neighbouring states, they may be entirely free to do as they please. Influential families govern the desert lands of Nabataea and Sabaea, while Solyma is ruled by an elite religious priesthood. The wild Saracen tribes remain ungoverned and ungovernable, even by Palmyra, and they continue to present a threat to civilisation.

Slavery: Enslavement of humans is a well established aspect of society. Most slaves are born to other slaves or are captured in wars. A slave learns to be obedient or is whipped, branded, mutilated or killed. Most slaves are house slaves or personal servants ('body slaves') but others are forced to work on chain-gangs in the mines, as oarsmen in the galleys of the Empire or Palmyra, or as gladiators fighting in the arena. A slave has no rights, and although some are treated very harshly, others are given great freedoms, sometimes wages with which they can buy their own freedom. Some slaves are highly educated men such as doctors, accountants or scribes. A freed slave ('freedman') generally has fewer rights than a freeman, but his children are born free. Children born to a slave are slaves, and belong to the master. He may or may not sanction liaisons between his slaves. The further one gets away from the Empire, the less freedom is given to slaves and the less likelihood that they will be able to rise in status or bring up families. In the East, in particular, noblemen, kings and princes often demand eunuch slaves for reasons of absolute loyalty. Such a slave without prospect of a wife or heirs has no reason to turn against his master. Eunuchs are given positions of great trust. The greatest slave markets are on the island of Delos, at Antioch and at Tyrus.

Clothing: For the poorest people of the East, clothing is simply a linen loincloth or kilt, or a simple dress if female. The clothing of wealthier men and women reflects the dominant culture at the time. Generally, in Imperial provinces and those lands that have once been part of the Empire, togas are worn by the wealthy, while short-sleeved tunics and cloaks are worn by other men. Women wear wrap-around stolas. In many cities and towns traditional eastern dress is still popular. For men this includes

knee-length long-sleeved tunics with close-fitting trousers, boots and wrap-around turbans or pointed Phrygian caps. Women wear long dresses with long sleeves, and caps or headdresses.

Cities & Towns: Cities and towns founded by the Empire are very well planned and strictly laid-out. Even



ancient eastern cities which came under Imperial influence have felt that hand of the Empire's planners. A typical eastern city is a sprawling and very jumbled affair. Houses are made of baked brick or stone and have a flat roof used for cooking and daytime activities. Houses are built back to back, crowded into city districts and cut by narrow, winding streets and alleyways. Markets and stalls crowd into open spaces near street intersections and at gateways. A stout fortified wall surrounds the heart of the city, and is usually pierced by several impressive gateways. Later houses, stables and wooden lean-to's are often built outside up against this wall. Outside the city are inns, market-stalls, beggars and slums.

City-dwellers live a more crowded life than farmers but it is still essentially a struggle for survival. Most townspeople engage in a craft rather than farm. They work for the wealthy businessmen or the temples. Others may have little shops - town houses with large ground-floor windows opening

onto the street. Goods are displayed outside or hung up within.

Oxen, camels, donkeys and bearers always crowd the narrow streets of any city - along with petty traders and many others trying to make an honest living. Most cities are encircled by brick or stone walls and have two or more gateways through which merchant caravans pass. More houses, shops, temples, warehouses and other buildings cluster outside the walls. On the coast a wide sloping beach will be backed by a long line of warehouses, stone-built jetties, merchant halls and trade agents' houses. From every city comes the smell of camel, of dung, human sewage and cooking fires. Most cities will have one or more markets held daily at the city gates, places of many sights and smells where established traders sell wares that they purchase from the caravans and where local craftsmen sell their wares. Fresh in from the fields would be farmers and their families selling any surplus vegetables and fruits they might have.

The city itself is divided into districts defined by trade, a silversmith's district, a potter's district, a temple district, a merchant's district - and so on. The city's specialist industry always groups itself together like this. The workers are often bound together within guilds to protect themselves and provide mutual aid. The city's public amenities will vary, but nearly all will include a forum, a public square where the two main streets cross, used for meetings, ceremonies and markets. Here men gather to find work, hear rumours or stories, campaign for office, find workers to hire, sell or buy wares, or just meet up with friends. A forum has long colonnades surrounding it, which contain shops and offices, as well as, on one side, a basilica. A basilica is both a public meeting hall and a law court, and

is a huge and impressive building. In or near the basilica is the rectangular-shaped curia (or senate house), used for meetings by the city's ruling men-folk, a theatre and a gymnasium used for athletic training, exercise and also intellectual pursuits such as study and lecturing. While gladiators can often fight in the forum or a temporary wooden arena, some cities have permanent gladiatorial arenas, some even have full sized circuses for chariot racing. The bigger cities also have gladiator training schools, often sited close to the amphitheatre. Nearly all cities and towns can boast luxurious public baths with steam rooms and hot water. And every city has temples, many open to the public and adjacent to or very near to, the forum. Other temples, meanwhile, are restricted to a select membership. Cemeteries are always found outside the walls, usually along a road leading away from the city, although in some cities of Syria and Phoenicia, an ancient practice of interring the dead in underfloor vaults still persists. Out in the streets there is no lighting, and the winding streets are pitch-black and treacherous. Robbers and gangsters are common dangers. The wealthy are carried about in litters by their slaves, and the way is lit by more torch-bearing slaves.



Housing: Although most town houses are tiny affairs with just a couple of rooms, some are more splendid places to live. These are virtually windowless (to stop thieves) and all the rooms on both floors face into a central courtyard

or garden. Men and women lead separate lives and live in separate parts of these wealthy abodes. The slaves, too, have their own rooms on the upper floor. A doorman (often a slave) usually admits people into the house, where they will emerge directly into the courtyard. Such a house would include a ground floor kitchen (with an open fire), women's quarters, men's dining room (often with mosaic floors and couches), a family gathering room (often with a central hearth), and a bathroom with basins, or terracotta bath, and drain. Every house has its altar to the household gods, and the grandest rooms are decorated with home-woven tapestries and rugs. Indoor lighting is normally achieved with clay lamps (using wicks and oil).

Social Status: Not everyone is equal. Below the freeman are several groups of people who do not enjoy the same status, rights or wages. Women are always poorly treated (depending on their status of course - Zenobia is queen of Palmyra), as are foreign settlers. Below them are slaves and other menials (including gladiators, prostitutes and criminals, for example). Above the freeman, working in the fields to cultivate wheat, barley, olives, grapes or flax, and his town-dwelling equal the craftsman, is an entire strata of educated families able to turn their sons into accountants, scribes, doctors, clerks, priests, merchants, farm managers and a hundred other educated professions. Above these are the real aristocrats, the city gentry able to sit on the town senate and affect public life through their vote. To qualify these families must have lots of property, land, money and 'muscle'. Although still obliged to follow the dictates of the king or governor, the senate still has great municipal powers.

Law and Order: Only civil cases are heard in the law courts (the town basilica), since the governments do not (need) to prosecute people. The courts are managed by the provincial governor or the king. He also selects judges who can do a good job, and (in serious cases) these men hear cases fought over by competing lawyers. If serious, a jury comes to a verdict and the judge announces the verdict and decides the punishment. Prisons exist only to detain criminals for trial.

The educated and wealthy are always treated with a good deal more respect and favour in law courts than 'everybody else'. For the wealthy who are found guilty, crimes such as fines and exile are more appropriate. For everyone else there are also confiscations of property, flogging, mutilation, service as a slave-gladiator or galley or mine slave, or execution (by wild animal, beheading or crucifixion). Public order is kept by the local garrison of the army, usually light troops such as cavalry or archers. Sometimes mercenaries are hired by the governor to keep the peace, or a special unit of troops, an urban cohort, is raised.

Economics: The standard coin throughout the East is the silver denarius, which is equivalent to 8 brass dupondii.. Twenty-five denarii are equal in value to a single gold aureus.

1 Aureus = 25 Denarii

1 Denarius = 8 Dupondii

Some eastern cities call their silver coins tetradrachmas or shekels. Throughout the Persian kingdom, the silver denarius is equal in value to the sigloi, while the aureus is equivalent to the Persian daric.



Entertainment: The people of the ancient world are able to relax and amuse themselves in a number of different ways. The wealthy often give dinner parties or elaborate banquets, complete with numerous courses and entertainment in the form of dancers, acrobats, poetry reading, musicians, wrestlers - even courtesans. Public entertainment consists mainly of the theatre, which hosts touring productions of comedies and tragedies (all the actors are male). Athletic competitions including running races, javelin throwing, boxing and other sports are still popular, although chariot racing has far surpassed these in popularity. Every circus (where they exist) is bursting to capacity for every race. The Empire has introduced a less wholesome entertainment - gladiatorial combats. Many cities have arenas specifically for this grisly sport. Again, gladiatorial fights are very popular; often some wealthy noble will sponsor an entire day's worth of fights. The different origins of combatants and the numbers of styles of fighting are seemingly endless. Most gladiators are slaves, though some are freemen and participate willingly. The final great past-time of the ancients is spending time at the baths. Cities and towns have public baths where customers can swim, bathe, plunge into hot water or sweat in a steam room where they can gossip with friends, lounge around, gamble,

read, write and exercise. The larger baths often incorporate an exercise field, offices, a library and colonnades for strolling or sitting in the shade. The greatest baths in existence are the Baths of Caracalla built in the Eternal City around fifty years ago. Private bath-houses can also be found in very large houses and villas, palaces, and forts.

The Calendar

The calendar used by the Empire is sophisticated and fairly accurate, and is current even beyond the Imperial borders. It uses a familiar system of 12 months, with an extra day added in Februarius every four years (the leap year). The Imperial names for these months are: *Januarius, Febrarius, Martius, Aprilis, Maius, Junius, Julius, Augustus, September, October, November, December*. Months contain a number of days equal to the modern Western months.

The early Imperial calendar did not use the current system of seven-day weeks, but instead numbered days of the month in relation to certain phases of the moon. The Kalends was the first day of the month, the Nones was the 5th or 6th and marked the first quarter of the moon, the Ides was the 13th or 14th of the month and marked the full moon. The days of the week are named by Ionic astrologers after the heavenly bodies: *Moonday, Marsday, Mercury-day, Jupiterday, Venusday, Saturday, Sunday*.

There are no weekly 'days of rest' but the Eternal City recognises well over one-hundred festival days each year and citizens of the Empire take the opportunity to relax and have a holiday or not, as their situation dictates. Some festivals are recognised only in the Eternal City, a few are recognised across the Empire (and even beyond).



The Farming Year

In Ægypt the climax of the year is the **Inundation Season** (mid-Julius to mid-November). The fields are flooded by Nile water and work comes to a halt. Some peasants are called up for mining or building works while everyone waits for the waters to recede. From mid-November to mid-Martius the **Growing Season** occupies everyone's time. The farmers plough the land and scatter the seed. In the weeks that follow they weed and water the growing crops. The **Harvest**, from Martius to Aprilis, is

gathered after tax men tour the estates to calculate how much grain each field will yield. After the harvest, before the heat of **Summer** (mid-Martius to mid-Julius) made the ground too hard, the irrigation ditches have to be repaired and new ones dug ready for the next flood. This is done as part of the labour that everyone paid to the king.

Lands without great rivers follow slightly different farming years. Grain is usually sown in October so that it can grow during the wetter months. In Aprilis or Maius the crops are harvested with sickles. The land is often left fallow to allow it time to recover. Immediately after the harvest the grain is threshed (separated from the stalks) by being trodden over by cattle. The chaff, the outer cover of the grain, can then be winnowed - tossed into the air so that the breeze can blow away the chaff.

III CREATING ADVENTURERS

There are three main types of character in **ZENOBIA**: adventurers, crafters and the learned. Crafters are anyone who use their labour to make a living, most are very poor, a few make quite a decent living. The learned are nobles, merchants, scribes, priests and others who have had some education and come from well-to-do families. Both the learned and crafters are civilians who almost never see combat and rarely have to risk their life in the pursuit of their profession. Adventurers, on the other hand, do. The adventurer is a wanderer, a tough warrior who seeks employment and his fortune in a world rife with opportunity for plunder and a grisly demise.

Normally each player will create and run one character, but there may be times when this basic rule is ignored. Perhaps one of the players cannot make it to the game and someone volunteers to run his character. Perhaps the adventure calls for an extra career type ... there are really no hard and fast rules.

As long as the players feel comfortable with the characters that they are running, and can see the world through the eyes of their character (or characters). Rarely should a player attempt to handle more than two characters at a time, though. The danger here is that he plays them all the same, or favours one to the detriment of the others.



The character creation rules below are only suitable for the creation of adventurers. Detailed crafters and learned folk can be created using rules given later in the game. Do not think that the characters created here are typical folk. They are not by any means!

There are **seven main steps** to character creation, but each step is very simple and quick to resolve.

STEP I	Select a Culture of Origin
STEP II	Roll the Attributes as directed in the relevant section
STEP III	Select a suitable Previous Experience for the character
STEP IV	Note down his skill. Make a MIGHT roll (roll 2d, add the MIGHT score for a result of 10 or more) to determine if the character receives the specified bonus
STEP V	Select or roll the Family Origins of the character
STEP VI	Allocate initial equipment and decide on any purchases before the game begins.
STEP VII	Decide on a background details such as a name and a brief character history. A description of the character's appearance will help too!

Step I - Cultural Origins

In **ZENOBIA** there are a number of major cultural groups that a character can come from. The use of these cultural labels is entirely optional, but should give the character a little more definition. The three dominant cultures of the Desert Kingdoms are the Persian, Aramaean and Imperial. However, others exist, and these are also described. A culture of origin provides the character with his native language, an idea about his general outlook and also some minor bonus.

Aramaean

Indigenous to the Desert Kingdoms, Aramaeans are the city-dwelling descendants of desert bedouin of a thousand years earlier. Tough, talkative and cunning, the Aramaean blood-lines have mingled and merged with centuries of invaders and settlers. Aramaeans are the most numerous since they have populated the Desert Kingdoms for a millennia.

Language: Aramaic

Character Bonus: +2 HITS

Imperial

Imperials have governed regions of the Desert Kingdoms for three centuries. Many Imperial families have since taken root, families of legionary veterans, colonists, entrepreneurs and landowners. They are practical and cultured. But they can also be blunt, harsh and lacking compassion. Some families are instead descended from Ionian settlers, but still share many aspects of Imperial culture. Imperial families are widespread in current or previously Imperial-occupied areas across the Desert Kingdoms, from Ægypt to Nabataea, Solyma to Decapolis - and can be either rich or poor.

Language: Imperial

Character Bonus: +1 LEARNING to give Fluent Imperial language ability

Persian

The influence of Persian culture is widespread in the Desert Kingdoms, and there are Persian enclaves throughout Chaldea, Osrhoene, Phoenicia, Armenia and the Decapolis. The Persians are a people of deserts and mountains, of tough lands. They are true of word and deed and devoted to fire cults and to the veneration of fravashis or guardian angels. Persian culture is exotic, sophisticated and urban.

Language: Aramaic

Character Bonus: Guardian Angel [fravashi]. See Guardian Angels, later.

Ægyptian

The native Ægyptians are a down-trodden underclass that have been ruled and administered first by Ionian invaders and now Imperials. They are an insular and haughty breed that believe Ægypt to be the one true “Temple of the World”. Ægyptians rarely venture (or get the opportunity to venture) out of the Nile Valley - they do so most often as bandits, legionnaires or wandering magicians.

Language: Ægyptian

Character Bonus: +1 FATE

Saracen

The Saracens are hardy desert nomads wandering the Desert of Lost Souls, riding camels and herding sheep. Their life is harsh, dominated by the need for food and water, and shelter from the ravages of the desert. Saracens often settle in the cities of Chaldea, Solyma or the Decapolis - communities are found everywhere. The Nabataeans and Sabaeans are cousins of the Saracens, related folk in their baggy desert robes, who settled down to agriculture hundreds of years earlier.

Language: Saraceni (or Nabataean or Sabaean)

Character Bonus: Desert Travel

Armenian

Armenia is an exotic eastern kingdom established in high mountains and fertile valleys. Its people have been fiercely independent for a thousand years, although Armenians have been greatly influenced by Persian culture, warfare, government and society. Armenia is famous for the wonderful horses which are bred in the river valleys, and every Armenian is an adept rider.

Language: Armenian

Character Bonus: +1 any action on horseback

Solyman

The Solymans of the Desert Kingdoms are a strange minority that worship the Nameless One to the exclusion of all other gods. Their faith in this god shapes their lives, and no Solyman can mix easily with folk of other cultures. They are defiant, proud, cultured and found in all big cities (especially Antioch and Alexandria).

Language: Aramaic

Character Bonus: +1 LEARNING (the extra language point is to be spent on Basic Solyman).

Carthaginian

The cities of North Africa are inhabited by the descendants of Carthaginians, the rulers of an ancient sea-going empire that fought with the Eternal City centuries ago. Now intermixed with Imperial colonists, the Carthaginians are redoubtable farmers, craftsmen and industrialists. The provinces of North Africa are almost a vast farming estate designed to feed the hungry mouths of the Eternal City. A Carthaginian is optimistic, erudite and hard-working. He'll never give up.

Language: Imperial

Character Bonus: +1 CRAFT

Cappadocian

Asia Minor is home to two ancient kingdoms, Cappadocia and Pontus. Their people have an eastern culture that is descended from Thracian invaders hundreds of years ago. Their Phrygian caps are distinctive, and they wear the long-sleeved tunics and baggy pants of the Persians. Both kingdoms are mountainous, and cut by well-watered valleys. Its folk are hardy mountaineers used to their own company and unused to the cosmopolitan riches of the lowland cities.

Language: Ionic

Character Bonus: Movement through hills and mountains at x 1.5 normal rate (the character can act as a pathfinder, and lead others through the mountains at the same rate).

Chaldean

Chaldea is an ancient land of vast fertile rivers winding through deserts to the sea. The Chaldeans have lived in immense walled baked-brick cities for as long as records tell. They are incredibly urban and sophisticated people with a knowledge of astronomy, mathematics, medicine, demonology and much more besides. Outside of the huge cities, farmers negotiate flooded fields and swamps on reedboats, maintaining complex irrigation works to keep the crops watered.

Language: Aramaic

Character Bonus: +2 in spirit combat, and halve any hostile Terror scores

Libyan

South of the big cities of North Africa, the dry steppe gives way to desert, and the Libyan tribes ride camels and horses and herd goats and sheep in this hostile no-mans-land. The Libyans have frequently terrorized the cities and so are never trusted by the authorities. Some turn to mercenary work to make a living in the Desert Kingdoms, others turn to banditry or settle in the impoverished ghetto of some powerful Imperial city.

Language: Libyan

Character Bonus: Desert Travel



Step II - Attributes

To create an adventurer for the world of **ZENOBIA**, players roll six-sided dice to come up with random numbers. These are used to stand for various attributes of the adventurer, his strengths and weaknesses. The primary attributes are: **MIGHT**, **FATE**, **HITS**, **CRAFT** and **LEARNING**. There are also two other attributes which will be dealt with later on in the chapter on fighting battles - **COMBAT** and **ARMOUR**.

MIGHT

A measure of strength, physical prowess, and fighting ability. Roll 1d and re-roll any score of '1'.

FATE

Luck and the will of the Gods. Fate is also a measure of the adventurer's inner power. Roll 1d and re-roll any score of '1'.

HITS

The adventurer's toughness, endurance and bodily health. At 0 HITS he is dying. Roll 2d and add 10.

CRAFT

A measure of the adventurer's ability to perform basic manual tasks, to repair or construct items and work as a craftsman. Initial score is 1.

LEARNING

A measure of education, book learning and social skills such as persuasion and leadership. Initial score is 1.

Over time these attributes may increase, and the procedure for this is given later on in the game (in the Religion chapter). Note, here, however HITS may never rise beyond 30 and other attributes may not rise beyond 10.

Step III - Previous Experience

It is likely that the character has already been pursuing some sort of profession for a few years before he actually begins his adventures under the control of the player. Such professions give the player an idea about his character's personality and behaviour and might spark useful ideas about his background.

Previous Experience and Skills

One of the main benefits of a past profession is that it gives the adventurer a skill that can be used during adventures. Professions also give a chance to start the game with some money and equipment. All characters receive a basic set of equipment (with money), but they also receive an additional sum, depending on which profession they have chosen. In addition, by making a successful MIGHT roll (roll 2d and add the character's MIGHT score for 10 or more), the character receives a bonus. Again, check the relevant profession.



Archer

A skilled Eastern warrior - an expert shot and a professional mercenary.

The Empire has its legionnaires - clad in plate and wielding shortswords; the Desert Kingdoms have their archers. Archery is a skill given great status in the East. While most eastern armies are composed of cataphract cavalry or horse archers, the infantry they do have is usually made up of bowmen. Archers are the only really experienced infantrymen in the Desert Kingdoms that are professional warriors. They act as mercenaries, moving from kingdom to kingdom clutching their bow and quiver. An archer is a self-reliant fighter, able to make his own bow and arrows.

Culture Note:	Not for Imperial characters
Money:	180 denarii
Skill:	Killing Shot
Bonus:	Bow, Quiver and 12 Arrows, Helm.

Thief

One of the clever thieves, burglars and con-artists that live in most cities.

These gangsters are opportunistic burglars and hold-up men who operate amongst the twisting alleys of the larger cities. Others work in teams or brotherhoods, and in this way are able to carry out more elaborate scams. A player character rogue is possibly one of the many freelancers who wander from city to city, parting fools from their silver through deception, trickery and theft and then moving on before the authorities can catch him.

Culture Note:	-
Money:	200 denarii
Skill:	Open Lock
Bonus:	Two daggers and two phials of Aqua Noxious (deadly poison).

Bandit*Desperate men living in the wilderness and preying on merchants and other travellers.*

When times are hard, farmers give up on the crops and take to the forests and hills. There they use whatever weapons they can find to steal from others. They raid wagons, attack travellers and even plunder lonely villas. It is a precarious life, living hand-to-mouth with other bandits, dodging the legions and with only the fate of crucifixion to look forward to. Bandits are free to live how they want and travel where they want. They develop into tough and combat-hardened mercenaries able and willing to fight for their own survival.

Culture Note: -
Money: 1d x 25 denarii
Skill: Hiding
Bonus: Roll once on the Random Treasure Table.

Cataphract*Heavily armoured warrior-nobles from the East, 'knights of the desert'*

When Eastern lords ride into battle they ride on impressive warhorses and wear complete suits of chainmail or scale mail. They make an impressive sight as they complete their cavalry manoeuvres on the field. Out of the saddle, a cataphract is a wealthy noble (or not so wealthy, perhaps he has been impoverished or forced to take up mercenary work), and he has an estate to run, slaves to command and a villa to inhabit. Imperial nobles do not go to war like this (see Tribune).

Culture Note: only Noble Persian, Aramaean or Armenian
Money: 400 denarii
Skill: Mounted Combat
Bonus: Scale Armour, Horse, Helm, Spear

Horse Archer*Adaptable shock warriors, skilled with bridle and bow*

Eastern noblemen learn to ride horses and shoot bows from a young age. In battle they form a huge arm of light cavalry used for scouting, raiding, patrols and shock missile attacks. The very rich nobles don heavy armour and a lance to charge the enemy full-on (but still carry their bow with them into the fray). Most eastern armies contain very few infantry, but simply masses and masses of horse-archers. Not all are poor noblemen, many are mercenaries, or Turanian nomads, or caravan guards or policemen.

Cultural Note: Aramaean, Persian, Saraceni, Nabataean, Cappadocian, Armenian
Money: 180 denarii
Skill: Parthian Shot
Bonus: Bow, Quiver, 12 Arrows

Hunter*Lone hunters, forever on the trail of their prey*

Most societies have hunters, men on the fringes who are independent, who search the wildlands for game to bring to the table. There may also be some (especially in North Africa) who track wild animals not to kill, but to capture for the bloody beast fights of the Imperial games.

Cultural Note: -
Money: 60 denarii
Skill: Read Tracks
Bonus: 2 Javelins, Fighting Net, Foxskin Hat

Spy*Shadowy figures in the alleyways and palace courtyards, assassins and deceivers*

Every culture has spies. The Persian kingdom has many spies, organized into an official cadre called the *askadar*. They resemble a unit of secret police. But spies proliferate everywhere that rumour, information, gossip and mistrust flourish. The professional spy can fight, too, and has been known to conduct assassinations on his employer's behalf.

Cultural Note: -
Money: 1d x 50 denarii
Skill: Silent Movement
Bonus: Dagger, False Papers, Stolen Key (see your referee!)

Desert Warrior*Camel-riding bedouin of the desert. Fanatical warriors and raiders - often fighting as mercenaries*

Desert warriors are the muscle of a nomad tribe; they protect the tribe and form the sheikh's bodyguard. Most of the men can fight, but the warriors are the 'braves' who lead the battles. Nomads trek from one waterhole to another with their camels, sheep, tents and families. They know the ways of desert survival. They are honourable and utterly loyal to their clan. A nomad's word is his bond. They are also prone to a bit of banditry, raiding isolated settlements and even trade caravans.

Culture Note: Saraceni or Libyan only
Money: 1d x 25 denarii
Skill: War Cry
Bonus: Roll once on the Random Treasure Table

Gladiator

These men have fought to the death in the arena for the pleasure of the crowds

The gladiators are slaves forced to fight in the arena for the pleasure of spectators. Many duels are to the death, others just to first blood. Sometimes these fighters are pitted against wild animals, sometimes against armed prisoners. The gladiator is owned by a lanista ('butcher-boy'), a manager of fighters who rents them out for games or festivals. Their home is a gladiator school (a ludus). Most gladiators are trained in one particular style of fighting. Gladiators, although slaves, receive great public adulation and the most successful have very interesting social lives outside of the ludus! At the start of the game it is assumed that the gladiator has earned his freedom, or been granted his freedom after a succession of successful fights. Or he might have escaped and be on the run.

Culture Note:	-
Money:	1d x 50 denarii
Skill:	Killing Blow
Bonus:	Manicae, Spear and Helm

Legionary

Soldiers of the legions, men who are tough fighters and disciplined military men

The Imperial legions and the soldiers who marched with them, the legionnaires, form one of the most successful armies in history. Soldiers might be Imperial sons eager to follow the legions and seek promotion, or simpler Ægyptian or Aramaean folk seeking just a decent wage. Whatever his origins he is a professional, spending most of his life with the legion. He is loyal to the emperor and tries to earn honour and glory in battle as well as promotion to higher ranks. The best and oldest soldiers are the centurions; a successful MIGHT test for a bonus indicates promotion to the centurionate (but only for Imperial characters). A centurion receives a pair of Greaves in addition to a Mail Cuirass. Every legionary is a skilled swordsman and javelin thrower - all have nerves of steel. In combat and in the field, the legionary wears a chainmail or plate segment cuirass, a legionary helm, and heavy belt, and he carries a spear, a shortsword, a dagger and a large rounded shield. On the march he carries even more gear, including his part of the tent, pickaxe, fence post and building tools.

Culture Note:	Not available to Persians
Money:	180 denarii
Skill:	Hard To Kill
Bonus:	Mail Cuirass (also Greaves if admitted to the centurionate)

Tomb Robber

Brave and foolhardy plunderers of tombs, graves, temples and pyramids

For millennia mighty kings, merchant princes and the aristocrats of bygone empires have been laid to rest with all of their worldly possessions. Sometimes the wealth of a kingdom vanished into a rock-cut tomb or an impregnable desert mausoleum. Often the secrets of these carefully guarded tombs were passed on by the stonemasons who made them. Sometimes the stonemasons themselves returned to these tombs months later. The tomb robber is a professional, probably once a stonemason himself. He understands the construction of these resting places as well as the kinds of traps and other dangers within them. But he pays a price - tomb robbers, like assassins, are reviled and despised by all decent folk and he must keep his profession secret or face execution. The artefacts he raids may only fetch scrap value, or they may be objects desired by some Imperial collector, or even a weapon or artefact from ancient myth - a piece of living magic!

Culture Note:	-
Money:	1d x 25 denarii
Skill:	Traps & Secret Doors
Bonus:	Roll once on the Random Treasure Table

Tribune

A proud officer of the legions - educated and eager for promotion

Only Imperial characters may become tribunes. The legions need educated men of good standing to command their soldiers in both peacetime and in war. They must be literate and intelligent, keen observers of men, used to politics and handling problems of many kinds. The young men begin at the bottom of the promotional ladder - first seeking a commission as a town magistrate, and then joining the legions as commander of a cohort of scouts for a few years. The next post might be as one of the staff officers to a legionary commander. A success here might see the tribune gain command of one of the cavalry regiments. The best posts are commands of the few double-strength cavalry regiments and of course of an actual legion (a post opened to tribunes by the reigning emperor Gallienus himself). Many tribunes return to political life after just one or two posts - some dedicate their lives to the legions.

Culture Note:	Noble Imperial characters only
Money:	400 denarii
Skill:	+2 LEARNING points
Bonus:	Plate Cuirass

Slinger

Skilled troopers with little or no fear in the face of death.

Although mostly auxiliaries, slingers are used to a good effect by the Sassanid Persians, and even the Empire recruits them. Some of them are clad in leather cuirasses, although the best part of them wear no armour at all, which makes them highly agile and manoeuvrable. Due to the fact that slingers only make up a small number of the troop total, they are mostly mercenaries, offering their combat skills and their fighting know-how to the best paying lord, king or chieftain. That's also the reason that most of them are always "on the move", wandering around the many Desert Kingdoms to offer their services and their fighting skill to anyone who has a job for them. Most of them are only loyal to themselves and to the man who pays them their wages.

Culture note: Not for Imperial characters

Money: 1d6 x 25 denarii

Skill: Evade

Bonus: Sling, dagger, loot bag, sun-hat

Random Treasure Table

<i>1d</i>	<i>Treasure</i>	<i>Notes</i>
1	Bow	A standard bow, with quiver and 10 arrows
2	Cavalry Helm	An ornate cavalryman's helmet with full protection.
3	Silver Dagger	Knife blessed by the goddess Luna, capable of harming 'creatures of the night'
4	Cloak Brooch	Golden brooch in animal form worth 250 denarii
5	Aqua Somnus	A potion of sleep that lasts for eight hours
6	Aqua Vitae	A healing potion with a store of 30 HITS that can be portioned out

Step IV - Social Class

The character might come from any one of several social niches. Perhaps his father was a slave, perhaps he was a priest or maybe even a wealthy aristocrat! He may have been a shepherd, perhaps a hill or irrigation farmer, a craftsman or some city dweller. But whatever the details of the character's origins, he has since emerged into the world as a poor man and must make his way without the riches his family might have enjoyed.

A player may select a social class from the table below, or he may roll 1d to determine his origins randomly. The table provides an easily remembered origin for the character.

1d Roll	Social Class
1	Outsider. The family were outsiders, wanderers, labourers, shepherds or nomads, often on the move, cut-off from society and living hand-to-mouth, day-to-day. Their place is a low one with little respect.
2	Slave. The character has grown up in a town or city as the son of slaves. Working day after day in the workshop or household of some wealthy citizen, the character has now gained his freedom (either by buying it, by being awarded it by a generous master, or by running away). Alternatively, the character's slave father might have earned his freedom. Either way, he is now free.
3	Peasant. The family was poor, living in a crowded town house or a village with little spare food. A living could be made from the river or the fields, but taxes took much of this away. Yet the family had a regular income and a place in their society.
4	City-Dweller. The family had mastered a craft and were valued members of the village or town. Other people came to them for goods or services. The family probably owned a business within the city.
5	Scribe. Educated and well read, the family moved in higher circles than others. The family home might have been a well-to-do town house or well appointed villa in the countryside. They were not aristocrats, but were nevertheless cultured, well paid, highly educated and comfortable.
6	Noble. The family was a noble and honourable one, born to rule and with legitimate claims to land and villages in the area. Although it may have been a long way from royalty, the family owns vast estates, workshops or other capital and its men-folk are highly educated and involved with the politics of kingdoms, sitting on city councils as magistrates. A well established and highly thought of family.

The Class Skills

These different social classes provide different types of training for their children. Even without formal training, a character has picked up a decent amount of information - a skill. A skill is a talent or ability which an occupation, social class or profession teaches. Social class will also have an effect on how educated a character is, or how good they are with their hands. Skill descriptions, attribute bonuses and details of how they can be used in play are given further down.

<i>Social Class</i>	<i>Skill</i>	<i>CRAFT Bonus</i>	<i>LEARNING Bonus</i>
Outsider	Find Direction	3 dice	2 dice
Slave	Streetwise	5 dice	2 dice
Peasant	Carry Burden	4 dice	3 dice
City-Dweller	Evaluate	5 dice	3 dice
Scribe	Organise	3 dice	5 dice
Noble	Seek Audience	3 dice	5 dice

Attribute bonuses are rolled once and any '6' result adds +1 to the relevant attribute score. For example, a City-Dwelling character rolls 5d for CRAFT and gets 6, 2, 1, 4, 5. Thus he gets a +1 to add to his initial CRAFT score of '1'. Additional '6' results just add more +1 bonuses to the attribute.

Step V - Skills

A skill has no number attached to it, like FATE, LEARNING or MIGHT. A character either possesses a skill or does not. The use of each skill is different and both referee and player must determine the exact use of a skill by checking the descriptions given below.

Carry Burden: The character has plenty of hard experience as a bearer - someone who carries around loads on his back. It means he can comfortably carry far more than his body size would suggest. A strongman might be able to lift the weight over his head, but only a bearer could carry it across the desert all day! A proficient Bearer has double the load capacity of an unskilled character (see Initial Equipment, later in this chapter).

Desert Travel: Travel through desert terrain can prove deadly to the unskilled and lack of water will slowly kill a traveller, day by day. The character with Desert Travel knows about the dangers of heat stroke, heat exhaustion, sunburn, sand storms, lack of salt, sand blindness and a host of other problems including the chances of floods in dry desert valleys and the value of wearing desert clothing. A character with Desert Travel suffers minimal damage when in desert

terrain and knows where and how to find waterholes or likely spots to dig for water in stony desert each day. See the later section on deserts in the Adventure Tool-Kit.

Evade: The character can avoid and flee violent confrontations and attacks very easily. If he spends 1 FATE point he gains a +4 bonus on his COMBAT roll to avoid combat. And he only needs to make this roll once to retreat (see Retreating). Evade only works if the PC is not wearing metal armour and is not carrying a weapon heavier than a dagger or club, or a shield.

Evaluate: The character can immediately assess the worth of an item of trade or an item of treasure. He knows what this item should be worth on the open market in a typical city or town. It does not apply to one-of-a-kind items, exotic, magical or previously unknown items, but only typical, commonly known, trade or treasure goods.

Find Direction: The character is always sure from which direction he has just come, can retrace his steps perfectly, and has an uncanny knack of being able to determine the direction north, with only the minimum amount of observable clues.

Hard To Kill: The character is hardened to pain and wounding, he has an in-built armour factor of 1. Any wounds inflicted upon him are reduced by one point.

Hiding: The character is expert at concealment and ambush. He is able to literally cover his tracks to prevent pursuit and can hide behind or within many different features to avoid detection. When someone attempts to spot the character that searcher gets an automatic -2 to his roll. A common use for Hiding is to ambush passing characters and gain complete surprise.

Killing Blow: The character has trained to hit certain parts of a target's anatomy in hand-to-hand combat. He knows just where to strike for most damage, whether throat, eye, groin or heart etc. This precision attack costs 1 point of FATE, but provides the adventurer with +4 on the damage that he inflicts (if the attack is successful). This bonus is good only for that single attack.

Killing Shot: The character has trained to hit certain parts of a target's anatomy in missile combat. He knows just where to strike for most damage, whether throat, eye, groin or heart etc. This precision attack costs 1 point of FATE, but provides the adventurer with +4 on the damage that he inflicts (if the attack is successful). This bonus is good only for that single attack.

Mounted Combat: The character is trained to fight hand-to-hand from horseback and gains a +2 bonus to hit, regardless of what hand-to-hand weapon he uses or whether his opponent is on horseback or not. Normally an unskilled rider would be at -2 to any attack!



Open Lock: The character is an expert at picking locks. Locks are very expensive in the Desert Kingdoms, used only by noble families, some very rich merchants and royalty. Locks are big and heavy. To use this skill a tool is required, either pre-prepared or improvised. A CRAFT roll is required to successfully pick a lock.

Organise: The character is trained to solve problems, to be efficient, to maximise resources and minimise waste! The Empire trains an army of scribes with the ability to organise and many consider this army more potent than its legions! A character with organise can always seem to speed up any team effort, always find a way to stretch resources just enough, can scrounge desperately needed items, and always find some way to cut corners. It may take some thinking time (or calculating time if that is more appropriate) but he can usually do it.

Parthian Shot: Used to shooting arrows from horseback, the character can use his bow without penalty while walking, running or riding. While on horseback he can even shoot backwards - a very useful manoeuvre when fleeing the battle!

Read Tracks: Fresh tracks and spoor can be identified and interpreted, allowing a tracker to assess the possible direction and number of an animal type. Certain terrain, time and bad weather will all badly degrade animal tracks. Humans, too, leave distinctive and tell-tale tracks that can (in ideal circumstances) betray direction, speed, numbers, burden carried and even how long ago they were made.

Seek Audience: The character is familiar with court etiquette and ritual and is readily able to 'play the system' to use the right amount of flattery and demand to get to see a high-ranking personage. A very useful skill!

Silent Movement: The character can creep about in total silence, making him a great thief or assassin! He cannot run or perform any other exertions, but must move slowly and cautiously. Note that this skill is not some magical power. If the character is walking on pebbles then he cannot rationally *avoid* making a noise ...

Streetwise: The character has experience with crime and the criminal underworld in one or more of the large cities of the Desert Kingdoms. FATE can be rolled to establish a contact in a city with members of a criminal gang (perhaps thieves or assassins). Bribes are standard for such contacts. Rolls can also be made to make a variety of illegal deals within this underworld culture, to find certain people or be introduced to an important figure.

Traps & Secret Doors: The character can spot traps and secret doors more reliably than others (who trust to FATE) and knows just how to deal with them. He can disarm or otherwise bypass traps, and can open a known secret or concealed door. Rather than possessing acute eyesight, the character has a 'feeling' that a trap or secret door is in the immediate area. This helps to prevent this skill ruining an adventure. When a character with this skill nears a concealed trap the referee can simply tell the player that 'there is a trap nearby'. The character is thus on edge and forewarned but is still not sure where the trap is or what it is, indeed he may even still become a victim of the trap! The same goes for the existence of a secret door.

War Cry: The character can work himself into a terrible frenzy with a ritual war cry that might scare his opponent and give himself courage. A war cry must be screamed while engaging a fresh opponent, and costs him 1 point of FATE. It provides him with a +2 to hit against any opponent(s) for 1-6 combat rounds.



Step VI - Initial Equipment

Any gains made from Previous Experience is added to the character's initial equipment, listed below:

Shortsword
Pack
Firebow
3 Torches
Waterskin
Pouch
Denarii (1d x 50 denarii)



Carrying Equipment

How much can an Adventurer carry? Players have a tendency to overload their characters, picking up equipment, loot, new weapons and so on without thought. This isn't how we envisage the cool heroes of Conan, Gladiator, The Lord of the Rings or Troy. The rule should be 'carry what's valuable, ditch the rest'. As a rule of thumb assume that an adventurer can comfortably carry $\text{MIGHT} + 8$ items, this is his Load Capacity. An item is an object that can held in one hand (like a dagger, quiver, helmet, scroll or a sword). Larger objects, often two-handed objects (such as spears, shields and bows) count as two items. Some items (pouches, hats etc.) are either too small, or counted as being worn. Armour is as heavy as its Armour Value. Being encumbered (ie. going over your $\text{MIGHT} + 8$ maximum) results in half speed and - 1 on all physical actions. No one may encumber themselves beyond $\text{MIGHT} + 12$ items. Those characters with Carry Burden skill get to double their MIGHT when calculating Load Capacity.

Price Lists

Travel

<i>Item</i>	<i>Price (denarii)</i>
Camel	1000
Chariot	1200
Donkey	500
Horse	1000
Merchant Ship	8000
Rowboat	250
Trireme	25000
Wagon (2-wheel)	350
Wagon (4-wheel)	500

Other Items

<i>Item</i>	<i>Price (denarii)</i>
Blanket	15
Chain (10m.)	120
Clay Lamp	20
Cooking Equipment	135
Food, Good Meal	1
Food, Trail Ration (one week)	5
Healing Herbs (5 uses)	75
Horse Grain (one week)	10
Horsewhip	25
Ink, Quills and Papyrus	90
Knife	20
Lamp (clay)	10
Lamp Oil	4
Lyre	100
Pack	10
Panniers (for donkey)	25
Pickaxe	35
Pouch	3
Rope (10m.)	40
Saddle & Bridle	300
Saddlebags	180
Soldier's Mess Tin	30
Tent (3 man)	180
Tool	40
Torch	1
Waterskin	5
Wax Tablet	140

Fashion

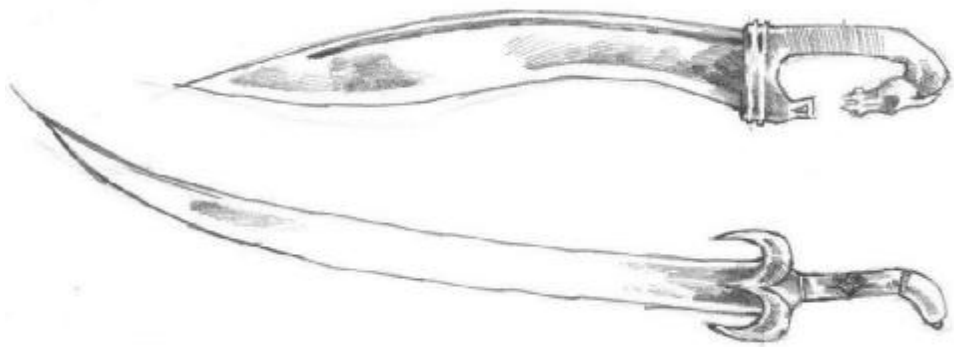
<i>Item</i>	<i>Price (denarii)</i>
Bath & massage	15
Cloak	60
Cloak Brooch	20-120
Dress	45
Hairbrush	20
Haircut (barbershop)	10
Hairpin	25
Hat	25
Headband	10
Military Boots	120
Mirror	140
Perfumed Oils	50
Sandals	50
Tunic	40

Weaponry

<i>Item</i>	<i>Combat Bonus</i>	<i>Price (in denarii)</i>
Battleaxe	+2	100
Bow (2H)	+2	150
Boxing Cestus (only if unarmed)	+2	10
Burning Torch	+2	1
Club	+1	5
Dagger	+1	35
Dart	+2	5
Fighting Net	-	120
Handaxe	+1	25
Javelin	+3	60
Longsword	+2	150
Pilum	+3	125
Scimitar	+2	120
Shield	+1 (defence only)	100
Shortsword	+2	100
Sling	+1	10
Spear	+3	20
Staff	+1	5
Trident	+3	35
Whip (2m. long, used by wagondrivers)	+2 (only stun)	25
12 Arrows	-	24
10 Slingshot	-	5
Quiver (holds 12 arrows)	-	15

Armour

<i>Item</i>	<i>Armour Rating</i>	<i>Price (denarii)</i>
Greaves (legs)	1	2500
Helm	1	100
Leather Cuirass	1	300
Mail Cuirass (scale-mail or chain-mail)	2	800
Manicae (one arm)	1	400
Plate Cuirass	3	1200
Shield (for defence only, +1 Combat Bonus)	-	100
Cataphract Armour	6	4200



Step VII - Background Details

There are a host of lesser details that can be created for a player character, details that really bring that character to 'life' in the imaginations of the players. Players needn't write reams of background history - a short paragraph should suffice, outlining the character's upbringing, his early career or life, the changes that affected him and the chain of events that gave him the previous experience selected by the player. Every character really needs some kind of background story. Where are they from? Why have they turned their backs on their old life to adventure in the big wide world?

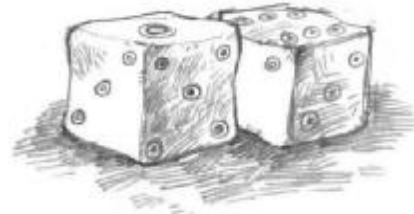
The ideal background runs a little like a unresolved story. Sketch out the character's family upbringing on the farm, in the workshop, out on the pasture or closeted within a luxurious villa. What kind of relationship did he have with his family and his siblings? Was there tension, a dark secret, a rivalry, hatred, love and a strong friendship?

The next step is to determine what happened next. Did the character follow in his family's footsteps? Did he branch out, fighting the system? Did some other agent of change arrive on the scene to change his life forever? Did the character make good friends and strong enemies during these years? Was he betrayed or did he betray others?

A good character background helps to explain where the character came from and explains how he came to have certain skills, likes and dislikes. The **best** character backgrounds leave some issues unresolved - plot hooks dangling in front of the referee. Enemies might be hunting the character, he may be on a quest, or have been shunned by his own family. Whatever the details may be, the character's background is in danger of coming back to haunt him. Referees love to have these plot devices, since they can be woven into the fabric of the game. Think of any movie or novel: how may protagonists get involved in the plot because of something that happened to them in their characters' pasts? Plenty. Do the referee a favour and give him one of these unresolved plot ideas ...

The following tables are given here as an aid for the player stuck for ideas. Pick one of the listings or just roll the dice and try to explain the results. Better still, come up with something unique!

Family Fortunes: Has the family always had its current status, or has it risen from more obscure origins through a royal grant or financial acumen.



Perhaps it has been reduced in rank by warfare, economic catastrophe, divine intervention or the wrath of an angry lord. Roll 1d and refer to the table below:

1d Roll Previous Status

1,2	Lower than at present
3,4	Same as current status
5,6	Higher than at present

The referee and player are encouraged to come up with an interesting reason **why** the family's fortunes changed, and what impact it has made on the outlook of the current generation (if any).

Family Relationships: Not everyone gets on with their family. In the Desert Kingdoms families are not just hereditary units but actual economic units. Members are also co-workers that depend on each other for the family to prosper. This table looks at the relationship between the character and his family.

2d Roll	Family Relationship
2	Taking the family business in a new direction
3	Earned himself the respect and admiration of his family
4	Brought disgrace on the family name
5	About to follow in his father's footsteps
6	Following in footsteps of ambitious brother
7	Has become involved in a secret criminal/political scandal
8	Rose beyond family's expectations
9	Shows possibility of taking over the family business
10	Black sheep - a rebel
11	Found a way to earn money another way
12	Fled the family in disgrace

What Happened Next?: What happened to the character to change his life and set him on a new course, a path that will be charted more fully during the game? Player characters aren't stay-at-home farmers any more, they are adventurers, entrepreneurs and heroes of a kind. This table comes up with a number of agents for this sudden change. The player and referee will still have to come up with some sort of story as to what happened and why. Simply choose or roll 3d to determine what kind of agent inspired the character to abandon his old life.

3d Roll The 'Agent of Change'

3	Criminal act
4	Major military disaster
5	Involved in a rebellion or coup
6	Accident
7	Whim of a king or lord
8	Incident in a battle
9	Intervention of a god
10	Family feud
11	Arrival of a stranger
12	Arrival of strange group (nomads, mercenaries, pilgrims, entertainers)
13	Enmity of a rival (within the family or without)
14	Local calamity calls for action
15	Sorcery
16	Intervention of some supernatural entity
17	Appearance of an ancient artefact
18	Ancient curse or destiny fulfilled

Personality - Why? Why? And Why?

Often roleplayers shy away from creating distinct 'personalities' for their characters. Many play the game 'as themselves'. Firstly, this is a game and there is nothing wrong with just getting involved as yourself. Secondly, we are not all Shakespearean actors and even the best of us have difficulty in putting on a separate and distinct mindset, complete with body language and accent.

But, keep in mind that your character has done things, seen things and been places that you couldn't imagine. He lives in an ancient world dominated by god-like kings, wealthy temples and ties of brotherhood and kinship. Most definitely these guys are not like us.

Apart from this basic fact, we want our characters to be different from one another - unique. Let's say I want a character who is a thief, but the character of the player sat next to me also steals anything of value. He's not a thief, it's just the way he plays his character.

To make my character into a real thief, we can give him a thief's personality! We make him a coward, frightened of direct violent confrontation. We make him a kleptomaniac - he steals **anything**, and works out if it's valuable or not later on. We make him quiet and shy - someone who stays in the (social) shadows. Now we have a realistic, believable thief, rather than just a 'character who steals valuables'.

You have (hopefully) created a background story for your Desert Kingdoms character, and you now need to add an extra dimension to that story. That dimension is personality. In effect, what effect has the background story had on the player character. Has it made him more optimistic, fatalistic? Does he hate desert nomads or Imperials now? Does he covet wealth and jewels more than anything else? Or is power his thing?

You don't need to (and probably shouldn't) come up with ideas for your character's personality out of the blue. Think up some likes and dislikes, but just as importantly, look at his background story. What happened to the character? What scars have been left? Will he react in a different way in some circumstances now? These are the cues you need to create a realistic character with a realistic personality.

The best way to create that depth is by asking three questions: why? why? and why?

Pick out some aspect of your character's professional life, or identify some personality quirk that sets him apart from other characters. It could be his fear of snakes, his love of jewellery, a fascination with ships or the fact that he is a womaniser. Pick or create one such quirk and ask 'why?'. Why is the character like that? Perhaps he's a womaniser because he thinks he's really good looking and wants to prove it. Then ask 'why' a second time. Why does the character want to prove that he's good looking? Perhaps he was scorned when he was younger and has never forgotten it. Now for that third and final 'why?', usually the most difficult of all the questions to answer. Why did he never forget that first rebuff? Perhaps the girl was of such lowly rank, perhaps a slave, he was

shocked that she would have nothing to do with him.

So what have we learnt about our womaniser? He's of quite good breeding, and was once rebuffed by a slave girl. This had a big impact on him - perhaps it was his first love. He's never forgotten that rebuff and continues to womanise to prove to himself that he is not at fault. He may have a grudge against all slaves now, since he realises they have some power after all. He may treat all women (even those of his own social rank) as if they were slaves of a kind.

This system of asking 'why?' three



times in succession is known as the Y3 system (get it?) and has been used by some authors to add instant depth to the characters in their novels and screenplays. It is recommended, too, for roleplaying games and is a system that can be utilised by the referee when creates Non-player characters, either before the game begins or even 'on the fly'.

Appearance

The appearance of your ZENOBIA character might seem to be a very trivial thing. The author has played in some other games where 80% of the player characters didn't have descriptions but were just 'a magic user', a 'fighter' and so on. Think of any big film and the care taken to really personalise the hero. The appearance often becomes a visual description of the hero's past life or personality. Players should do their characters a favour and give a brief

written description of their character for all to read. Things to note, however, are that tunics without trousers are universal amongst Imperials and Ægyptians, long robes are popular amongst the desert nomads, and amongst the Persians and many Aramaeans long tunics are often worn with baggy trousers. But if the Adventurer, as a warrior, wants to wear a loincloth and what-ever armour he can afford - then that's fine!

To personalise a hero, think of a trademark 'look'. An eyepatch, a scar, a distinctive top-knot, tall, short, wears all-black, blue eyes, crooked teeth, a cackling laugh, a whisperer, cracks his knuckles, wears rings, has a broken nose, stubble, a short pointy beard (popular amongst Aramaeans), and so on and so on. Just one or two 'quirks'



will keep an image of that character fresh inside of everyone's head ...

A Name

Naming is very easy. One of the reasons the **ZENOBIA** setting came about was for the opportunity to give characters Greek and Roman names (i.e. Ionian and Imperial names). Whether the character is an Imperial or not, so much Imperial influence has washed over the Desert Kingdoms over the past three or

four centuries that all kinds of people give their children Ionian or Imperial names. Persians most definitely are the exception, however. Since the player characters begin the game as wanderers, tough soldiers and misfits, they may well have 'adopted' a name anyway. For Imperial and Ionian names check the list below.

For those who want a more culturally-orientated name for their character then two additional lists are presented, one specifically for native Ægyptian characters (not members of the Imperial elite), and one for the native inhabitants of the Desert Kingdoms. A great deal of cultural intermingling has gone on in the Desert Kingdoms so it is only counter-productive to try and isolate a specific name for a specific culture.

The lexicon of character names that follows contains a number of original personal names from various ancient sources. There are many names of normal people or city officials as well as kings. Some of the names are made up of the names of gods - it should be possible to obtain even more names by swapping the names of gods around (Bel, Sin, Enlil etc.). In many cases the god's name given in the name of a father is repeated in the name of the son. Because **ZENOBIA** is not a perfect simulation, feel free to change a syllable or consonant here or there, or swap parts of names around. Anything to find a name that captures the spirit of your character.

Desert Kingdom Names/Female

Abi-simti, Ahassunu, Ahatiwaqrat, Ahunatum, Ali-ahhusha, Alittum, Ammat-Baal, Amurritum, Arah-Sammat, Arinna, Arwi-a, Assur-sharrat, Athaliah, Baranamtara, Belessunu, Beltum, Bikku-lum, Bint-Anat, Bittatum, Daqqartum, Dunnasha, Elamassi, Enanedu, Enannatum, Eshargamelat, Habadjilat, Habannatum, Humusi, Hunabatum, Iltani, Ilusha-hegal, Ishtar-belessa, Ishtar-gamelat, Ishtar-ibbi, Ishtar-rabi-at, Jezebel, Kammani, Ku-aya, Liwwir-esagil, Mandane, Manatum, Mekubi, Michal, Muallit-sherua, Mulissu, Munawirtum, Nakurtum, Naqia, Nikkal, Ninab, Nin-dada, Nin-kagina, Ninduzu, Nintur, Nis-Anat, Nuptaya, Nuratum, Rahab, Sammuramat, Samhat, Samshi, Sarai, Sapurtum, Shaddita, Sharrat-sippar, Shat-sin, Shatu-murrim, Sheba, Shiptu, Siduri, Simanat, Sin-nada, Summirat-ishtar, Tabni-ishtar, Takurtum, Taram-uram, Tamar, Tasmetum-sharrat, Telpunnaya, Tisha-Lim, Tukkin-khatta, Ummi-waqrat, Yadidatum, Yamama, Wurusemu, Zakutu

Desert Kingdom Names/ Male

Abdi-arah, Abdu-Heba, Abiditan, Abi-eshu, Abiyamuta, Abuwaqar, Adda-kalla, Addi-liblut, Ad-mat-ili, Agga, Aham-nishi, Ahatiwaqrat, Ahikibani, Ahiman, Ahi-shagish, Ah-kalla, Ahum, Ahum-waqar, Ahuratum, Ahu-shina, Akiya, Ali-ellati, Allala, Amar-sin, Ammi-ditana, Amnanu, Apil-ashnan, Apil-ilishu, Apilsha, Apil-Sin, Apiyatum, Appanili, Artabarnus, Arammadara, Arnuwanda, Ashi-qurud, Ashmadu, Asharidu, Askur-addu, Assur-Dan, Assur-na'da, Assur-susuli, Assur-taklaku, Awil-aya, Awil-ishtar, Awiliya, Awil-ninurta, Awil-shamash, Awil-sin, Ayar-ilum, Aziru, Azi, Azuzum, Baba, Babati, Baya, Bakshishum, Baal, Baasha, Balak, Balaam, Balasi, Baladan, Bar-Gush, Baqqanum, Belanum, Belakum, Belshimani, Beli-Ashared, Bel-Akum, Bel-Ibni, Bel-Shamin, Bel-Shazzar, Belshunu, Ben-Hadad, Benteshina, Berossus, Beth-El, Bilalama, Burnaburiash, Buhazum, Bunu-ishtar, Burrukam, Buttatum, Dada, Dadanum, Darius, Damqi-ilishu, Dazuzum, Ditanu, Dudu, Duququm, Durrimush, Ea-nasir, Ebarti, Eikuppi-adad, Ekur-zakir, El-Ah, El-Isha, Ellu-mushu, Eluti, Enlil-bani, Enlil-ennam, Enlil-kurgalani, Enlil-zi-shagal, Ennam-belum, Enentarzi, Eshmunazar, Eth-Baal, Etel-pisha, Etel-pi-sharrim, Etirum, Etum, Gazualum, Geshur, Gimil-lum, Gimil-ninurta, Hadad-Shuma, Hadad-ezer, Hadaya, Hallushu, Hanun-dagan, Heana, Hudu-libbi, Hunhalbida, Huttupum, Ibal-pi-el, Ibni-adad, Ibni-Sin, Ibni-shahan, Ibi, Iblinum, Ibnatum, Ibni-amurru, Idrimi, Iddin-enlil, Iddin-ilum, Iddin-ninshubur, Igmilum, Ikuppi-adad, Ila-kabkabu, Ilanum, Ili-alum, Ili-idinnam, Ili-iqisham, Illuratum, Ilshu-abushu, Ilshubani, Ilu-asu, Ilulu, Ilum-aha, Imdilum, Imgua, Imgur-sin, Inbusha, Inim-shara, Iphur-kishi, Ipqatum, Ipqu-adad, Ipqu-annunitum, Ipqu-aya, Iptiyamuta, Ir-Nanna, Irra, Irrara, Ishhi-addu, Ishme-adad, Ishme-dagan, Ishme-Ea, Ishme-karab, Ishtup-sin, Kadashman, Kandalanu, Karaindash, Kassis, Kudur-Enlil Kikuid, Kubburum, Kudiya, Ku-enlila, Ku-inanna, Ku-ningal, Kurhitti-mushtesher, Kurumtum, Kuwari, Laliya, Lamusa, La'um, Lipit-ea, Lipit-enlil, Lipit-ishtar, Lipit-tishpak, Lubarna, Lu-amar-suenaka, Lu-bau, Lu-dingira, Lu-enlila, Luga, Lugal-azida, Lugalkam, Lugal-urudu, Lugatum, Lu-inana, Lu-nanna, Lu-nin-ilduma, Lu-ninurta, Lu-shalim, Macath, Malgum-liblut, Mannum-ki-iliya, Marduk-asir, Marduk-shakin, Marduk-balassu, Mari-ersetim, Mar-iltum, Maru-yatum, Mattaki, Mazdata, Melishipak, Merodach-baladan, Mesi-ilum, Mezizi, Milki-la-el, Minninum, Mithras, Mithridates, Mukannishum, Munawirtum, Muurgallu, Mursilis, Mut-kabid, Mutu-bisir, Nabi-enlil, Nabi-sin, Nabopalassar, Nabu-Nasir, Nabu-bani, Nabonidus, Naram-Sin, Namhu, Nammahani, Namzu, Nanna-mansum, Nanna-sig, Naram-sin, Narubtum, Nasha, Nawirum-ili, Nebuchadnezzar, Nergal-etir, Nergal-erish, Nidnatum, Nin-unumun-ki-ag, Ninurta-ra'im-zerim, Nur-ishtar, Nur-kubi, Nur-shamash, Onan, Palusum, Pirhum, Pu-balum, Pu-dagan, Pula, Pushu-ken, Puzrish-dagan, Puzu, Puzur-assur, Puzur-erra, Puzur-ishtar, Qisht-ea, Qishti-ilabrat, Rabi-sillashu, Rabi-sillashu, Rakhianu, Rashil, Remanni-Adad, Rimush, Rish-shamash, Sabium, Sabum, Sagil-zimu, Samsi-addu, Salu, Sangara, Samu-El, Sargon, Sennacherib, Samum, Ses-kalla, Shalanum, Shalim-tehhusu, Shalmaneser, Shallurum, Shamash-andulli, Shamash-gamil, Shamash-hazir, Shamash-nasir, Shamshi-addu, Shatamurrim, Sharkali-Shari, Shep-sin, Sherum-ili, Shesh-kalla, Shesai, Shilkani, Shubnal, Shu-mama, Shummanla-shamash, Shubat-Enlil,

Shulgi, Shuppilu-Liumesh Shuqallilum, Sidu, Sig-ersetim, Silli-emah, Silli-ishtar, Silli-shamash, Silli-sin, Sillush-dagan, Sin-alshu, Sin-gamil, Sin-dinnam, Sin-kashid, Sin-idinnam, Sin-imgurani, Sin-ishmeni, Sin-lidish, Sin-magir, Sin-mushtal, Sin-nadin-shumi, Sinnashi, Sin-nasir, Sumalika, Sumu-abum, Sumuil, Sumu-la-el, Talmai, Talmi-Teshub, Taribat-sin, Taribatum, Taribum, Tarkhulara, Tiridates, Tirigan, Tigranes, Tubityamuta, Turam, Tuttar-shar, Turam-dagan, Ubar-sin, Ubarum, Udama, Udish, Ugazum, Ur-dumizida, Ur-gula, Ur-lama, Ur-shubula, Ur-shulpae, Ur-Zaba, Uselli, Uta-misharam, Utul-ishtar, Warad-enlil, Warad-iliya, Warad-ishtar, Warad-kubi, Warad-murrim, Warad-shamash, Warad-sin, Warassuni, Wardum, Watrum, Werket-El, Wusum-beli, Yaggit-lim, Yahdun-lim, Yahurum, Yamquzzuhalamma, Yarim-lim, Yashub-yahad, Yasmah-addu, Yassur-addu, Yayatum, Zababa-il, Zamaranum, Zaninum, Zeru-Baal, Zimri-dagan, Ziyatum, Zummabu, Zuzu

Ægyptian Names/ Female

Ashayt, Beketmut, Bentanta, Esenofre, Hetepheres, Iset, Isis, Isisnofret, Kiya, Maatkare, Meresankh, Merytamun, Meryset, Nebettawy, Neith, Nefertiti, Neferu, Nefretari, Nitocris, Nofret, Rai, Sadeh, Sankhkare, Sitkamose, Sitre, Sobekkare, Sobeknefru, Takhat, Tausret, Tawaret, Tia, Tuya, Tiya

Ægyptian Names/ Male

Ahmeni, Ahmose, Akhenre, Akhtoy, Ankhsamtek, Amenemhat, Amenhotep, Amenophis, Ay, Bakenkhons, Dagi, Djedi, Em, Haremsaf, Henenu, Horemeh, Imhotep, Ippi, Kay, Khendjer, Khnumibre, Khufu, Merenptah, Merenre, Merhotepre, Mermesha, Neferhotep, Nefermenu, Nefrusobek, Rahotep, Rameses, Ranofre, Renseneb, Sahure, Sekhemre, Senuseret, Seostis, Setau, Setepenptah, Setepenra, Seti, Si, Siamun, Sihathor, Sinhue, Sobekhotep, Thothmosis, Tutankhamun, Userkaf, Wenamun, Wennefer, Zanakht

Ionian Names/ Female

Aithra, Alcmene, Antiope, Antonia, Apamea, Atalanta, Axiothea, Briseis, Callisto, Cassandra, Calypso, Chryse, Clytemnestra, Deianara, Dione, Europa, Eurydike, Glauke, Harmonia, Hebe, Helike, Hippolyta, Helen, Helena, Iphigenia, Iris, Laodicea, Leda, Medea, Megara, Melantho, Olympias, Orithyia, Panope, Penelope, Phaedra, Sappho.

Ionian Names/Male

Abas, Acastus, Achilles, Agathocles, Antigonos, Ajax, Alexander, Amphitryon, Anaximander, Antenor, Antiphos, Apollonius, Ariston, Arridaios, Antiochus, Cadmus, Clytus, Cleander, Cleomenes, Creon, Dymnos, Elpenor, Demeratus, Demetrius, Diomedes, Eurymedon, Glaucón, Iolaus, Jason, Lycaon, Lycastus, Megisthus, Menestheus, Orestes, Pelasgon, Periander, Pericles, Perseus, Polites, Nicander, Phillip, Phaido, Philotas, Polydeuces, Proteus, Ptolemy, Seleucus, Solon, Sthenelus, Telamon, Theodotus, Theophrastus, Xenophon, Xenon, Xerxes, Zeno.

Imperial/ Male & Female

The names below are all given in male form, but many are easily convertible into a female rendering by dropping the last two letters and replacing them with the letter -a. Annius becomes Anna, Octavius becomes Octavia, and so on.

Acrisius, Aemilius, Agrippa, Albius, Anneaus, Annius, Appius, Arcadius, Antoninus, Atticus, Aurelius, Aulus, Balbinus, Bassianus, Caecilius, Calvus, Carus, Carinius, Cato, Catullus, Claudius, Clodius, Cornelius, Crispus, Curtius, Decius, Decimus, Didius, Drusus, Domitian,

Egnatius, Ennius, Fabius, Falernus, Falco, Faustus, Felix, Flaccus, Flaminius, Florian, Furius, Galerius, Gaius, Gallus, Gracchus, Gnaeus, Herminius, Helvius, Hirtius, Horatius, Julius, Julianus, Laelius, Lentulus, Leonidas, Lepidus, Licinius, Livius, Lucanus, Lucius, Lucretius, Maelius, Manilius, Macrinus, Marcus, Maro, Maximus, Maximinius, Menenius, Metellus, Naevius, Nepos, Nero, Numitorius, Octavius, Otho, Ovidius, Papinus, Pertinax, Petronius, Pilatus, Plautus, Plinius, Pompeius, Pomponius, Pontius, Proculus, Publius, Quintus, Rufus, Sallustius, Septimus, Sestius, Sextus, Stadius, Suetonius, Tarpeius, Tadius, Terentius, Tiberius, Tibullus, Titus, Tullius, Valentinian, Valerius, Varro, Vergillius, Verginius, Verus, Viribius, Vitellius, Vitruvius

Persian/ Male

Abbas, Abouali, Abtin, Afshar, Afshin, Ahmad, Akbar, Ali, Alidad, Amin, Amjad, Anoush, Anoushiravan, Arad, Aram, Arash, Ardavan, Ardeshir, Aref, Arman, Armeen, Arsalan, Arya, Asad, Asghar, Ashkan, Azad, Bardia, Behnam, Behrouz, Behzad, Bizhan, Cyrus, Danush, Dara, Daraba, Darius, Esfandiyar, Faramarz, Fardad, Fardin, Farhang, Fariborz, Farid, Farjad, Farrok, Farshid, Farzad, Farzin, Ferydoon, Firouz, Ghobad, Habib, Hafez, Hamed, Hamid, Hassin, Hassan, Hedayat, Heydar, Homayoon, Hooshmand, Hooshyar, Hormoz, Iraj, Iman, Jahandir, Jahangir, Jahanshan, Jafar, Jalal, Jalil, Jamshid, Javad, Javeed, Kamran, Kamshad, Kamyar, Kamal, Karim, Kaveh, Khashayar, Kia, Kiyan, Kourosh, Makan, Mahmoud, Mahyar, Majid, Manoucher, Mansoor, Massoud, Mehrab, Mehrak, Mehran, Mehrzad, Mohsen, Mujtab, Morad, Morteza, Mustafa, Namdar, Namvar, Nima, Niyoosh, Nouri, Parsa, Parviz, Payam, Puzhman, Rahim, Rakhshan, Ramin, Rashid, Sadra, Saeed, Salar, Saman, Sanjar, Sattar, Shaheen, Shahkam, Shahram, Shahrdad, Shahrokh, Shahruz, Shapour, Shaya, Shayan, Siamak, Siavash, Sohrab, Tooraj, Yashar, Zakaria, Zala, Zamyad.

Persian/Female

Afareen, Afsaneh, Afsar, Afshan, Afsoon, Aghigh, Ahoo, Akhtar, Akram, Alaleh, Anahita, Anoosheh, Ara, Arezoo, Arghavan, Armaghan, Ashraf, Asa, Asal, Assieh, Atefeh, Atifeh, Atoosha, Ava, Avizeh, Azadeh, Azin, Azita, Azar, Bahar, Baharak, Bahareh, Bahamin, Banafsheh, Banou, Behnaz, Behrokh, Bolour, Bousseh, Chalipa, Darya, Delaram, Delbar, Delkash, Deena, Donya, Dorri, Ehteram, Elaheh, Elham, Elnaz, Fakhri, Farah, Farahnaz, Farangis, Fariba, Farideh, Farkhondeh, Farrin, Farzaneh, Faranak, Farnaz, Fatemeh, Fereshteh, Firouzeh, Fojan, Forough, Forouzan, Forouzandeh, Gelareh, Ghamzeh, Ghassedak, Ghazaleh, Ghodsi, Ghoncheh, Gisou, Gita, Golbahar, Goli, Golnar, Golnaz, Golnessa, Golpari, Golshan, Gordia, Habibeh, Haideh, Haleh, Hamideh, Hediyyeh, Hengameh, Homa, Homeira, Houri, Iman, Jannat, Jamileh, Javaneh, Katayoun, Khandan, Khatereh, Khorsheed, Khojassteh, Kimiya, Kokab, Ladan, Laleh, Laila, Lida, Lila, Lily, Mahasti, Mahlagh, Maheen, Mahrokh, Mahnaz, Mahnoosh, Mahsheed, Masha, Mahta, Mahtab, Mahvash, Malakeh, Maliheh, Mandana, Manizheh, Marjan, Marjaneh, Maryam, Marzieh, Masoumeh, Mastaneh, Mastoureh, Mehrangiz, Mehrnoosh, Meshia, Mina, Minoo, Mitra, Moneereh, Nadereh, Naghmeh, Nahal, Naheed, Nastar, asreen, Nava, Nayyer, Nazafarin, Nazanin, Negeen, Niloufar, Nikou, Niyoosha, Noushin, Paree, Pareechehr, Pareerou, Pereesa, Pareevash, Parvaneh, Peymaneh, Raha, Ramesh, Ravan, Rima, REyhanah, Roshanak, Roxana, Saba, Sadaf, Saeedeh, Sahar, Sahba, Salma, Salomeh, Saman, Samira, Sanaz, Sara, Sarvenaz, Sayeh, Seema, Seeta, Setareh, Shadan, Shadee, Shaheen, Shahla, Shahnaz, Sharbanou, Sharhnaz, Shahrzad, Shalizeh, Sharareh, Sheefteh, Shervin, Sheyda, Sheeva, Shima, Shireen, Sholeh, Soheila, Soraya, Soudabeh, Soussan, Tahmineh, Tala, Talayeh, Tara, Taraneh, Tayyebbeh, Touran, Vanda, Yasaman, Zahra, Zar, Zeeba, Zilla, Zohreh.

Languages

Most of the Adventurers in the Desert Kingdoms will begin the game with a good grasp of Aramaic, a language that has been used in the Desert Kingdoms for a thousand years. To determine how well a character knows a particular language, each tongue can be rated as either 1 - Basic Understanding or 2 - Fluency. Basic Understanding of a language implies a thick foreign (or local dialect) accent and recognition of only the most basic written words. Fluency implies a wide vocabulary, subtle and inferred speech, excellent literacy skills and knowledge of literature written in that language.

A character's LEARNING score indicates the points available to him to spend on languages. For example, a scribe with LEARNING 4 could select one language at Fluent (2 points) and two more at Basic (both 1 point each).

Available Language List

ARAMAIC

The most widely spoken eastern language, Aramaic is a lingua franca, understood in villages and in cities from Syria to Solyma, northern and southern Mesopotamia to Persia.

ARMENIAN

The language of the Armenian kingdom, isolated in its mountain stronghold. Rarely spoken by outsiders, Armenian is related to various neighbouring tongues.

ANCIENT

In a time before alphabets or papyrus, scribes of the ancient city-state of Babylonia used small clay tablets upon which they scratched complex symbols. This language is no longer spoken and read only by priests, magicians and historians interpreting ancient texts. It is

found carved in rock or impressed on baked clay tablets.

ÆGYPTIAN

This incredibly ancient language is not spoken outside of the Nile valley, and even there it is now spoken mainly by the under-classes. Instead, the educated elite in Ægypt speak Ionic.

IONIC

Ionic is another widely spoken tongue that has been spread across the Middle Sea from Sicily, Ionia, across the Aegean Sea into Asia Minor (Phrygia, Cappadocia and Pontus) and taken to the east by Ionic colonists, traders and mercenaries from the old city-states of Ionia. It is a language of sailors and traders, and also of literature and science. The greatest playwrights, philosophers and scientists that ever lived were Ionic.

IMPERIAL

This language of the Eternal City became the staple tongue of the Empire once it had conquered much of the known world. Imperial is known by virtually everyone throughout the imperial provinces.

LIBYAN

The native language of Africa north of the Sahara and west of Ægypt. Many civilised North Africans speak Libyan as well as Imperial. Desert nomads (Numidians, Garamantes, etc.) will probably speak only Libyan, however.

NABATAEAN*

Spoken in the dry desert valleys of Nabataea by the Saracen tribes that long ago settled there. Nabataea is a wealthy kingdom of powerful merchant families.

OLD PERSIAN

An ancient language of the Persians, now used only by the educated elite, the Persian commoners having long since adopted Aramaic as their language for day-to-day use.

SABAEAN*

Spoken in the southerly mountain land of Sabaea by Saracen tribes that long ago settled there to found a wealthy trade kingdom.

SARACENI*

The language of the fierce Saracen tribes, the camel nomads who dwell in the dry steppe land and sandy deserts of

Arabia. Related to both Nabataean and Sabaeen. Anyone speaking Fluently in one automatically has a Basic Understanding in the other two.

SOLYMAN

A little-spoken tongue used by Solymans as a second language (mainly for religious purposes). Solymans are found in cities throughout the East and have carried this obscure language with them. Most would rather speak Aramaic.

*These three languages are closely related. See the *Saraceni* entry.

Guardian Angels

When a Persian is born his or her parents call upon a *fravashi* or guardian angel to guard that child throughout its life. The *fravashi* are grouped according to their nature, and each follows one of the six arch-angels [*amshaspend*]. The nature of that *amshaspend*, passed from *fravashi* to child, becomes an inspirational spark and the way in which that child, once grown, will try to conduct itself in life. When a character attempts a task in line with his or her guardian angel, the referee awards the player a +1 bonus on the dice roll.

The use of guardian angels and the +1 task bonus that they will call for needs to be carefully adjudicated by the GM. Do not let every character action be somehow connected to the character's thirst for truth or glory or whatever. The codes provide a minor bonus to encourage characters to follow one of six paths to god. They provide character flavour, and are not intended to be used by players to maximize their dice roll results! Bear this in mind. Note that only a Persian character can select a guardian angel.

AMERETAT (Life)

The protection of innocent life is paramount to this character, even though this may mean shedding blood. Any task that may save a life or eliminate a danger to innocents will garner the player a +1 task bonus.

ARAMAITI (Devotion)

The character values loyalty to an individual or to a group. Any actions that further this relationship or protect it garner the player a +1 task bonus.

ASHAVAHISHTA (Supreme Truth)

Pursuit of the truth is all important to this persona. If the action will help reveal the true nature of a person, place, item or situation then the GM can award the player with a +1 task bonus.

DRUJ (Falsehood)

A horrible secret to be kept from all right-thinking Zoroastrians, a Druj devotes his life to theft, deception and murder. If the task at hand will help to conceal the true nature of a person, place or item, then a +1 task bonus is gained. Note that any Druj must take another Code of Conduct as a cover for

his nefarious nature. Taking this Conduct is accepting that the character is a criminal, hunted and in fear of persecution. Beware!

HAURVATAT (Perfection)

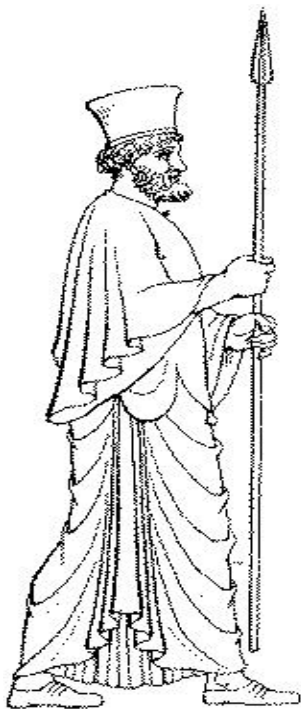
The persona pursues glory and personal achievement. Any action which could challenge or test the character or which might develop his or her skills will garner a +1 task bonus.

KSHATHRA (Dominion)

Mastery over others is all important to the character. If the task in hand will bring him power over one or more people, strengthen his power or defend his power over others, then he will gain a +1 task bonus.

VOHUMANAH (Good Mind)

The character likes to be right. Any action that will prove him or her correct in the face of opposition will result in the award of a +1 task bonus.



Why Can't I ...?

Players can create competent and exciting Adventurers with the system presented here in **ZENOBIA**, in fact there is great latitude given in the way of character creation. But certain questions may be asked of the referee and he might find the sections below useful in coming up with reasonable answers.

Why Can't I Play A Magician?

The character creation rules described here concentrate on Adventurers - tough wanderers and fighters in a tough world. But it *is* possible to play either a magician or a philosopher (a wizard-like alchemist). These two character types are not common, however, and so the rules for their creation are given later on in the Magic chapter. The referee might want to restrict his players to having only one magician/philosopher per roleplaying group for this reason.

Why Can't I Play A Female Adventurer?

You can. The text of **ZENOBIA** always refers to the male gender for simplicity, but no bias is intended in the roles that can be played or the players that may participate. This is fantasy, despite the historical setting, so many professions that rarely if ever saw a female can be chosen by the player. There are female Desert Warriors, Archers, Magicians and Philosophers, Tomb Robbers, Thieves, Spies, Bandits even Gladiators. Note, however that the Empire would never, ever allow female Legionnaires or Tribunes. Otherwise - almost anything goes.

Why Can't I Play A Non-Human?

The Desert Kingdoms have been civilised for millennia, and it is a civilisation of humans. Non-human creatures and various types of monster

do exist and will regularly crop up in adventures and campaigns. But the focus is on the human-side of life, on the world of Palmyra and Persia, the Empire and its oppressed provinces, on the cities and settlements, nomad camps and fortresses. Non-humans do not fit easily into this humano-centric environment without being viewed as terrifying aberrations, monsters or demons.

Why Can't I Play An Inexperienced Stripling?

You could easily play a starting character (or the referee could allow all of the characters to start out this way). By starting character we mean an inexperienced youth, fresh out of the city or farm and eager for excitement. This 'stripling' has no starting skill, he has MIGHT 1 and HITS of $1d + 6$. In effect he is a typical commoner, and must work his way up to the dizzy heights of Adventurer through adventures, fights and through thanking the gods. Do not allow a Shortsword as part of the Initial Equipment, instead replacing it with a farm implement or Club.

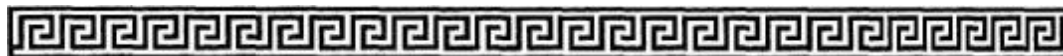
Why Can't I Play A Character As Good As Pete's?

Or Gerry's, or Sandy's ... Basically, the dice rolling part of Adventurer creation is designed to give the characters some differentiation. The randomness makes the creation process a little more

unpredictable and less likely to produce the same character over and over again (even though only three attributes, MIGHT, FATE and HITS are being rolled). Some players will be unhappy with this uneven system and prefer that all characters begin at exactly the same level, with nothing really to separate them in terms of overall points. The referee can easily implement a 'points-only' system which does away with the dice used in attribute determination.

The player allocates 12 creation points between MIGHT, FATE and HITS, he should keep in mind that 2 is the lowest score possible for MIGHT and FATE and that 6 the highest. For this system he can set HITS at any number between 1 and 6. Finally, when his allocations are completed, the player must multiply his HITS allocation by 2 and then add 10. This new figure is his Adventurer's HITS final score. Egyptian characters gain +1 on their final FATE score, but if FATE is already set at 6, then simply award the character +1 creation point to be used somewhere else.

This diceless method does away with the MIGHT roll to acquire a bonus for previous experience, just assume that the bonus is always gained. Magicians and Philosophers can choose any one item from their Random Treasure Table. The character is now complete!



IV COMBAT

“At last the armies met, with a clash of shields, spears and bronze-clad fighting men. The bosses of their shields collided and a great roar went up. The screams of the dying were mingled with the vaunts of their destroyers and the earth ran red with blood.”

Homer, *The Iliad*

Many, if not all, of ZENOBIA's scenarios will feature combat to a greater or lesser extent. This is normal. The life and death excitement of hand-to-hand combat puts the existence of the Adventurers in question and heightens the player's interest in his character's situation. Obviously too much combat becomes routine, and routine combat is boring. Fights should be fast paced and frenetic and if they simulate life in any way, should be short. A short, sharp fight packs a far greater punch than one half an hour long that produces the same results. Combat in this game should always add to the story, add to the drama, and never detract from it.

Procedure

Fights are divided up into 'chunks' of time called combat rounds. In each round everybody involved gets a turn to attack. Essentially, when an adventurer meets a monster or non-player character in combat both antagonists roll 2d and add their respective COMBAT scores. The highest score wins that combat round and inflicts damage on his opponent. Large amounts of damage can have additional benefits, as chosen by the player. Once everybody has had a chance to attack, a new round begins. A round lasts perhaps 5 to 10 seconds.

The Combat Attack Roll

There is one important consideration that the referee must address before allowing players to roll any dice for a martial attack: COMBAT. This is a secondary attribute of a temporary nature.

COMBAT is calculated by adding MIGHT to the COMBAT Bonus of the weapon currently being wielded. Such a bonus only applies if the weapon is being used in an attack. This bonus is a numerical assessment of that weapon's efficiency, both in terms of damage inflicted as well as the reach and strike probability of the weapon. Weapon values vary and are given in the table below:



**Weapon Table**

<i>Weapon Type</i>	<i>COMBAT Bonus</i>	<i>Cost</i>
Battle-axe	+2	100
Bow (2 handed)	+2	150
Boxing Cestus (Unarmed only)	+2	10
Burning Torch	+2	1
Club	+1	5
Dagger	+1	35
Dart	+2	5
Handaxe	+1	25
Javelin	+3	60
Longsword	+2	150
Pilum	+3	125
Scimitar	+2	120
Shield (cannot attack)	+1	100
Sling	+1	10
Spear	+3	20
Shortsword	+2	100
Staff	+1	5
Trident	+3	35

Basically, when rolls are required both antagonists roll 2d and add their respective COMBAT values to the roll. A draw indicates that neither combatant got the better of the other and that no-one got hurt that round. When one character beats the other with a higher total score, however, he has proved his superiority that round and inflicted that many points of damage on his opponent's HITS. But first of all, the relevant Armour Value of the victim is checked on a number of d6 to determine whether the armour deflects the blow. If the armour deflects (any result of '6') then any damage inflicted is completely nullified. Combat rolls continue until one side either escapes, retreats, surrenders or is too injured (or too dead!) to fight on. There are a couple of elaborations of this simple system detailed below:

Combat Result of 0

A combat result of 0 indicates that neither combatant got the better of the other - the round ends in a stalemate with weapons clashing.

Combat Results of 1, 2 or 3

Combat results of 1, 2 or 3 are simply subtracted from the target's HITS score as already described.

Combat Results of 4 or More

Combat results of 4 or more provide the player with an opportunity to select one of a number of Crippling Blows. The rolled damage is subtracted from the target character's HITS score as normal, but an additional bonus has been earned. The bigger the result the better the available Crippling Blows will be

(see the section on Crippling Blows, later on).

Saving Combat Results

As a tactical option the winner of a combat round can opt to save some or even all his combat result to increase the level of any injuries inflicted in a subsequent round. This simulates the manoeuvre called a *feint* where the advantage is gained but not exploited immediately. Feinting requires the attacker to have uninjured legs since quite a bit of rapid manoeuvring is assumed.

These saved result points are instantly forfeited when the character loses a round of combat. This makes the tactic a risky one; you dare not save them too long - keep your feint stringing along. Note that combat result points saved in this way only add to the injury type available, and are never added to the Combat Attack roll. Non-Adventurers (most lowly NPCs and extras, in other words) are not able to carry over their combat results in this way.

Rolling a 'Natural 12'

A natural roll of '12' (two-sixes) indicates that the player can roll another d6 and add it to his initial roll. This indicates a special success and allows characters with a low score to occasionally strike lucky.

Rolling a 'Natural 2'

A natural roll of '2' (two -ones) indicates that the character has failed in his action, no matter what bonuses he can add on to that roll. A 'natural 2' is an automatic failure.

Inflicting Damage

“Pelopidas received seven wounds in the front of his body, and at last sank down upon a heap of corpses, in which friend and foe lay dead together ...”

Plutarch, Life of Pelopidas

Weapons inflict an amount of damage to a victim equal to the winner's combat result (the difference in the two combat attack rolls). If the winner of that round rolled a total of 12 and his opponent rolled only 7, for example, then the victor would inflict 5 points of damage to his opponent's HITS. This damage value is subtracted from the target's HITS score. Any armour that the victim is wearing can significantly reduce the damage he suffers. See the rules on Armour (below). The number of HITS sustained may incur some other penalty. These are Crippling Blows (both Wounds and Maims), being Badly Wounded, and Death.

Crippling Blows

Damage inflicted equal to 4 or more points gives the player the option of

inflicting a Crippling Wound on his opponent. See Crippling Blows (below).

Collapsing

When an Adventurer's HITS score is reduced to 3, 2 or 1 points, he has suffered so much pain, blood loss and shock that he collapses, and is seriously unwell. All of his subsequent actions (of whatever nature) are rolled on 1d not 2d, and if a FATE roll is failed he falls unconscious for 2 dice minutes. The Adventurer loses 1 HIT per hour until dead, or until treated by someone with medical knowledge or healing magic. The referee may ignore this rule for monsters and/or non-player characters as he sees fit.

Death

At 0 HITS a character dies and his spirit travels to the blessed fields of Elysium.



Crippling Blows

“Then before the barbarian could strike, Pyrrhus dealt him a tremendous blow on the head with his sword. So great was the strength of his arm and the keenness of the blade that it cleft the man from head to foot, and in an instant the two halves of his body fell apart.”

Plutarch, *Life of Pyrrhus*

A character that beats his opponent's combat attack roll has proved his superiority and gained the upper hand. If a character has inflicted 4 or more points of damage on his opponent (after armour), then the referee may want to allow that player to select one of a number of Crippling Blows. Crippling Blows are essentially additional benefits or special attack moves the character can choose to inflict. They are rated on a scale 4-20 and this number indicates the minimum number of HITS that must first be inflicted to achieve a particular Crippling Blow. If a player wants to inflict some lesser blow - then fine! He can save the difference in points and use them to try and increase his damage next turn (see the section on Saving Combat Results, earlier). In other words he can save points now to inflict a really great injury later!

There are nine Crippling Blows called “Wounds” to choose from, one for each part of the human body. These are given a HITS rating that ranges from 4 to 10. Characters with lots of HITS to spend on a Crippling Blow can spend **double** the required amount of HITS to select one of nine Crippling Blows called

“Maims”. For example, our hero gains a combat result of 6 and sees that the 6 HIT Crippling Blow is a Head ‘Wound’ which might potentially knock his foe out! If our hero had gained a combat result of 12 he could have selected the 12 HIT Crippling Blow, the Head ‘Maim’, at a much greater lethality. A Head Maim temporarily incapacitates the victim and might knock him out for hours!

Fighting On!

A character who has suffered a Crippling Blow categorised as a Wound can spend **1 FATE** point to shrug off the penalties associated with that injury, while a character who has suffered a Maim can spend **2 FATE** point to shrug off the penalties associated with that injury. The blow still inflicts the same level of bloody trauma and wounding but the spent FATE point(s) allow the Adventurer to ‘fight on’. The HIT loss associated with the injury is still taken, however, and the rules for Collapsing and Death still apply in full. As soon as the combat is over the referee then imposes the normal effects of an injury on the player character.

The Crippling Blows and their bloody effects are:

HITS	Location	WOUND Description/Effects
4	CHEST	<i>Chest slashed open and ribs cracked</i> Stunned next round
4	LEG	<i>Leg cut badly, slashed to the bone</i> No running
5	ARM	<i>Arm bloodied and muscle torn</i> Use arm at 1d effectiveness. Drop item held.
6	HEAD	<i>Head knocked badly, dizziness and lots of blood</i> Stunned 1 round. Roll FATE or knocked-out for 2d rounds.
7	BELLY	<i>Guts cut open, weak at the knees</i> Stunned 2 rounds
8	GROIN	<i>A stab to the vitals - extreme agony!</i> Stunned 3 rounds
9	HAND	<i>Fingers cut badly, weapon dropped</i> Drop item, disarmed. Only 1 HIT inflicted.
9	FACE	<i>Slashed across the face - blood, gore and pain blinds the victim</i> Blinded till treated. Stunned 2 rounds
10	THROAT	<i>Throat slashed and larynx damaged, no talking till healed</i> Incapacitated for 2 rounds

HITS	Location	MAIM Description/Effects
8	CHEST	<i>Ribs broken and lungs punctured, coughing blood</i> Incapacitated 1 round
8	LEG	<i>Leg broken and gouged to the bone</i> Cannot stand, no running
10	ARM	<i>Arm broken and smashed, hanging useless</i> Drop item being held, arm cannot be used till healed
12	HEAD	<i>Skull smashed - disorientation, blood and gore</i> Incapacitated 3 rounds. Roll FATE or knocked-out for 1-6 hours
14	BELLY	<i>Agonising slash to the gut leaves entrails hanging out</i> Incapacitated for 4 rounds
16	GROIN	<i>Vitals severed or maimed, agony and traumatic blood-loss!</i> Incapacitated for 5 rounds
18	HAND	<i>Hand severed. Tourniquet NOW!</i> Hand severed. Fight at 1d from now on (not 2d) till healed.
18	FACE	<i>Face smashed into a pulp, eye lost and face bloodied</i> Lose an eye. Fight at 1d from now on (not 2d) till healed.
20	THROAT	<i>Victim decapitated, OR throat opened up spilling a sea of blood</i>

Definitions

Stunned: No attacking allowed, only defence. Roll combat attacks, no damage inflicted.

Incapacitated: Fall over. No actions can be taken at all. In extreme pain and shock.

No running: Cannot save combat results (i.e. feint manoeuvre).

Recovering HITS

To determine the rate of recovery from an injury and become healed, assume it takes one day to recover 1 HIT. Healed means he no longer suffers from any combat penalties. The injured character requires *rest*, *food* and *treatment* - change the recovery time to 1 HIT per two days if only 2 of the 3 healing conditions are met and change it to 1 HIT per three days if only one of them is met. Otherwise, use of such magical means as a healing power or by drinking a phial of aqua vitae is strongly recommended!

Armour

Armour can be worn by adventurers and by non-player characters to help absorb some of the damage that they suffer during an adventure. Because different characters can wear different pieces of armour at different times, individual items of armour are given a numerical rating. The ratings for each piece of armour worn are added up to create an Armour Value.

Armour Table

<i>Armour</i>	<i>Armour Value</i>	<i>Cost</i>
Helm	1	100
Greaves	1	2500
Manicae	1	400
Leather Cuirass	1	300
Mail Cuirass	2	800
Plate Cuirass	3	1200
Cataphract Armour	6	4200

What effect does wearing armour have on the chances for survival? When it is determined that the character has been hit, the player takes a number of dice equal to the total Armour Value and rolls them. If any of the dice come up as a '6' then the attack is negated! Simple as that. The roll is made before a player or referee decides what to do with the points he has scored and where to allocate them.

Note that only one cuirass (armoured shirt or breastplate) can be worn at one time. Greaves are a pair of iron leg protectors reaching from the ankle to the knee. A manicae is a leather and metal 'sleeve' protecting the sword arm from blows. It originated with gladiators in the arena but has also been

adopted by Eastern legionnaires. Cataphract armour is only available to Eastern armies or those with access to armourers trained in Eastern techniques. It is armour that completely covers the wearer, with a helm, banded metal armour to cover arms and legs, and combination scale and chainmail to enclose every part of the soldier's body. In essence it is Helm, Manicae, Greaves and Plate all added together. Obviously this is very hot and cumbersome, worn only by heavy cavalry who don't have to match in it!

A shield does not have an armour rating, in fact it adds a COMBAT bonus to the characters attack roll instead (as long as he carries a weapon with him to inflict damage). Don't treat a shield as a piece of armour.

Unarmed Combat

“Here the Spartans resisted to the last, with their swords, if they had them, and if not, with their hands and teeth, until the Persians coming on from the front over the ruins of the wall and closing in from behind, finally overwhelmed them with missile weapons”.

Herodotus, *The Histories*

An unarmed fighter has no COMBAT bonus from a weapon, and does Stun damage when he hits. Stun damage is inflicted on HITS just like regular damage; and these Stuns are always added to any damage **already sustained**. In keeping with the normal damage rules, 1-3 Stuns can be inflicted immediately or held back as a feint. Stuns of 4 or more can be used to purchase useful Unarmed Moves. Besides the effects of these Unarmed Moves, when an unarmed attacker has reduced an opponent's HITS to 0, that opponent is not killed but knocked unconscious for 2d minutes.

Boxing cestus are rawhide wrappings around the clenched fists which protect the hand and allow a professional boxer to do extra damage. Wearing a pair of cestus gives a +2 to the COMBAT roll for Unarmed fighting only. Keep in mind that a character wearing cestus cannot hold anything in those wrapped hands.

The Unarmed Moves (Basic costing 4-8 Stuns; Advanced costing 8-16 Stuns) are:

Basic Unarmed Moves

HITS	Basic Unarmed Move	Effects
4	Bloody Face	Stunned for 1 round
4	Throw To Ground	Suffer 2 HITS and 2 Stuns; now lying on the floor
5	Kick In Gut	Stunned for 2 rounds
6	Disarm	Drop item. Disarmed.
7	Arm/Leg Lock	Victim struggling, all actions use 1d roll, not 2d roll. That limb is immobile (to continue the lock win MIGHT versus MIGHT roll each round)
8	Head Lock	Victim immobile and in pain (to continue the lock win MIGHT versus MIGHT roll each round)

Advanced Unarmed Moves

HITS	Advanced Unarmed Move	Effects
8	Smash Face	Stunned for 3 rounds
8	Throw Against Wall	Suffer 5 HITS and 3 Stuns; now lying on the floor
10	Knock Out Combination	Groin strike followed by massive head blow; Knocked Out for 2d minutes
12	Use Enemy's Weapon	Winner can fight foe's friends by manipulating foe's weapon arm against his will!
14	Break Limb!	7 HITS worth of damage inflicted; leg or arm broken
16	Strangle	Inflict a number of HITS equal to MIGHT every round that strangling continues (to continue win MIGHT versus MIGHT roll each round)

Fighting Multiple Opponents

Fighting more than one opponent becomes a little more complex, but not much. When a lone character is fighting two or more antagonists, he rolls his dice once and decides which one he will try to hit that round. Then each of his opponents rolls separately to try and overcome that roll. Only the target selected will suffer any damage, however, and the adventurer himself can only attack one target each round. Any other successful rolls just indicate that a blow has been parried.

Some creatures have multiple attacks allowing them to fight and wound more than one character each round. They cannot use these attacks to 'gang-up' on one victim. One attack per character - at all times.

Fighting From Advantage

Player characters can and should exploit advantages that exist within the gameworld to maximise their chances of victory. These advantages include the following manoeuvres: ***Ambush, High Ground, Cover, Opponent fallen, Blinding foe, Mounted versus standing, Retreating foe.*** All of these (and many others too numerous to mention) make attacks easier and often more effective. The 'out-maneuvred' combatant must make an impromptu FATE roll to try to negate his opponent's tactical manoeuvre.

If failed, then the manoeuvring combatant gains a +1 on his attack roll for each advantage that has an influence on the fight that round.

Retreating

A character worried about his chances might want to forget about attacking his opponent and defend in full while he retreats. To do this he makes two consecutive combat rolls and if successful on either does no damage to his opponent. If both are successful he does, however, manage to flee the combat and find an opportunity for escape! Remember that the attacker might continue to pursue! The referee can only allow a retreat if there is somewhere to retreat to. It might be jumping from a balcony, stepping through a door, jumping out of a window or running down some stairs - but there must be some avenue of escape. A fighter could not retreat when duelling in the middle of open desert, for example.

Using Arms & Armour

Weapons and armour are heavy and unwieldy, requiring some considerable strength to use properly. An Adventurer's MIGHT rating must not be less than his total Armour Rating **or** his weapon's COMBAT bonus. Otherwise the Adventurer suffers a penalty to his combat attack roll equal to the difference between MIGHT and the heavy item. If there is more than one weapon or armour type exceeding his MIGHT, then only the heaviest will be used to calculate the penalty. Do not add them up. For example, an Adventurer with MIGHT 2 is wearing Plate Armour and Helm (AV 4) and wielding a Spear (+3), both exceed his MIGHT - but he suffers only a -2 penalty (because the armour exceeds his MIGHT by 2 points). If he shed the armour he would still incur a penalty of -1 for the spear.

Using Two Weapons

Everyone has a 'favoured' hand and an 'off-hand' and Adventurers wield their swords or knives or spears in their favoured hands if possible. But sometimes this is not possible, or the hero may want to fight with two weapons simultaneously.

The Off-Hand

When deprived of the use of his favoured hand through injury an Adventurer in a tight spot will have to resort to using his weapon in his off-hand. His aim is poor, his balance bad. Under such desperate conditions the weapon may be used in defence to parry as normal but if used to attack the weapon offers **no Combat Bonus**. Such a character cannot feint either, and so cannot save up combat results for later use..

Two-Swords Flashing

There may be times when a player declares that a second weapon is being used in his character's off-hand in addition to his primary weapon. This two-handed use looks great but is difficult to do well. Assume that in one-on-one combats that the weapon simply acts as a back-up weapon and perhaps helps with defence to a small degree. The real use of such a second weapon is when the Adventurer faces multiple opponents. A second weapon held in the off-hand allows an Adventurer to **attack two opponents in one round**, contrary to the rules given above that restrict him to one attack but allow multiple defence rolls. This second weapon is wielded with a 0 COMBAT bonus, though.

Using Nets & Whips In Combat

Both net and whip can be found in the arena used as nasty weapons of pain and torment.

The Net

When a gladiator or adventurer uses a net in combat it may or may not be used in conjunction with another weapon (such as a spear or trident). A net has COMBAT +0 but cannot wound someone if it's wielder is successful in combat. Instead it catches on them, giving them a COMBAT penalty equal to the difference between the winner's and loser's results. In the following round the entangled victim can make a MIGHT roll to untangle himself. While untangling himself he can defend with his basic MIGHT score and cannot attack.

A net-thrower who is using his net professionally attaches the net to his wrist by a cord so that once his victim is

untangled he can pull it back ready for another throw. If the net-thrower is using this method he can only attack his entangled victim with a *spear or trident* due to the distance between the combatants (the net is kept taut).

The Whip

A 2m long whip used by wagon-drivers can be used to cause pain in the first instance, and to grab hold of things in the second. It has a COMBAT bonus of +2 but only inflicts Stun damage. In keeping with the normal damage rules, 1-3 Stuns can be inflicted immediately or held back as a feint. Stuns of 4 or more can be used to purchase useful Whip Moves. Besides the effects of these Unarmed Moves, when an unarmed attacker has reduced an opponent's HITS to 0, that opponent is not killed but knocked unconscious for 2d minutes.

The Whip Moves (Costing 4-8 Stuns) are:



Whip Moves

HITS	Whip Move	Effects
4	Bloody Face	Stunned for 1 round
5	Pull To Ground	Suffer 2 HITS and 2 Stuns; now lying on the floor
6	Disarm	Drop item. Disarmed.
8	Blind	Victim makes a FATE roll, and if failed is blinded for 1-6 minutes. If successful he is Stunned for 2 rounds.

Missile Combat

“Then the Rhodians, who were posted at intervals in the Greek ranks, used their slings, and the archers shot their arrows, and no-one failed to hit a man (indeed one could hardly miss if one tried to) ...”

Xenophon, *The Persian Expedition*

The use of thrown weapons, slings or bows is handled in a slightly different way to hand-to-hand fighting. When an Adventurer wishes to use a missile weapon his player must roll 2d, add the character's MIGHT score and the missile weapon's COMBAT Bonus to achieve a result of 10 or more.

Technical Note

The bow is probably a composite bow made of horn, woods and sinew, common in the Desert Kingdoms. The dart is the Imperial legionary's plumbata, a miniature arrow-length javelin with a nasty bladed head, lead weight, and fletchings. They are often carried in a leather quiver, 5 to a quiver. The javelin is a light throwing spear, while the pilum is an Imperial javelin with a long iron tang and head that adds significant range and power to the throw. These iron tangs bend and stick tight when they hit shields, rendering the shield useless to the enemy. Also, the pilum shaft breaks off the tang to prevent the missile being thrown back at the Imperial troops.

Ruining The Aim

A number of factors, as well as range, might affect an Adventurer's aim. These penalties are given below:

Target over range	-2
Target over double range	-4
Target in partial cover	-2
Target moving	-1

Note that although a thrown weapon can be cast while on the run, the sling and bow must both be shot from a stationary position on the ground (ordinarily, but see the skill called Parthian Shot).

Hit by an Arrow - If hit by an arrow that inflicts damage, the adventurer must remove the arrow quickly or suffer the consequences! If left in, the adventurer suffers a penalty to all actions equal to the HITS it inflicted. So an arrow that hit for 4 points gives that adventurer a -4 to all his combat (and other) actions. Pulling it out without medical aid or healing results in a further 1 HIT loss.

Reloading

Bows and slings can generally be used once per round and reloaded in the interim. Quivers carry 12 arrows, bags of slingshot have a capacity of 20.

Melee & the Missile Weapon

When missile weapons are used in melee, problems arise. When an Adventurer tries to use a missile weapon at very short ranges (i.e. while in hand-to-hand combat) he must be told that there is a minimum range of 3m for any missile weapon. If he wishes to fire at a distant target while being attacked in hand-to-hand then the attacker only has to roll over the archer's basic MIGHT score. Easy. Sitting target.

Another complication is hitting a target who is engaged in melee combat with a friend. The character wants to hit the enemy, but not his friend. He rolls to hit at -2, and if he misses, the archer will hit his friend on a combat result of 8 or 9. The damage done will be 1d + COMBAT bonus of weapon. Ouch!

Missile Weapons

<i>Missile Weapon</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>COMBAT Bonus</i>
Bow	50m	+2
Dagger, Thrown	8m	+1
Dart	10m	+2
Javelin	10m	+3
Pilum	15m	+3
Sling	50m	+1
Spear, Thrown	5m	+3
Stone, Thrown	10m	0



V RELIGION

*“Hear us, you gods perfect in power;
Hear us, sovereign gods and goddesses,
Protectors of our country’s bulwarks:
Do not betray our city
Thus in the labour of battle
To enemies of alien mind.”*

Aeschylus, *The Suppliants*

Life (and death) in the Desert Kingdoms is dominated by the Gods. These divine beings control the destiny of Mankind (so it is said), many were there at the creation of the world, and others were created in human times by their own heroic deeds. Priests and Philosophers debate endlessly the nature of the gods and their number. There were originally only twelve Olympians, but what about the rest of the Ionian gods? What about the gods of Ægypt - of Chaldea - of the Decapolis? There are innumerable gods and goddesses, and they do not require that Mankind be utterly loyal to one or the other. Men and women worship at whatever temple or shrine they fancy, wherever they are - for the gods are always grateful for another sacrifice.

ZENOBIA then, doesn’t give an exhaustive list of the deities known and worshipped in the Desert Kingdoms. Instead we look first at *The Olympians*, a family of deities worshipped across the world wherever Ionians and Imperials have trodden. These gods are recognised by all and often syncretised with local divinities. Most large cities have temples to one or more of the Olympians. Then we briefly survey the other *Gods of the Desert Kingdoms*. In the following chapter we look at a small number of very popular religions amongst travellers and Adventurers in the Desert Kingdoms, and give an in-

depth description of their customs and peculiarities. These cults allow worshippers to be initiated and get closer to their god. Many offer something better in the afterlife. Adventurers can join these cults as initiates, maybe progress to the priesthood, or alternatively the referee can use the cults as background for his campaign or for individual adventures. The cults given this in-depth treatment are: Bel-Marduk, Dushara, Jupiter Heliopolitanus, Mithras, Sabazius, Venus-Atargatis

The Olympians

Jupiter

The king of the Olympian gods. Also called Jove, Jupiter Capitolinus or Jupiter Optimus Maximus (‘IOM’ in inscriptions). He is a powerful god of sovereignty, mastery, government and victory in warfare. As a god on high he is associated with storms, rain, tempests and with thunder and lightning. He protects the Empire from on high and demands oaths of loyalty from its diverse subjects. He is supreme judge and his realm is the Heavens (Earth belongs to his brother Neptune, the Underworld to his other brother Dis Pater).

Juno

The matronly wife of Jupiter, Juno is associated with the sky and with the moon. God of women and of childbirth and marriage, she is rarely invoked by Adventurers. Her temple in the Eternal City houses the Imperial mint, since she is also goddess of banking. Juno punished many of Jupiter's lovers, and could be said to have also embodied jealousy. The peacock is her cult animal.

Mars

A brash god of warfare, Mars is popular with Adventurers. Since early Imperial legionnaires were also farmers he was a god of agriculture, too. Mars is invoked also for revenge. He is not a subtle god of grand strategy but an up-front believer in raw combat.

Vesta

The goddess of the home and hearth. The temple in the Eternal City houses a sacred flame, the hearth fire of the Empire, and is tended by 12 Vestal Virgins. The family and community are associated with her gentle cult. Bakers also sacrifice to her.

Vulcan

The god of fire, smiths and craftsmen in general, Vulcan is a brawny, lame god. He is also associated with volcanoes. In myth he built many fantastic devices, some of which are hidden about the world in labyrinths and on remote islands. His wife is the adulterous Venus. His priests are called 'flamen'. Temples to Vulcan are kept outside city walls since the god is associated with the destruction of volcanoes.

Mercury

The winged messenger of the gods, Mercury is also the god of thieves, travellers and merchants. Mercury guides the spirits of the dead to the underworld, and wayside marker stones

are dedicated to him. The great cults to Mercury are run by the merchant brotherhoods to whom they owe their good fortune. Gamblers too, pray to him.

Apollo

A god of sunlight, musicians, fortune-tellers and medicine. This bold and potent god is also the protector of herdsmen, but it is his association with the sun that is most strong. His deadly and unerring skill with the bow is symbolic of rays of light. But his typical symbol is the lyre. Many famous seers and soothsayers claim to have been given their powers by Apollo.

Neptune

The brother of Jupiter, Neptune is the god of the oceans and seas, as well as earthquakes and horses. A harsh and unrelenting god, Neptune shows his anger with floods, storms and earthquakes. Sailors fear him. The symbol of Neptune is the trident.

Venus

The amorous goddess of love, beauty and sex, married (in the myths) to Vulcan. She is fickle and passionate, and prone to initiating liaisons and romances. Young lovers pray to her. The Emperors of the Eternal City all claim descent from Julius Caesar who claimed descent from Venus.

Bacchus

A god of wine, pleasure and revelry often invoked at bars, banquets and orgies. Since he is associated with wine cultivation he represents both the pleasures of wine and its darker side of mad passions and abuse. His favourite method of punishing wrong-doers is through madness. His cult throw wild orgies at which respectable women dance wildly in the countryside to the sound of raucous music.

Diana

Diana is the virgin sister of Apollo, and she is the goddess of hunting and of wildlife. As a fertility goddess she is invoked by mothers as well as more typically hunters. She has a lunar aspect and is well known as a great and deadly archer. The goddess also protects slaves, and her priests are traditionally supposed to be runaway slaves!

Minerva

Along with Juno and Jupiter, one of the Capitoline triad, the central cults of the Imperial state. She is the goddess of wisdom and inventiveness, of women and the arts and crafts. Other professions looked to her, including doctors, teachers, actors, poets and students. Minerva is the armour-clad virgin daughter of Jupiter and burst, fully armed from his head. She is a warrior who fights for order, peace and righteous causes. After her birth she dispensed advice to her father.

Dis Pater

The grim and dark god of the Underworld who rules with his wife Persephone. He has no temples and no organised cult. Those who wish to call upon him must dig pits to throw down their sacrifices. He is a symbol of death.

Aesculapius

The son of Apollo, god of Medicine and doctors. Aesculapius was in trouble with Dis Pater because he was preventing the new intake of the dead from arriving as they should have. Aesculapius is the healer god, a wise and beneficial deity. His temples include rest-houses or dormitories in which worshippers can stay overnight in the hope of being healed by the god. His main sanctuary is at Epidaurus in Ionia.

Fortuna

The goddess of fortune and good luck often called upon by gamblers in bath houses across the Empire.

**Nemesis**

The goddess of law and justice, Nemesis also rules over the powers of divine retribution. In some ways she is connected with destiny.

The Muses

Nine daughters of Jupiter, goddesses of music, the arts, science, dance, theatre and history. The Muses are led by Apollo. Their cult centre is the Temple of Muses (Museum) at Alexandria.

Victoria

Specifically a goddess of the legions and emperors, an embodiment of victory and conquest.

The Furies

Female demons serving the gods. Daughters of Gaea, they are monstrous hags with canine faces and black wings, serpent-haired and wielding long whips. They hunt down offenders and send them mad. The three Furies are not vindictive, but impartial.

Morpheus & Somnus

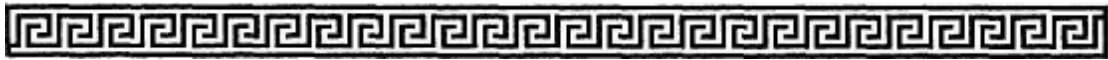
Two gods of sleep, often mistaken for one another. Somnus rules sleep in general, and Morpheus is the god of dreams.

Dioscurii

The Twins of ancient myth, Castor and Pollux, great heroes of Sparta and brothers of Helen of Troy. They are the patrons of sailors and other travellers and are associated with hospitality as well as warfare and the legions. The Dioscurii are also associated with an egg-shaped cap crowned with a star, horses and St Elmo's Fire.

Hercules

This hero from ancient myth became a god long ago and his fabulous feats of daring and strength are known to every living soul, for Hercules travelled far and wide. All know of his Twelve Labours. Today, Hercules embodies endurance, fortitude, courage and stamina. The god is popular amongst legionnaires and other fighters, as well as travellers of many kinds. He is associated with lions, archery, and the club. Many towns and villages in Ionia and Latium have shrines to this cult.



Gods of the Desert Kingdoms

Ahura Mazda

The chief divinity of the Persian pantheon. The lord of wisdom, and father of Mithras, who fights the powers of darkness led by Ahriman.

Allat

A Saraceni deity, a mother goddess who is symbolised by the starry sky, the heavens, and by the Morning Star in particular. Consort of Dushara.

Amun-Ra

One of the chief gods of the Ægyptian people, an ultimate creator god. Revered by Alexander the Great as a father. The cult once had its own line of High-Priest Pharaohs.

Anubis

The jackal-god of Ægypt who leads the souls of the dead to the Underworld. A messenger and funerary god.

Atargatis

The Syrian mother goddess with an itinerant cult of ecstatic, flagellant worshippers and eunuch priests.

Baal

A storm and weather god of Phoenicia and the Decapolis. Every city has its own Baal, though some cults are powerful enough to have spread to other cities. He is a deity of warfare, of fertility, strength and civic pride. The bull is his symbol.

Bast

Ægyptian goddess of the sun and of cats, divine creatures in Ægyptian society.

Bel-Marduk

Cosmic creator of the Chaldean pantheon. Powerful and omnipotent. His son is Nabu.

Cybele

The Great Mother of Asia Minor, a mighty earth goddess commanding great respect. Her rituals are reminiscent of Atargatis and the two cults have much in common. Cybele's priests are

eunuchs and parade in public dancing and shouting, whipping themselves into a frenzy to the sounds of wild music. This cult is also popular with women everywhere.

Dagon

God of the Philistines, a Baal of the oceans and general fecundity. The Philistine cities are on the coast, west of Nabataea.



Dumuzi

The hero shepherd god of the Chaldeans who died and was resurrected by Ishtar. A symbol of the seasons and the resurrection of plants. In Phoenicia and the Decapolis they call him Tammuz, in Ionia and the Empire - Adonis.

Dushara

Saraceni desert god of the oasis, palm tree, ivy and fruitfulness. He is the oasis, the paradise, and he is worshipped as a desert rock.

El

A distant god of the cosmos, a creator and father figure venerated by the Aramaeans of the Purple Towns and Caravan Towns. Father of Baal.

Elgabal

The radiant sun-god of Emesa, dwelling in a pyramidal 'star-stone' in the main temple. A teenage high priest of the cult was once proclaimed emperor (971 AUC) and took the stone of Elgabal to the Eternal City with him. The cults wild sexual excesses were not popular and the Imperials did away with the self-titled emperor Elagabalus.

Ishtar

The mother goddess of the Chaldean pantheon, a goddess of warfare and sex and magic.

Isis

Great mother of the Ægyptian pantheon, a mother-figure, fertility goddess, healer and miracle-worker. The cult has spread across the world giving hope to many. She resurrected her slain husband Osiris and suckled their baby king-to-be Horus.

Mithras

The son of Ahura Mazda, a sun-god, lord of light of hope and endeavour. The saviour god who offers resurrection. Popular amongst merchants and the legions. Worshipped by men only in cave-like sunken temples by initiation only.

Moloch

A little known god of Edom, east of the Dead Sea. Moloch is a brutal fire god and demands human sacrifice.

Nabu

Son of the Chaldean god Bel-Marduk, Nabu is a god of scribes, wisdom and knowledge. He holds the Tablets of Destiny that record all mens' fate.

Osiris

Great Ægyptian deity of resurrection and the afterlife - symbolised by vegetation. Osiris was slain and dismembered by his evil brother Seth and then resurrected by his faithful wife Isis. But Osiris now reigns in the Underworld and is worshipped by people across the world as a saviour god. His son, Horus, became the king of the world.

Sabazius

Orgiastic god from the Taurus Mountains, a god of pleasure, wine, sexual promiscuity, fertility and life after death. Without great public temples, worshipped in private homes.

Shamash

The Chaldean god of the sun, a god of judgement and truth.

Sin

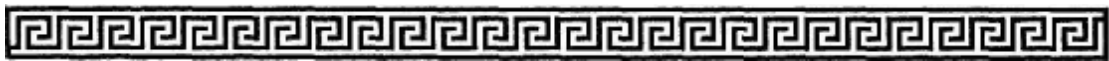
The Chaldean god of the Moon.

Tanith

A Phoenician goddess of war and love, she represents the passions of humankind. She is often said to be the consort of Baal.

Thoth

The Egyptian god of knowledge and writing, symbolised by the baboon and the ibis. Known by Ionian scholars and philosophers as Hermes Trismegistus - a legendary and powerful magician.

**Using FATE**

“Children, offer your prayers, with sacrifice and libation.”

Aeschylus, *The Suppliants*

FATE can be used to resolve some incident that relies on luck, fate and the unknown ‘will of the gods’. Leaping a chasm, surviving poison, spotting an ambush in the desert - all are dependant on a FATE roll. Roll 2d and add the FATE attribute - on a 10 or more the attempt succeeds.

Calling on the Gods

FATE can also be used to call on the gods for divine aid. A prayer uttered in an instant to a deity can result in an action succeeding *automatically*. However the adventurer’s FATE attribute is then temporarily lowered by 1 point. In addition, only non-combat actions can be rendered automatic in this way. When FATE reaches 1 the adventurer cannot make anymore further appeals.

Recovering FATE Points

To recover FATE points lost through appeals to the gods, an adventurer can make a sacrifice to any god. The sacrifice (typically a sheep) must be made at a recognised temple of the god and be conducted by a priest of the cult. The cost of such a sacrifice will usually be 25 denarii. Once completed (an hour long ritual is common) the adventurer’s FATE attribute is restored to its original level. If the adventurer is in disfavour with a god or temple then he cannot approach any of that cult’s temples to carry out a sacrifice.

The Gods Reward

It is common for inhabitants of the Desert Kingdoms to give thanks to the gods following a successful expedition, journey or experience of any nature. This display of gratitude usually takes the form of a stone stele (carved marker stone) dedicated to the god and both purchased at and deposited at one of the god’s temples. Anyone can dedicate a stele, the character need not be an initiate of the cult. The character must pay the temple 1000 denarii for this service.

In game terms the god (in the form of the referee) bestows on the character wisdom and experience relating to the adventure or scenario just played out - whatever the outcome. The creation of the stele requires three days, and the dedication a one hour ritual, led by a priest of the temple. At the conclusion of the ritual the character gains 1 Experience Point. The referee actually awards the Experience Point at the end of the adventure if he believes the characters have earned it, and the Adventurers receive the Experience Point by dedicating a stone stele.



An Experience Point can be spent immediately to improve a character, or can be saved and used to better effect later. Experience Points can be used in the following ways:

Increase an Attribute - To increase an Attribute (other than HITS) by 1 point, the player needs to spend a number of Experience points equal to the character's current Attribute value. MIGHT, FATE, CRAFT, and LEARNING can all be increased in this way.

Increase HITS - To increase the HITS score by 1 point, the player needs to spend 1 Experience Point.

Learn a New Skill - To learn a new skill, a player needs to spend 3 Experience Points. See the 'Resolving Actions' chapter.

Learn a New Priestly Ritual - To learn a new priestly ritual and advance further into a cult, the player needs to spend 2 Experience Points.

Learn a New Magician's or Philosopher's Power - To learn a new magic power, the player needs to spend 2 Experience Points.

Fighting Spirits

A spirit is a non-physical being, often the insubstantial remains of a dead person. Most spirits travel to the Otherworld once separated from their dead body. Some remain behind as ghosts. Ghosts are mysterious beings, only partly existent in this world and terrifying to any mortal. And then there are demons. Demons are supernatural entities, minor godlings trapped on this world since Creation and intent on causing agony, chaos and death to humankind. Like spirits they are insubstantial, but they are much more powerful. All are rated with the attributes of FATE, HITS and TERROR. FATE is used when attacking victims (just as MIGHT is used in more physical combats), HITS are used to measure 'life force', and TERROR is used even before combat is joined to scare and terrify a victim according to the Sanity rules in Chapter VIII. Check TERROR when a spirit is first encountered, and then go on to spirit combat using FATE should a spirit so wish.

A spirit, ghost or demon can attack a person at will, all the person can do is try to fend-off such an attack. Fleeing is only of use against a ghost that haunts a particular location. When an adventurer is engaged in spirit combat against such a being, he makes a FATE roll. If successful he inflicts 1d6 Stun damage on the spirit's HITS score (see Unarmed Combat). If unsuccessful then the spirit

inflicts 1d6 Stun points on the adventurer. A spirit at 0 HITS vanishes to reappear at some later date. An adventurer who is reduced to 0 HITS by a non-corporeal being suffers a variety of effects depending on the nature of the spirit that attacked him. A spirit from the Otherworld seeks to return to that place as soon as possible and will leave the adventurer for dead. A ghost may have uses for the adventurer and might possess the body when it wakes, in order to carry out its campaign of deception. Demons each have their own individual powers and will possess an adventurer and then inflict their awful curse upon him. Some inflict disease, some madness, some agonising pains, others inflict psychological illnesses. Some examples of spirits follow:

Minor Ghost

FATE 2 HITS 4 Terror 2

Ghost of an Egyptian Pharaoh

FATE 8 HITS 12 Terror 4

Demon of Disease

FATE 3 HITS 6 Terror 3

Initiates

Some worshippers make a further commitment to a god and become initiates. An initiate devotes his life to the service of a god and that god's allies. Usually initiation involves passing some sort of test to enter the temple staff, followed by service within the temple as an attendant, musician or singer. This service is not full-time, and initiates work for set periods throughout the year (usually one week in four - amounting to three months of temple duties). An initiate follows the likes and dislikes of his cult, obeys any priests of the cult and must aid a fellow initiate unless ordered otherwise by his priest. The initiation test can be abstracted by making a FATE roll, with an additional

+1 per 100 denarii donated (maximum of +4 gained in this way).

The benefits of initiation include:

1 - Board and Succour

The initiate can seek temporary shelter and food at any of the cult's temples.

2 - Use of Cult Amulets

Initiates can purchase a cult amulet that can carry a number of sacrifice 'charges' to be used away from the temple.

3 - Favours

An initiate who travels around can carry out a favour for one cult temple and then request a favour in return at another temple (or the same temple, it doesn't matter). A favour requested will be well matched in proportion to the favour the character initially did for the cult.

4 - Banking

Many temples have funds and resources. The initiate can deposit treasure or coinage at one temple and quite easily request a sum of money up to that value from any other temple. The god is all-knowing and priests can easily detect a fraud or trickster. Alternatively, the initiate can borrow a sum of money up to 100x his FATE score at zero interest.

Cult Amulets: A faithful worshipper can purchase an amulet from a temple that is crafted in the shape of the god's holy symbol. Normal sacrifices can be made in the presence of the amulet and the 'charge' that would normally restore the worshipper's FATE is stored within the amulet. This can be done a number of times until the amulet has a maximum of 8 'charges' in it. To make use of a 'charge' the worshipper spends one round clutching the amulet and reciting a prayer to the god. Other

people can use these charges if the worshipper wishes to give the amulet away, or sell it. Amulets are useful to those who travel and cannot always get to a temple. Amulets purchased from the temple typically cost 50 denarii. If more than one amulet is owned by a worshipper, none will work.

Entering a Priesthood

An Adventurer may want to join a cult as a priest. A priest is a full-time permanent worshipper of one particular god. He is a learned man with the ability to cast certain powerful rituals on his god's behalf. Many priests go out into the world to further their god's and their temple's aims. Most priests try to live according to their deity's own life and to emulate it.

To become a priest a candidate must have been an initiate in good standing for at least three months and also donate 2500 denarii in ornate goods as a sacrifice. He must also pass a test. This test varies from cult to cult, but will often involve some journey, some physical test or hardship or a test of loyalty. Once completed satisfactorily, the candidate is ordained as a junior priest of the god. Temple priests must be able to read and write (exactly which language depends on the individual temple). This means that every candidate must first have LEARNING of 2 or more. Once the adventurer has become a priest, he cannot sacrifice to any other deity but his own. However he does enjoy all of the benefits of the initiate (see above) as well as the ability to carry out cult rituals. He begins with one ritual - Sacrifice, and must gain knowledge of the other rituals through the use of Experience Points.

The Staff of a Priest: Many cults welcome magicians into their ranks as skilled spiritualists and mediums, able

to hear the voice of the dead, and the voice of the god. These magicians are priests and their magical staffs must conform to a set type determined by the nature of the god (see the sample cults at the end of this chapter). Other priests have no need of such a staff, other than as a symbol of office.

Priestly Rituals

To perform a priestly ritual, a priest must be 'pure' and in favour with his god. If he performs the ritual within the temple it succeeds automatically. If it is performed outside of the temple precinct then the priest must make a FATE roll for it to succeed. Rituals take about an hour to perform and require concentration and much gesticulation and chanting of formulae. Like powers, rituals cost the priest a number of HIT points.

The five rituals are:

Divination (*cost 1 HIT*) - Through the use of this ritual the priest can divine the thought of the gods. One question can be asked of the god, although in **ZENOBIA**, no god can see into the future. Questions must refer to the present or the past. There are a number of different divination rituals used by the cults, and the diviner will attempt the one preferred by his cult. The most common two forms of Divination are: **Haruspication** and Dream Reading. Haruspication can be performed whereby the liver and entrails of a sacrificed sheep are inspected and the god's reply comes in the form of a yes or no answer.

Alternatively the priest can perform a **Dream-reading** which involves sleeping on the question, and the god reveals his answer in the form of a lucid

dream or vision . Both methods have their uses. Dream interpretation is a highly sophisticated and important aspect of life in the Desert Kingdoms. The interpreter is a priest who was sometimes able to call for a dream sent by the gods, or to call for a dream to be sent to an initiate of the religion. For speed of play (and general playability) these dreams are 'shadows' of what might come to pass. The referee decides on some event involving the character in the current adventure which is likely to pass and relates it to the player. The player is thus forewarned and can avoid repeating those actions if he desires.

But there is a more sophisticated and more atmospheric method of dream prediction which the referee can use in his games. In this the dreams have a mythic, symbolic quality about them, revealing much if the player can decipher their meaning. The referee must create one (or more, if desired) dream for an adventure before it is run. This dream will be a clue the players might use.

For example, the final scene from the introductory adventure, 'Valley of the Phoenix' can be used to illustrate the concept. The dream could refer to an evil sorcerer and his attempts to kill the phoenix. The dream might run: *'You are hunting a crane in the reed swamps of the Nile delta when suddenly a black panther leaps from a thicket and devours the crane. As it turns to you, it howls in pain, and the crane bursts its way out of the panther's belly, ripping the beast in two ...'* Looking at the ending of the adventure will make this dream's message clear. Similarly the encounter with the Guardian of Ra might be foreshadowed in a warning dream: *'You are the passenger of a river barge, the solar barge of the god Ra as it passes through the heavens. One man pulls the oars - you whip him*

to row faster, and he suddenly drops dead. You are forced to take the oars yourself, and spend eternity rowing the solar barge across the heavens'. Looking at the adventure will also make this dream's message clear.

Have one dream ready for each adventure and recite the dream to any who have a prophetic dream while engaged in the adventure - it can be the same dream, which makes it more vivid, more symbolic. To create a prophetic dream consider your adventure, the tricks, traps, deceptions and complications. Think of one which could benefit from a coded warning. Turn it into a list of its basic parts and rewrite them with the inclusion of the player character and some other 'props'. Disguise people with animals and facets of nature. Remember to use the elements of life of the Desert Kingdoms to the full!

For example, an adventure might contain a scene in which a local thief is going to show the Adventurers some stolen treasures, but betrays them and ambushes them with his friends. Basically, a dark ally offers wealth, but instead betrays. Try: *'You stumble through the desert, half blind and almost dead, and see tracks, the tracks of some animal leading to a waterhole. You follow in desperation, dying of thirst. As you emerge over a low rocky ridge you see the waterhole but dry and bare with lots of animal skeletons. The footprints were of a crafty hyena which laid in wait for you and attacks with others from its pack! '* This method is purely optional, and should be used only when the referee is confident enough in himself to be able to create suitable prophetic dreams.

Holy Healing (cost 1 HIT): The priest can ask his god, through this ritual, to heal a friend or colleague. If the god is

known as a healing god, he will eradicate any disease or affliction and restore the patient to full HIT points. If not then the most the god can do is restore 6 HIT points. A patient can only be so blessed by a god once per day.

Purification (*cost 1-3 HITS*): The priest can purify himself (cost 1 pt), other people (2 pts), or even places (3 pts) with this ritual. He often uses holy water that he must first bless. Only a purified person may enter a temple or other holy area without incurring the wrath of the god. The ritual also imbues a person with an aura of divine protection. A purified person is immune to attacks from demons and spirits as well as the magical powers used by magicians or monsters. Places that are purified are protected by an invisible ward or barrier that prevents spirits and demons as well as hostile magic from passing across. By 'place' an area roughly 5m square is meant. Purification will only last till sun-down or sun-up, whichever comes first.

Sacred Animal (*cost 1-3 HITS*): This is essentially three rituals in one, all of which allow the priest to interact with the favoured or 'holy' creatures of the cult, animals favoured by the god. Jupiter, for example, holds the eagle to be a sacred animal, Thoth the baboon.

- **Speak To Animal** (*cost 1 HIT*): The priest can understand the beast's speech and speak a rough approximation of that tongue.

Many animals are of limited intelligence however, unless they are sacred individuals uplifted in intelligence by the god. The ritual takes only one minute to perform.

- **Call Animal** (*cost 2 HITS*): The priest can summon an animal of the cult to aid him. The animal will do what it can to help the priest once called, but is limited by its very nature. The ritual takes 10 minutes to perform.
- **Shapechange** (*cost 3 HITS*): The priest can change himself into a proud and powerful specimen of the cult's favoured species. He retains his intelligence, memory and personality, but his clothing and equipment magically vanish until the priest returns to normal. A transformed animal cannot speak human languages or use human tools. The ritual takes ten minutes and lasts up to 3 hours.

Sacrifice (*cost 1 HIT*): The priest can perform a sacrifice at a cult altar, taking the life of a sheep or goat with a ritual knife and burning the remains as an offering to the god. Worshippers pay 25 denarii for this service. It does mean that the priest can perform his own sacrifices and need not approach another priest to perform them for him. He may also build a temporary altar and sacrifice to his god wherever he desires (but must roll FATE for the ritual to succeed). Such an altar can only be used once.

VI CULTS OF THE REGION

The Anointed One

(also: Jesus, Christ, the Saviour, the Lamb of God)

The Son of God, Promising an Eternal Afterlife



Nature of the God

The Anointed One is essentially a god of love, forgiveness and tolerance. In fact he is recognised not as a god, but as the son of a god called the Nameless One, and as such worshipped separately - almost as a channel to reach the ear of that god. The Anointed One was heralded in Solyman culture long before he arrived in the flesh, three hundred years ago. He was born as a mortal baby in a dusty Solyman village and grew up as a follower of the Nameless One ("my father").

Given the name 'Jesus', he became a magician who preached messages of love, kindness and self-sacrifice, while also railing against debts and the economic forces of the Imperium. The priests of the Nameless One were allies of the Imperium and saw this man as a danger to be eliminated. With Imperial approval (for the Empire held sway in Solyman in that age) they crucified him. After his death, the magician Jesus is reputed to have walked again on earth before joining his father in heaven. As such, the Anointed One represents resurrection and hope.

Cult Centres

Hierosolyma, Tarsus, Antioch, Cyrene, the Eternal City.

Associations

Small statuettes of the Anointed One depict him nailed to the cross, a long-haired bearded man in his 30s. He appears calm and serene. The symbol of the cult is the Crucifix, the cross upon which the Anointed One was crucified. The sign of the fish is often used by cult members as a covert symbol of recognition. Palm leaves are also a symbol of the cult.

Cult Practices

The cult meets weekly in secret on Sun Day, often in local caves or cellars hidden from view. The symbol of the fish is commonly drawn in the sand by visiting cultists to gain access to meetings. A candle is lit at the start of each meeting, and this ceremony has now taken on a magical significance, symbol of hope and comfort. There are no animal sacrifices, only prayer, liturgies and sermons. The Mass is a regular ceremony that recreates the Anointed One's Last Supper with his loyal cult followers, prior to his own execution. In the ceremony members of the cult drink the blood of Christ (red wine) and eat the flesh of Christ (bread). If the rumours of the Empire are to be believed the Christians actually eat real human flesh and drink human blood.

Initiate Membership

The cult is a flourishing religion, but a clandestine one. It is most popular amongst the poor, amongst slaves, women and the oppressed. Still, Christians from a wide variety of backgrounds congregate in secret,

soldiers, Imperial officials, scribes and so on. Initiates take turns to read the writings of Jesus' companions (if they can read), or to lead prayers. There is no formal structure at this level.

Status & Role of Priesthood

Priests of the cult are those individuals who show inspired leadership, and are able to provide the meeting with hope, light and safety. Slaves are as likely to be priests as wealthy councillors. Women are not eligible for priesthood. Large cities with several Christian meeting houses are co-ordinated by a high priest (bishop). These bishops regularly communicate with one another, and sometimes even meet in person if the political conditions are favourable. The bishops pay deference to the bishop of the Eternal City, since the first bishop of the cult (Simon Peter) had his meeting house here before he was executed by the Empire.

The cult is generally hated and despised by almost everyone. The Solymans deny the divine nature of Jesus and consider the cult a betrayal of the Nameless One. The Emperor often outlaws the cult and carries out massacres of Christians because the cult refuses to pay him homage or recognise the protective gods of the Empire. Without this recognition, the Olympian gods will bring down their wrath upon the Empire. In addition, suspicion is rife that these cultists kill, dismember and eat one of their 'flock' at ritual meals and drink that victim's blood. Since the cultists also call one another 'brother' and 'sister', it is widely believed that the Christians practice incest. Whether any of this is true is up to the referee.

Preferred Divination

The Word of God received after a day of fasting and sleep deprivation while out in the wilds.

Preferred Staff Type

Shepherd's Crook

Preferred Animal Familiar

None

Preferred Amulet

Simple cross fashioned from wood

Allied Cults

None

Bel-Marduk

(also: Bel, Bol, Belos)

A god of supreme cosmic power, knowledge and the universal laws.

Nature of the God



Bel-Marduk was the oldest son of Ea, wise Lord of the Apsu (the Subterranean Waters). He came from the Apsu and originally personified the fertilising action of the waters; it was he who made plants grow and grain ripen. He thus was an agricultural deity as his symbol, the spade, shows. His fortunes grew with the greatness of Babylon, the city of his choice, and finally he occupied the first place among the gods. He had, moreover, attained his position through right of conquest.

After the failure of Anu and Ea to thwart the goddess of chaos, Tiamat, Bel-Marduk dared to face her. Tiamat had created a legion of monsters to be led by her husband, a prince of darkness, called Kingu. As his seal of authority Kingu had been awarded the Tablets of Destiny by Tiamat. Her ultimate goal was to destroy the gods.

Ea summoned Bel-Marduk, 'the son who makes his heart swell', and bade him to do battle with Tiamat. Bel-Marduk accepted, but first insisted that the assembled gods should confer on him supreme authority. The gods consented and after holding a great banquet they prepared a princely dwelling for him. They acknowledged his rule over all the world and accorded him the sceptre and the throne.

Thus invested Bel-Marduk took in his right hand a bow, fixed a string, hung a quiver by his side, set lightning before him and made a net in which to entangle Tiamat. He loosed the winds which he posted beside him; then, taking his chief weapon, the hurricane, he mounted his chariot - a terrifying tempest - which was drawn by four dragons. They rose up, Tiamat and Bel-Marduk, among the gods. The Epic of Creation tells us:

*They marched to war, they drew near to
give battle.
The Lord spread out his net and caught her
in it.
The evil wind which followed him, he
loosed it in her face.
She opened her mouth, Tiamat, to swallow
him.
He drove in the evil wind so that she could
not close her lips.
The terrible winds filled her belly. Her
heart was seized,
She held her mouth wide open.
He let fly an arrow, it pierced her belly.
Her inner parts he clove, he split her heart.
He rendered her powerless and destroyed
her life.
He felled her body and stood upright on it.*

The death of Tiamat spread confusion amongst her army of demons. They fled in disorder to save themselves and some found refuge in the hidden corners of creation. The rest Bel-Marduk swept up in his net and took them all prisoner. With Kingu he threw them in chains

into the infernal regions. Returning to Tiamat he split her skull and cut the arteries. As he contemplated the monstrous corpse he 'conceived works of art'. He clove the body 'like a fish into its two parts'. From one half he fashioned the vault of the heavens, from the other the solid earth. Her breasts formed mountains, the Tigris and Euphrates flowed from her eyes, her spittle became the clouds in the sky. That done he organised the world. He constructed a dwelling place for the great gods in the sky and installed the stars which were their image. Thus the earth was formed, and 'in order that the gods should live in a world to rejoice their hearts' Bel-Marduk created humanity from the blood of Kingu. After his ordeal, the gods awarded Bel-Marduk fifty titles, each of which corresponded to a divine attribute. The wife of Bel-Marduk is Sarpanitu and their son is the wise god Nabu.

Cult Centres

The modern centre of the cult is the desert city of Palmyra - there a vast temple complex has been constructed in the god's honour, a fabulous edifice and an enduring monument to the human spirit of faith and religious devotion. The Palmyrene people, of mixed Saraceni-Aramaean stock, have always been traders and middlemen, their wealthy caravans wending across desert and steppe to link up the world's greatest cultures. As such they have always been open to outside influences. The cult of Bel-Marduk came from the East, from the ancient civilisation of Chaldea. Centuries earlier, before the rise of the Empire, the cult centre lay at the Chaldean capital of Babylon, the greatest and most powerful city to ever exist. But Babylon long ago fell into disuse, bypassed by trade routes and caravans. Today the sand-choked ruins of Babylon still stand on the edge of the desert by the river Euphrates, and the

majestic ziggurat and temple precinct to Bel-Marduk lies broken and lifeless.

Amongst the Palmyrenes the cult is pre-eminent, and Palmyra is a holy city, dedicated to the god. But the influence of the cult is great, its history long and its legacy powerful. The inhabitants of Mesopotamia (now under the government of the Persian kingdom) still revere Bel-Marduk, holding him and his cult in great estimation. Practically every Mesopotamian city has raised a temple of some size to the god. The cult has also spread out from the desert staging post of Palmyra into Osrhoene and the Kingdoms of the Taurus. It is perhaps the most widespread of the Eastern cults. As Belos, Bel-Marduk is actively worshipped at a great temple at Apamea.

The cult is politically powerful. Wherever rulers rule in the shadow of a Bel-Marduk temple, that temple must be consulted and addressed by the actual or would-be king. Often he will hold the post of priest or arch-priest of the cult. As usual, there is no grand organisation, but when priests of Bel-Marduk gather irregularly, those of Palmyra hold precedence over their cousins.

Associations

Bel-Marduk is considered to be the master of the cosmos and time by those who worship him in the East. He is often worshipped with two companions, Iarhibol (the Sun) and Aglibol (the Moon). Bel-Marduk appears as a mature clean shaven man wearing the armour and uniform of a legionary commander. His divine nature encompasses many things. As a god of creation he has power over all life. He is a healer and a destroyer. He embodies of the winds and tempests of the air, and also the fertility provided by the fresh-

waters of the Apsu. As the supreme ruler, Bel-Marduk has authority over the passions and plans of humans. Through his son Nabu (who holds the Tablets of Destiny) Bel-Marduk can control the fate of any individual. He also embodies judgement and divine wisdom. The symbols of Bel-Marduk are the triangular Mesopotamian spade and the dragon.

Cult Practices

The greatest holy day of the cult is New Year's Day (on the spring equinox) when the statue of Bel-Marduk is carried solemnly through the immense crowd out of the temple in Palmyra and out of the city to a temple in the country called the Akitu. Here it remains for several days. The spring barley harvest is celebrated, episodes from the god's life are enacted, and the queen of Palmyra herself is forced by duty to receive investiture from Bel-Marduk (known as 'taking Bel by the hand'). These festivals last ten days. The ritual of this ceremony comprises prayers chanted by the priests, magical ceremonies, purifications and sacrifices.

Initiate Membership

Initiates of Bel-Marduk are generally Eastern men and women who long to be connected with the 'ultimate being'. Palmyrians think of Bel-Marduk in much the same way as inhabitants of the Empire think of Saturn. Both acknowledge the power and divine might of Jupiter Heliopolitanus, but also recognise a 'higher being' that came before.

Bel encompasses everything, he is the world and everything in it, he is thought, speech, memory and action. All that IS is Bel-Marduk. A huge number of Palmyrenes and others worship the god. Soldiers, traders and other travellers show a preference for Bel or his ambassador Malakbel

because they know that the god 'is everywhere - is everything'.

Status & Role of Priesthood

The priests of Bel are known by the title *Themes* ('Servant'). They are traditionally clad in long white robes and wear tall conical mitre hats, also white. Like initiates, priests of Bel are often well travelled and 'worldly-wise'. The wealth of worldly knowledge is open to them and they revere that knowledge. Every *Themes* is a scribe and cultured individual, but many have practical experience as travellers, caravan leaders, mercenary captains, merchants or diplomats. Since Bel-Marduk IS the very machinery of the universe, his priests seek to find out how that machinery works. They are collectors of strange facts, information, knowledge of every kind.

Preferred Divination

At Apamea, Belos, known as the Ruler of Fortune, has a famous oracle attended by hundreds of pilgrims every week. The preferred divination method of Bel-Marduk is astrology, since the stars reveal the machinery of the universe in motion.

Preferred Staff Type

Cedar wood staff topped with a lunar crescent and a solar disk.

Preferred Animal Familiar

Hawk

Preferred Amulet

Triangular-headed spade or hoe amulet

Allied Cults

Aglibol (Calf of Bel): Depicted as a lunar god with a crescent behind his head. Power of plant growth and fecundity is his. His brother is Malakbel, the servant and holy messenger of the cult, and they are often worshipped together, and sometimes

depicted shaking hands in front of a cypress tree. The two gods are commonly worshipped together wherever Palmyrene soldiers are stationed together, whether in the East or the multitudinous provinces of the Empire.

Iarhibol (Master of the Months):

Iarhibol has a radiate crown of light on his statues, making him the equivalent of the Sun.

Malakbel (Angel of Bel): Malakbel has rays of light on his statuary, much like Iarhibol. Malakbel is rarely depicted wearing a cuirass, he is more commonly shown in Persian garb. He is the holy messenger of Bel and a trusted mediator of God. As a mediator, he has some status in the cult of Bel. Since Bel is often considered to be a great and universal, though invisible deity, Malakbel sometimes tends to supplant him as the visible image of that god, much as the Christians revere Christ as much as, or more than, his master, the Lord. Malakbel is often conflated with the god Mercury, but also has a role as a 'good shepherd' and herdsman, a protector of flocks who was born of a tree.

Nabu: Nabu is the Chaldean scribe god and the divine scribe of destinies. As such he is also revered by all those in the Desert Kingdoms who have scribal training. Because so much learning is transmitted through the art of writing, Nabu is also a very wise god, a god who knows many things. Not only is Nabu a devoted son, he is Marduk's closest minister and advisor. On the day when destinies are determined by the gods, it is Nabu who faithfully transcribes their decisions on the Tablets of Destiny (the *Dup Shimati*). But this role did not mark him simply as the scribe of the gods, at the god's beck and call. Nabu could increase or diminish the number

of days allotted to any mortal, this gives the god his real power. As a judge over life and death, Nabu is also a stern judgement figure - a god that can be appealed to for judgement and for decision-making. Nabu is also, by virtue of his skills, a messenger and herald.

Dushara

(also: Master of Sharay, Dushrat, Theos Ares)

A god of toughness and survival, of mountains, desert and oases.



Nature of the God

Dushara is essentially a sun god who descends to the mortal realm via desert mountains. In this way he is linked to those mountains and they are sacred. He is the son of a virgin goddess named Khaaba and was born on 25th December. Dushara is not depicted or even thought of as being in human form - he is elemental, a force of nature. The deity has never appeared to humans and is far from human perception. Dushara is also a god of wine and the vine, of growth and plants. He is life and survival in tough situations - he IS the life bringer. Water is sacred to such a desert god and every underground

cistern of the Nabataeans is a shrine to Dushara.

"Beyond the desert of life awaits a heavenly oasis"

Cult Centres

The Great High Place of the cult is the summit of Jebel esh-Sharat, outside Petra. Within Petra the grandiose temple to Dushara stands under the glowering Ummn al-Biyara rock. His other temples and shrines are rarely anything more than shaped holy stones standing defiantly up against the sky on ridges, cliffs, boulders or mountains. Sometimes a simple but enigmatic face stares out of these holy rocks, and the priests swear to the god that no mortal hand carved those faces. Some temples are found in towns and cities and do enjoy the presence of temples, ritual and cult.

Associations

The vine - a plant of great vitality and energy but also a great survivor. Dushara is also associated with the date palm, one of the few trees in the desert to bear fruit. Finally, the phoenix bird in all its mythical glory is often seen as a symbol of the cult.

Cult Practices

The cult worships not at traditional altars, but at black, square stone blocks (betyls), often placed in a decorated rock-cut niche. The holy stones are over a metre high and well under a metre across. Those betyls in city temples are often ornately presented, sometimes standing on golden bases. Otherwise the cult rituals are conducted in the open air, high up on summits and cliff-tops. Animals are sacrificed, incense is burnt and smoke rises up to the sunlight that IS Dushara.

Initiate Membership

The initiate must survive a harsh desert survival test. Those who do not return are not found worthy.

Status & Role of Priesthood

The priests of Dushara do not have greater status than other men. They prefer a simple life without wealth or ostentation. They dress as others dress. Priests of Dushara do not drink wine and are bound by the cult rules not to live or sleep within a building. For the priest of Dushara a tent is his home, even if he lives within a city.

Preferred Divination

Lithomancy - the casting of holy stones.

Preferred Staff Type

Palm-wood staff carved with ivy leaves and capped with gold.

Preferred Animal Familiar

Camel

Preferred Amulet

Flat stone from a holy mountain, with the carving of Dushara's holy face inscribed onto it.

Allied Cults

Allat - Allat is his consort, also known to the Saracens as al-Uzza. She is seen in the sky as the Morning Star, a symbol of the heavens in general. A gushing spring sacred to Allat is found just outside Petra.

Jupiter Heliopolitanus

(also: Baal-Hadad, Jupiter Dolichenus)

The absolute master of the heavens - bringer of strength and victory

Nature of the God

Jupiter Heliopolitanus ('Helios') is the absolute master of the heavens, a sky god of immense power. His ancient cult was known as Baal-Hadad, but the

Imperials know him as Jupiter Helios. His realm extends beyond the sky to the cycle of vegetation and the seasons, as well as to warfare and the endless wars of men. It wasn't long before the god usurped the powers of lesser deities and proclaimed himself the master of the universe. Jupiter Helios grants victory to the faithful and protects the army. As the absolute sovereign he is master of Time, and his cyclic phases are marked by the stars.

"Strength and honour in this life"

Cult Centres

The cult of Jupiter Helios stretches from the borders of Persia into the heart of the Empire. But the cult centre is at Heliopolis ('Sun-City') in the mountains of Phoenicia. This city is utterly dominated by the vast classical temple of Jupiter Helios. Another strong centre is the town of Doliche in the Taurus Mountains further north. Other cult centres exist at Beirut and Damascus. But the cult thrives wherever military men congregate. The cult has spread to the Eternal City. The Emperor Gallienus is said to be a 'comrade'.

Associations

Statues of Jupiter Helios are uncompromisingly military statements. The god is clad in the plate cuirass of a legionary general - a war god of power and invincibility. He is often depicted wearing a horned tiara. Other associations include a double-bladed axe and thunderbolt. His foot rests on a bull. Sun and Moon are part of his symbology and these stress another aspect of the god - eternity.

Cult Practices

The cult is well organised, as you would expect from an organisation that is so closely tied to the military. In each kingdom or Imperial province, the cult

is headed by a Provincial Council, which is a meeting of the cult's high priests in that area. Many other temples have an active life in the town in which they are situated with festivals and parades. The priests of Jupiter Helos restrict these parades to the temple precinct, retaining an aura of secrecy. There is a closeness amongst the cult members and they always refer to one another as 'comrade'. Banquets form the high point of cult ritual. The sacrificial victim is eaten, and often this victim is a bull. The animal is butchered on a stone table and served up in a special dining room (triclinium) attached to every temple, complete with plunge pool for ritual purification before the meal is joined. The skulls of these honoured bulls are displayed on the temple walls.

Initiate Membership

There are various initiatory ranks that a 'comrade' can complete. In ascending order they are: Comrade, Hero, Diomedes, Achilles, Hercules. Hercules is a son of Jupiter Helios. To become initiated, and to reach higher ranks, the candidate must prove his skill in battle. Typically the cult pits the candidate against a prisoner of war bought by the cult for that purpose and they fight in a tiny sand-covered arena within the temple precinct. The slave goes free if he wins.

Status & Role of Priesthood

Aspirants to the priesthood must be a Diomedes or higher and take jobs as assistants to priests before they can be ordained. The high priest has two such assistants (given the honorary titles of Castor and Pollux). The priests wear a long-sleeved garment, desert fashion and an Eastern-style tiara. Every priest is called an Aquila ('Eagle').

Preferred Divination

Dream Interpretation

Preferred Staff Type

Oak-staff topped with a miniature double-bladed axe.

Preferred Animal Familiar

Eagle or other bird of prey, bull

Preferred Amulet

Circular bronze sun disk inscribed with a lightning flash or spear point. The reverse typically shows a soldier sacrificing at an altar.

Allied Cults

Atargatis, the consort of Jupiter Helos; the Dioscuri; Hercules; Mithras.

Mithras

(also: Lord of Light, The Unconquered Sun, The Bull-Slayer)

A god of light, life and salvation, of courage, endurance and toughness

Nature of the God

Mithras is a mighty Persian god, a solar god born of the Generative Rock. He was ordered by his father, Ahura Mazda - Lord of All, to hunt down and slay the bull Silvanus, the Bull of Life. Only by doing this could evil be pushed back and the world filled with life. Demon servants of Ahriman the Dark One tried to stop him, but his faithful hound kept them at bay. The sacrifice took place in a sacred cave, the Cave of Mithras. The entire basis for Mithraism is the dualism of Light and Darkness, the eternal fight between Good and Evil. When Mithras had captured the bull he dragged it into the cave and against his wishes he slew it. Many statues and paintings preserve this moment, often with the Sun and Moon flanking the struggle, sometimes along with the two torch-bearers, Cautes and Cautopates.

The death of the sacred bull allowed all life to flourish, including the first



human couple. Mithras protected them from the ravages of Ahriman and then made ready to depart the mortal world. He brought together his disciples, Cautes and Cautopates, and ate a celebratory Last Supper. This event is remembered in Mithraism by a ritual meal of bread and wine. Then Mithras ascended to heaven in the Sun God's chariot and from heaven he continues to watch over his followers. Some accounts tell of his eventual return to destroy the world in fire and lead the faithful to heaven. As light and life, Mithras is responsible for the cosmos, he is order, goodness, victory. He is a doer and a saviour. The blood of the bull was fertility itself, and Persians harvest a plant that bleeds this holy blood - Haoma. Soldiers everywhere admire his steadfastness, courage and martial duty.

"We must get through dark times with fortitude and faith"

Cult Centres

The great centres of Mithraic worship are Artaxata (the Armenian capital), and Arsakia (a Persian administrative capital). Tarsus in Cilicia is also a great centre for the cult - it is the city from which Mithras burst out from the Desert Kingdoms into the West.

Associations

Mithras is depicted as an athletic youth clad in baggy Persian pants, a long-sleeved tunic, a short cloak and a Phrygian cap. Above his altars stand a set-piece carving of Mithras straddling the Bull of Life and plunging a dagger into its neck. From the cut flows blood as a form of vegetation, and the evil Ant, Scorpion and Snake try to stop the killing. The loyal dog of Mithras is often helping him.

Cult Practices

The temples of Mithras (Mithraeum) are tiny underground cellars, often especially built and housing less than 50 people. Each one resembles the Cave of Mithras and is decorated with plaster rock facades as if it were a real cave. A porch allows access and initiates the space to change. Long benches line the sides of the tiny room, and at the far end stands a statue of Mithras wrestling with the sacred bull flanked on either side by his retainers, the Dadiphoi. These torch-bearers accompany Mithras in much of the cult's artwork. Reliefs and altars also decorate the end of the Mithraeum and the room is filled with the sweet smell of pine-cone incense. Mithraism actually practices baptism and the members eat a sacramental meal. Other ritual acts include the imitation of animals sacred to the god - initiates flap their arms like the raven and growl like lions. Costumes and masks are worn according to the grade of the initiate. Some of the ceremonies end with the sacrifice of a bull to the god. Much as Mithras enriched the world with the life-giving fertility of the dying bull, so too his worshippers kill a bull, not for the benefit of the god, but for the benefit of Mankind.

The Mithraic aspect of sacrifice and asceticism appeals to soldiers, and much of Mithraism mirrors army life.

With its emphasis on austerity, toil and struggle the cult speaks directly to the tough legionary. He can identify with its ideals, unlike the self-consuming and contemplative cults of the intellectuals. Mithras is not a god of violence and killing, but of soldiering in general. For the soldier, Mithras is the unconquerable god, one of his later titles is : 'Sol Invictus', the Unconquered Sun. The god had struggled through many adversities, but his courage and determination guaranteed him success. For initiates of Mithraism, life itself is seen as a battle between good and evil, angels and demons, and his worshippers can easily see in the great wars of the Empire and the Desert Kingdoms, some cosmic significance. The cult is able to elevate the warrior from apologist for his crimes to the fighter on the front-line for the destiny of the universe. And for initiates this conflict continues even in death.

Initiate Membership

The cult's military-style organisation revolves around seven (including priesthood) ranks that a worshipper can pass through as well as an all-male membership and an emphasis on ordeals and initiation trials. Initiates have to match Mithras' toughness and austerity, especially during the ritual tests for entrance and promotion. One of the ranks, attainable by passing a test is actually called Soldier. The worshipper has to push a crown from his head so that it falls to the floor. As he did this he states that "Mithras is my crown". Other ordeals test the initiate's courage and determination and allow him to prove himself to his god. One test involves the aspirant's hands being tied behind his back with chicken guts, then he is thrown across, or has to jump, a water-filled pit while blind-folded. Other horrible rites take place in the temples, including ritual brandings and tortures.

Bloody swords are reported and depicted, to be used in a ritualised mock murder. The pit is also used for ritual combats, since man-to-man fighting is often seen as the ultimate test of character, bravery and toughness.

The titles of the initiation levels are all masculine which reflects the restriction of membership to men, and their meanings are astrological; each rank represents one of the planets. These six levels, in ascending order are:

- **Raven:** The Raven was Ahura Mazda's messenger and represented Mercury. On frescoes and mosaics the initiate holds a cup and the caduceus (the winged staff with two serpents entwined around it).
- **Bride:** Since the congregation is all-male, this title has a masculine ending. The Bride carries a lamp, and wears a diadem and yellow veil, representing Venus.
- **Soldier:** Unsurprisingly, the rank of Soldier is equated with Mars, and initiates of this level are depicted in brown clothes and carrying a spear and legionary's pack.
- **Lion:** The Lion represents Jupiter and he clutches a lightning bolt in one hand and a rattle in the other. He is associated with fire. Since water is hostile to fire, honey is used to wash with during Lion-initiations.
- **Persian:** Initiates who attain this rank are depicted in grey clothing and wield the

implements of agriculture: a scythe, sickle and ears of corn. Astrologically, the Persian is the Moon.

- **Messenger of the Sun:** As the title would imply, this rank is associated with the Sun. In mosaics the emblems of a crown radiating light, a burning torch and a whip are featured. The whip is used to drive the Sun chariot across the sky each day.

Mithraism can be likened to Freemasonry. It crosses social, political and religious borders yet binds together the initiates with both fear, secrecy and camaraderie. Like the Masons, devotees of Mithras pledge to help each other no matter what, forming a close-knit brotherhood. Whether a worshipper is a senator or the lowest legionary, he has a chance of reaching the rank of Father and leading the rituals. Even educated slaves and freedmen are among the initiated. Women, however, can never join the cult.

Status & Role of Priesthood

Priests of Mithras are termed Father, this is the highest rank in a Mithraeum. The Father is usually chosen by the worshippers of that temple and he presides over worship, initiations and the astrological destiny of the cultists. He is represented as a red-robed figure wearing a Phrygian cap and holding a sickle and a staff. He is Saturn. Where there are a number of Mithraeums in one city, one is elected to be the leading temple and the priest of that Mithraeum is termed the Father of Fathers.

Preferred Divination

Astrology

Preferred Staff Type

Staff carved with the seven grades of the cult with their respective symbols, and topped with a leonine head.

Preferred Animal Familiar

Dog or raven

Preferred Amulet

The advancement of initiates from planet to planet and further into the mysteries is seen as the ascent of a ladder up which the soul travels. The ultimate goal is heaven. Ladder-shaped amulets of bronze are used by cult-members.

Allied Cults

Jupiter Heliopolitanus; Aion - lion-headed Eternity symbolised by the zodiac; Cautes & Cautopates - the rising & setting sun.

Sabazius

(also: Jupiter-Sabazius, Lord Sabazius)

A god of earthly pleasures, of orgiastic rites and fertility.

Nature of the God

Sabazius is the god of the fermented grape, as such he represents both the good side of intoxication as well as its more evil side. He is reckoned by some to be the father of Bacchus, and is more potent for it. He also encompasses flora and fruitfulness in general - he is fertility and rebirth. Sabazius is also an omnipotent god, a driving force of cyclical life. Like the plants he represents, Sabazius is rebirth and resurrection. Death is not the end. He is the sacred wine of immortality, and he is an essential (THE essential) cog in the machinery of the cosmos. As in life, so in the afterlife. Live life as you want to live forever. Enjoy yourself, no matter what the consequences. Sabazius gives you the gifts of life and rebirth. Do not squander them on modest living, frugality and temperance. Wine is to be

drunk! Food to be eaten! Sex to be enjoyed!

“Eat, drink, enjoy thyself and come to me. As long as thou livest have a good time: thou will carry it with thee!”

Inscription on the tomb of a priest of Sabazius

Cult Centres

Temples of Sabazius are often termed Sabazeums, but they are not the ornate temples of other gods but often just meeting places of worshippers, houses and rented halls. The cult has no public temples - but an itinerant following. Sabazian clubs were established throughout Ionia. Pergamum once enjoyed a dynastic cult of Sabazius.

Associations

The typical busts of Sabazius show him as a bearded man wearing a Phrygian cap. He may be associated with one or more universal cosmological symbols.

Cult Practices

The cult is well known for its nocturnal rites, ceremonies that feature extravagant revelries. There are ritual feasts, drinking bouts and orgies and sexual rites, all accompanied by wild music. These licentious pleasure-filled ceremonies are more like hedonistic parties than religious ritual. Since most common folk would be shocked by the behaviour, the ceremonies take place behind closed doors and at night.

Initiate Membership

During initiation the candidate is smeared with mud and blood and oat bran and told to recite the words: “I have escaped evil; I have found good”. The candidate is the guest of honour at a banquet and must carry out various debauched acts in front of the other worshippers. Exotic dances are performed with cult snakes. Finally he

or she is tattooed with the cult symbol: the trailing ivy leaf, and then performs a sacred union to re-enact the union of Jupiter and Persephone (the parents of Sabazius). Elaborate body paintings of entwined serpents were made on the two participant's chests before they consummate the ritual.

There are several stages to initiation. Each stage is given a title denoting the cult's wild feel and rural origins. The four initiatory levels are: Rustic, Shepherd, Herder, Harvester.

Status & Role of Priesthood

The priests of Sabazius are for the most part itinerant, moving from city to city, cult house to cult house, organising worship on an ad-hoc basis. There is no regular worship, though for certain major festivals worshippers may gather at a set local location to carry out rituals to the god. Where there are no suitable houses belonging to worshippers in a town or city, the priest may often be able to use the temple of a friendly cult. Because of his omnipotent nature, Sabazius is accepted by several other cults and these cults sometimes allow a priest to set up a temporary altar within their temple. To this end many priests carry a full set of icons and religious paraphernalia within a folding wooden travel case. The assemblage includes the symbols of friendly deities like Cybele, Mithras, Attis and Atargatis.

Preferred Divination

The preferred divinations of the cult include astrology, dendromancy (the observation of the movement of trees in wind) and vinomancy (observing the path of wine as it trickles across the naked body of a Sabazian priestess).

Preferred Staff Type

A Thyrsus: an ivy-wreathed staff topped by a pine-cone.

Preferred Animal Familiar

Snakes

Preferred Amulet

The Hand of God. A bronze hand on a base making the 'benedicto latina', the thumb and first two fingers upright, the last two curled over. The hand is covered from palm to fingertip in cosmological symbols and often also incorporates a tiny bust of Sabazius.

Allied Cults

Mithras, Attis, Cybele, Venus-Atargatis

Venus-Atargatis

(also: Dea Syria, The Holy, The Celestial, Juno Dolichenus)

A mother goddess of wild celebrations, ecstatic worship and fanatical priests.

Nature of the God

Venus-Atargatis is a goddess born of the Decapolitian culture, a goddess of water and fertility. She represents the perpetual power of goodness in water that nourishes and thrives. Fish once saved the goddess when she plunged into the deep on a headlong dash from her pursuers - thus strengthening the watery connection. She is also mistress of wild animals.

"Display your devotion and the goddess will provide"

Cult Centres

Hierapolis is 'Sacred Town', one of the Decapolitian cities, and the centre of Atargatis' worship. The temple there dates to the days of the Flood and has a huge staff of 300 priests, a theatre, banqueting hall and a full complement of exotic magicians (mainly astrologers and fortune tellers). In the precinct is an array of wild animals, remarkably living at peace with one another. The priests at Hierapolis wear white robes and tall white hats topped with a crescent moon.

The cult is also very strong on the island of Delos and in Antioch. There are very few temples to the goddess since her cult is an itinerant one, wandering from town to town in search of offerings and converts.

Associations

Venus-Atargatis is depicted as a mature woman wearing a conical hat topped with a crescent; she holds both a hand-mirror and a staff. Often rays are shown surrounding her head and lions flank her.

Cult Practices

Rituals carried out in honour of Venus-Atargatis are extraordinarily loud, wild and frenetic affairs. Wild music from flutes, castanets and tambourines drown out the ecstatic singing and shouting of the worshippers. Make-up, bright clothing and exotic costumes are the norm. Many initiates scourge themselves in honour of their goddess, and literally whip themselves into a frenzy. There is blood aplenty at an Atargatis ceremony. Strangely, though, when that same congregation pays homage to the consort of the goddess, Baal-Hadad (Jupiter Helios) it is conducted in almost total silence. The clergy of the cult are those individuals who are prepared to take such behaviour to its conclusion. The priests have castrated themselves during these bloody worships, often with the most clumsy of instruments; the priestesses have offered up their bodies to worshippers as a sacred prostitute.

Initiate Membership

The cult is a wandering religion. Outside of the temple at Hierapolis, there are few if any temples in the Desert Kingdoms. The worshippers and their priests (the famous Galli) and priestesses (Hierodules) wander the roads and track-ways of the Desert Kingdoms from city to city. When they

reach a suitable location they begin to worship with noise and spectacle, and kindly take the food, drink and trinkets offered to them by the locals. These gifts are ‘sacrifices’ offered to Venus-Atargatis (as in the rules already described). Cult members (of all ranks) live day-to-day off of the alms they are given. Unfortunately the cult has also gained a reputation as a den of beggars, pilferers, charlatans and con-men. Sometimes the group becomes so poor they become very desperate and turn to cheap con-tricks to gain their food and drink.

An initiate joins the wandering group for at least one month and wears the exotically coloured, very un-Imperial flowing robes of Atargatis. He wears make-up during rituals and will scourge himself (see below). He will not eat fish; he will call to his goddess before he drinks water, and he will ask her for forgiveness before he enters water. Because they are penniless and cannot sacrifice food, trinkets or animals, initiates must display the depth of their devotion to the goddess in other ways. Men flagellate themselves. This involves incapacitating the character for half a day and incurring the loss of 1 HIT due to blood-loss. The bloody self-mutilation lasts at least an hour and must be accompanied by cultic music and dancing. Female cult members are obliged to offer themselves to a non-worshipper of their own choosing for sex. This act of union symbolises and re-iterates the goddess’ power over the forces of fertility and nature. The ritualised union requires at least an hour.

After one month the initiate can go out into the world on his own, still wearing the exotic costume of the cult and can sacrifice animals at the temples of other gods as normal. He must find altars of Atargatis within the temples of allied

cults if he wishes to add to his amulet (see above). When he meets a wandering cult group he is obliged to worship with them at their next ‘stop’ and can either donate a little food, drink or silver equal to 25 denarii (a typical sacrifice to replenish FATE) or go ecstatic and scourge himself during the frenetic ceremony. His choice ...

Status & Role of Priesthood

A priest of Atargatis has castrated himself for the goddess and is a eunuch priest (one the cult’s famous ‘Galli’). His painful sacrifice is buried with care beneath an altar erected to the goddess. The ritual is carried out during a typical noisy, frenzied worship and results in the permanent loss of 2 HITs and the temporary loss of 1-6 more. The new Galli is incapacitated for a number days equal to the total number of HITS lost. His voice may also be affected (!). The priests and priestesses wear vivid purple and scarlet robes of luxurious silk, wear their hair long (for the dramatic ‘head-whirling’ dances) and prefer Persian-style slippers. During ceremonies they paint their cheeks bright red. The Galli carry curved sabres (scimitars) with them and are able to perform an amazing sword dance with other Galli. These swords are used by the priest to inflict nasty wounds on himself in the heat of worship.

Preferred Divination

Hydromancy - The observation of oil on water.

Preferred Staff Type

Sacred Scourging Rod (complete with sheep’s knucklebones for breaking the skin!)

Preferred Animal Familiar

Fish

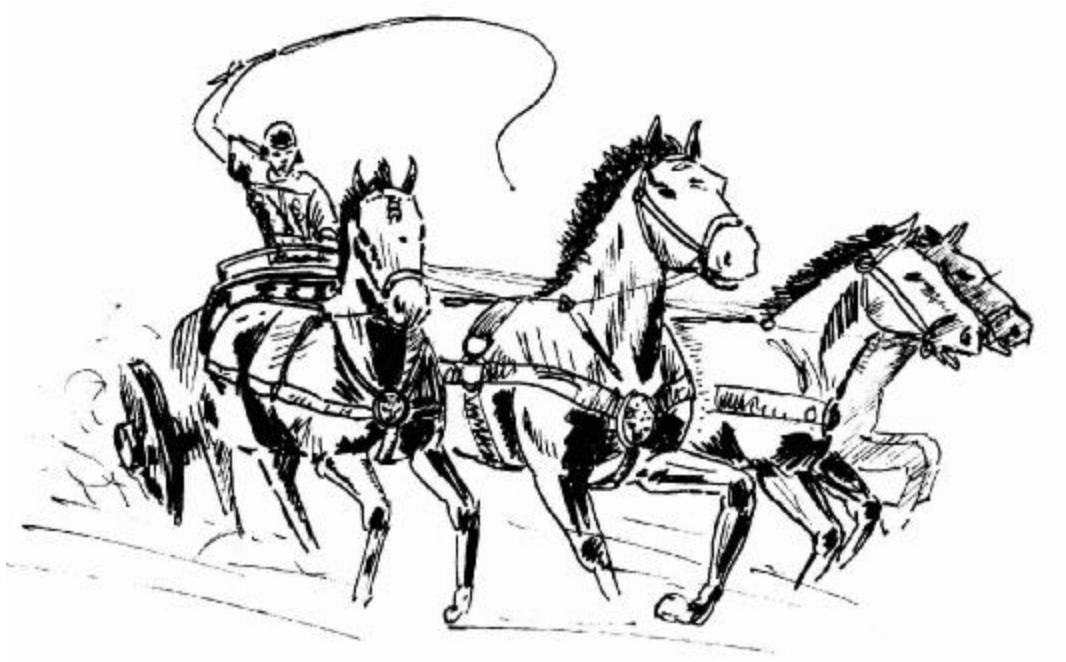
Preferred Amulet

Golden-lion’s head

Allied Cults

Her main allied cults are that of her consort, Baal-Hadad (Jupiter Helio-politanus), Cybele, Attis, Mithras, and Sabazius. Because the worshippers of Atargatis are itinerant, they move from city to city and are often welcomed at

any temple of an allied cult. There they carry out their worship (most of these temples have a temple to Atargatis some-where). Occasionally the cultists make themselves at home too easily and make off with property that doesn't belong to them ...



VII MAGIC

ZENOBIA is fantasy roleplaying, despite the historical setting. As such magic plays a part in the game alongside supernatural monsters and the powers of the gods and their priests. Magic is the technique of controlling the universe through use of hidden or unseen powers. Imperial engineers can carry out many fantastic feats using complex calculation, ingenious techniques and brute strength. A magician calls on dark powers, spirits of the dead and demons to carry out his works. A philosopher, wise in the ways of the universe and its laws, uses his knowledge of powers and effects to accomplish his tasks.

Players and referees may wonder why philosophers are described here in the chapter under Magic, but for our purposes the philosopher is an ancient wizard, a collector of wisdom and arcane information, strange formulae and alchemical potions. Our philosophers are half-scientist, half-alchemist. As such we refer to 'powers' not spells. The magician is a necromancer and summoner of dark powers, some of which are traditional incantations (or 'spells'), while others will be in-born talents - gifts (or curses!) inherited from a mother or father. Referees and players will not go too far wrong in thinking of the two types of magic-user very loosely as female witches and male wizards, with all of the connotations those labels imply. But use them as you will.

Becoming a Philosopher

Philosophers are the wisemen of the Empire, proto-scientists, academics, inventors and researchers into the unknown. Many call them 'wizards'. All are devoted to the search for facts, and all subscribe to one all-encompassing theory of the universe or another. Like magicians, philosophers are not strictly religious in their viewpoint. The best and greatest philosophers originated in Ionia almost a thousand years ago, and have since revolutionised academic thinking. The best shine like beacons in Ionian and Imperial history: Aristotle, Eratosthenes, Euclid, Archimedes. A philosopher tries to master every discipline, from mathematics to geography, naturalism to engineering. Their mastery over the forces at work all around them have become their greatest strengths. Philosophers are able to carry out amazing feats by virtue of their vast knowledge. Some would call this magic - they call it science.

Creating Attributes for Philosophers:

The creation method for philosophers is different to that of adventurers. Note that all philosophers are trained by a philosopher who was also trained by a philosopher etc., etc. Often these teachers are members of long-established schools, of which the Academy in Athens is the most famous. All philosophers must be of Imperial origin, although their actual culture is Ionian and their native tongue is Fluent Ionian. The player should use the following values and rolls:

MIGHT	Initial score is 1.
FATE	Roll 1d and re-roll any score of '1'.
HITS	Roll 2d and add 10.
CRAFT	Initial score is 1.
LEARNING	Roll 1d and re-roll any score of '1'.

The player can select a social class from the Creating Adventurers chapter, but will gain no bonuses for CRAFT or LEARNING, as the other starting characters do. Neither will they gain a skill from that social class. A philosopher devotes his life to his powers and his search for knowledge.

Philosopher

Wise academics and scientists, seekers after hidden knowledge with amazing powers

Culture Note:	Imperial or Ionian only
Money:	180 denarii
Skill:	The player receives four powers from the philosopher's power list given in the next section.
Bonus:	Roll once on the Philosopher's Treasure Table

Philosopher's Treasure Table

<i>1d</i>	<i>Treasure</i>	<i>Notes</i>
1	Phial of Invisible Ink	Most philosophers know the secret of reading invisible ink if they suspect it's use
2	Any One Potion	The philosopher must be able to brew the potion he chooses
3	Magnifying Lens	A simple convex lens
4	Telescopic Pole	This pole is a 30cm long, but extends out to 3m. Lots of uses!
5	Folding Mirror	Perfect mirror in a rectangular folding wooden case
6	Magnetic Weight	A small metal weight that is a magnet; shaped into a star

Philosopher's Initial Equipment

Leather Scroll Case
Blank Scrolls
Ink Palette & Quill
Alchemy Equipment in two large sacks
Pack
Firebow
Torch
Waterskin
Pouch
Denarii (1d x 50 denarii)

Becoming a Magician

Magicians of many different types abound in the world. Many are connected with the forces of spirits and the dead, and on minor magical curses and cures that can be bought by desperate individuals. Often magicians are solitary figures, living alone in the wilderness or in villages and in cities. The Magician is adept at using magic. Magicians are in great demand in towns and cities, in palaces and temples. They provide a touch of sorcerous power in the world, where the priests can only

mediate between gods and their worshippers. The magician has existed amongst ancient societies since time immemorial. He (or just as commonly, she) can commune with the dead. He is a spiritualist, a medium and a necromancer. The spirits of the dead dominate his life, and village communities turn to his expertise to help them with supernatural threats. In addition, some Eastern temples employ magician-priests to speak to the spirits of the departed.

Creating Attributes for Magicians: The creation method for magicians is different to that of adventurers. As with the philosopher, the player can select a social class from the Creating Adventurers chapter, but will gain no bonuses for CRAFT or LEARNING, as the other starting characters do. Neither will they gain a skill from that social class. A philosopher devotes his life to his powers and his search for knowledge. The player should use these values and rolls:

MIGHT	Initial score is 1.
FATE	Roll 1d and re-roll any score of '1'.
HITS	Roll 2d and add 10.
CRAFT	Initial score is 1.
LEARNING	Roll 1d and re-roll any score of '1'.

Magician

Mysterious enchanters and sorcerers using their powers for customers and patrons

Cultural Notes:	-
Money:	100 denarii
Skill:	The player selects four powers from the magician's power list given in the next section.
Bonus:	Roll once on the Magician's Treasure Table

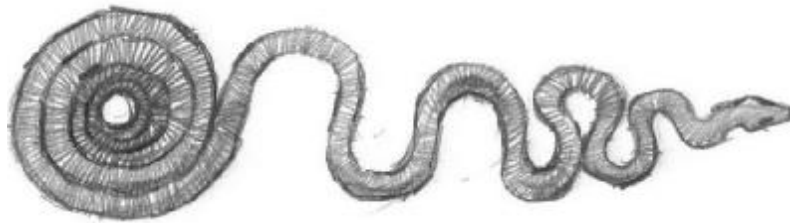
Magician's Treasure Table

1d	Treasure	Notes
1	Firesand	Three handfuls of sand that ignite whatever they are thrown at
2	Bag of Ziusurra	Holy flour, used to sprinkle on the ground to form protective magical circles
3	Scarab Servant	Scarab carving that transforms into a gigantic scarab once thrown to the ground
4	Scorpion Ring	Ring that counters any poisons
5	Khesbed Ring	Ring with 3 HITS used to cast powers or soak up physical damage
6	Khesbed Amulet	Amulet with 5 HITS used to cast powers or soak up physical damage

Magician's Initial Equipment

Magical Staff *
Pack
Firebow
3 Torches
Waterskin
Pouch
Denarii (1d x 50 denarii)

* Every magician has his own carved decorated Magical Staff, which takes him a week to make. It is sometimes used as the focus of a certain power (for example Staff to Snake), and can also extend the range of a power out to 100m.

**Using Powers**

When a Magician or Philosopher wishes to use a power, he declares his intention to the referee and deducts 1 point temporarily from his HIT points score. A power requires one combat round to cast, and takes effect automatically. It does **not** take effect automatically when directed against a target who will be resisting the effects of a power (the target of a Sleep power, for example). His target must make a successful FATE roll (as a resistance roll), and the power fails if the target's roll succeeds. Most Magicians have a magical staff which can extend the range of a power out to 100m, and sometimes act as the focus of a power (for example Staff to Snake or Healing Touch). The powers of philosophers are of a very different nature and do not require such props.

Brewing Potions

The Philosopher powers (see below) include the brewing of individual potions. This is alchemy and requires a comprehensive set of alchemical equipment (rare substances, certain special jars, filters and grinding tools). This set is portable and costs 1200 denarii to replace. When a Philosopher brews a potion cannot do anything else but tend it until the potion is complete. Only one potion can be brewed at a time. Each potion is stored in a tiny glass jar, a phial, stoppered with wax.

Identifying Potions

Most potions are made with a base of wine - making the identification of potions quite a rewarding task! To identify potions by sipping them, a Philosopher rolls 2d and adds the number of Potion powers he possesses. On a roll of 10 or more he can successfully identify the potion being tested.

Potions and the Gods

The gods do not like alchemy and do not agree to Philosophers creating fabulous substances from the world that they created and rule. To this end, any Philosopher who brews potions can only brew as many as his initial FATE score. These potions can be of the same or different types, but any brewed beyond that number will be pale and ineffectual versions of what they should otherwise be. As these potions are drunk/used/whatever, then more can be brewed in their place.

The Philosopher's Power List

Compel Truth - Cast on a victim who fails a FATE roll, Compel Truth forces him (unwittingly) to say only truthful things for five minutes.

Detect Lie - With this power the philosopher can determine if the person he is talking to has lied in the last minute. It does not reveal the truth, however.

Detect Substance - When the philosopher uses this power he must first envisage a particular substance (gold, cedar wood, limestone, water, for example). If it lies within 100m range then he can go straight to it. If it lies further than 100m then he knows its general direction. Where more than one source of the substance exists, the power detects the greatest concentration, unless otherwise specified by the caster.

Find Direction - This power tells the philosopher which direction is north, or from which direction he just came etc.

Measurement - This power gives the philosopher the uncanny ability to get a very accurate measurement of anything. From the capacity of an amphora to the height of a city wall, the depth of the sea bed or the width of a pyramid. The thing to be measured must be visible to the philosopher and be something that could be measured using the technology of the day. He cannot measure the distance of the Sun to the Earth, for example. The philosopher himself uses no instruments in his measurements, but only his skilful eye and his mathematical genius.

Potion of Aqua Noxious - For the cost of 200 denarii in materials the philosopher can create a single phial of poison. It takes 2 days to brew the potion.

Potion of Aqua Somnus - For the cost of 100 denarii in materials the philosopher can create a single phial of sleeping potion. It takes 1 day to brew the potion.

Potion of Aqua Vitae - For the cost of 400 denarii in materials the philosopher can create a single phial of healing potion. It takes 4 days to brew the potion.

Potion of Greek Fire - For the cost of 2000 denarii in materials the philosopher can create a single phial of Greek Fire. Greek Fire is not drunk! It is a burning, scolding liquid that is self-igniting upon contact with the air and that is difficult to douse with water. A phial thrown will explode on contact creating a large fire that will last for at least one minute and not be affected by water for that time. Anyone caught within it suffers a scorching 1d+5 points of damage. Some Philosophers have brewed larger amounts for use in military siege engines. It takes 20 days to brew a phial of the potion.

Potion of Radiance - For the cost of 500 denarii in materials the philosopher can create a single phial of radiance, a substance which, when smashed on the ground creates an intense burst of blinding light. Viewers roll FATE to avoid being blinded for 1-3 rounds. It takes 5 days to brew the potion.

Potion of Pure Natron - For the cost of 800 denarii in materials the philosopher can create a single phial of natron - a magical substance from Ægypt that provides protection for three hours from all manner of spirits, demons and ghosts. It takes 8 days to brew the potion.

Potion of Styx - For the cost of 1500 denarii in materials the philosopher can create a single phial of Styx water - a magical substance from the bowels of the Underworld that gives a drinker's skin complete invulnerability from cuts, stuns, bashes and fire for 15 rounds. The drinker can still be hurt by drinking poison or being strangled or drowned. It takes 6 days to brew the potion.

Potion of Herculean Strength - For the cost of 200 denarii in materials the philosopher can create a single phial of Herculean Strength - a potion which gives the drinker fantastic strength for lifting and carrying (but not for fighting and other skilful endeavours). For any pushing, lifting, pulling or carrying tasks, the drinker has MIGHT 8 for one hour. It takes 2 days to brew the potion.

Potion of Telepathy - For the cost of 600 denarii in materials the philosopher can create a single phial of telepathic potion which allows the drinker to 'hear' the surface thoughts of anyone within 10m that he specifically concentrates on. This power only lasts for 10 minutes. The victim must fail a FATE roll for the 'reading' to be successful. The victim will not be aware

of the 'psychic intruder'. It takes 6 days to brew the potion.

See Secrets - This power allows the philosopher to analyse some puzzle and to see the truth behind it, whether it be a secret door, hidden writing in a tapestry, or some intricate design that is actually the map of a labyrinth. Anything hidden away - but still in plain sight, is visible to the caster.

The Magician's Power List

Agony - This power causes a living target within 10m to double up in pain for 1-3 rounds, and suffer 1-3 points of damage. The target can make a FATE roll to resist.

Charm - This power brings a target (human, monster or animal) that is within 3m under the influence of the caster. The caster must be able to first engage his target in conversation. The target can make a resistance roll, and if failed will loyally agree to any proposition the caster puts to him. He will not harm the caster, but equally, will not harm himself, or his loved ones. Most charmed victims will have no compunction about turning against their friends and colleagues, however. The power could last forever, but can be negated by another Magician reversing the Charm power. Note that if the caster ever turned against the victim, the power would be broken.

Comprehend - This power allows a Magician to study any written text, maps, scrolls, carvings and parchments, and fully understand what is written there. Special signs, codes and ciphers will all be deciphered by the power. It will also reveal if something touched by the caster is magical. The power lasts

for 10 minutes, and does not include the translation of *spoken* languages.

Counter Magic - A power of protection against spirits, demons, ghosts and the magical powers of monsters or other Magicians. When attacked by a spirit, magical force or power this power gives the user (only) a +2 bonus on his FATE score (for defensive purposes only). A Counter Magic power lasts for 10 minutes.

Healing Touch - This power allows the Magician to lay his hands on a patient and restore 6 points of HITS. A patient's HITS can only be increased to a maximum of their initial value by this method.

Hold off the Dead - This power can be used against on a spirit, ghost, mummy or demon and 'hold' it in place, preventing it from advancing any further. The target can make a resistance roll. Many spirits will flee once this power has been used against them.

Lock - This power magically locks (or unlocks) a door, cabinet, scroll case, chest, etc. which cannot then be opened by normal means.

Magic Fire - The Magician can use this power to create a 'magical fire', a fire that burns without fuel (on stone or sand, for example). The fire is the equivalent of a torch, and will illuminate an area 10m across. If cast on flammable materials, the magic fire will begin to spread just as any other fire would. Magic Fire can also be used to extinguish a normal cooking-sized fire.

Anybody on fire (or caught within a fire) will suffer 1-3 points of damage every round. If a victim's clothes are on fire (the target can make a resistance roll to prevent a Magician casting

Magic Fire onto his clothes!) the victim can try to make a Might roll to put out the fire. Anyone can come to his aid and put the fire on the victim's clothes out automatically.

Oracle - This power requires the use of specially marked knucklebones. These are shaken like dice and cast onto the ground for a reading. They are used to decide between two or more alternatives, with the knucklebones giving the caster a 'preferred' or 'favoured' decision. The power cannot be used to resolve complex problems, only obvious choices (which path to take, which inn to stay at, which boat to hire, etc.). In this way bad choices can hopefully be eliminated.

Sleep - This power sends a target (human, monster or animal) that is within 10m to sleep. The target can make a resistance roll, and if failed will fall into a magical (very deep) sleep that lasts for 1-6 hours. Anyone under the influence of this power can be woken by very vigorous shaking.

Speak To Animals - This power gives the caster the ability to speak with any type of animal for 10 minutes. Most animals know very little of use, however.

Staff to Snake - This power allows the user to turn a Magical Staff into a deadly cobra, simply by throwing the staff onto the ground while reciting the words of power! The snake will fight for the user until dead, until the fight is over or after 10 minutes, whichever comes first.

Raise the Dead - This power allows a Magician to make contact with the spirit of a deceased person. The power can only be successfully used if one of the following is present, either a) the body of the deceased, b) the location of the

deceased's death, or c) a cherished belonging owned by the deceased in life. The spirit has a chance to resist the power, and if overcome will be forced to answer up to three questions of a yes/no nature for the caster. Sometimes

an evil spirit can accidentally appear (especially if the spirit successfully resisted the power) and could cause considerable problems for the caster, trying to possess him or his friends, or causing other problems.



VIII RESOLVING ACTIONS

“The Toronians received into the town seven light-armed men with daggers. They got past the fortifications facing the sea without being noticed, climbed up the hill on which the city stands, killed the garrison guarding the higher post and broke open the postern gate on the side of Canastraeum.”

Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*

Travel

Adventuring requires a great deal of travel. When adventurers travel they meet people, animals, monsters. Some of these encounters may be friendly and long anticipated (goats in the desert for food, for example, or nomads to provide water and shelter), others, such as lions or manticores provide danger. The encounter tables given in the Adventure Tool-kit are an aid to the referee when the player characters embark on a journey. The referee can pick an encounter or he can let the roll of 2d select one randomly. Try not to stereotype every encounter. Sometimes the lion will be skittish and flee, sometimes the nomads will want something from the adventurers and not want to attack them. Bandits might not look or pass themselves off as bandits. Be flexible, keep players on their toes and give them a feeling that they are wandering through a real world, not a fictional construct made up of random dice rolls.

Calculating Travel Rates

A typical rate of travel in the ancient world is 20km per day on foot, 40km on horseback. There are good military roads throughout the Empire and the kingdom of Palmyra and these are utilised by the official post, by the legions and by other travellers - on horseback in wagons and on foot. To calculate how far a character or group have travelled in a day, use the travel rates in the terrain section. A time period or around eight hours is

generally assumed for travelling. The referee should not try to be precise when two terrain types merge in one day's travel, just average the two speeds and assume the terrain change occurred around mid-day.

Cultivated Land

20km/day on foot

40km/day on horseback

Marsh

10km/day on foot or horse

40km/day by boat

Mountain

10km/day on foot or horse

River

40km/day by boat upstream

60km/day by boat downstream

Sand Sea

15km/day on foot or horse

30km/day on camel

Steppe

30km/day on foot

60km/day on horseback

Stony Desert

20km/day on foot or horse

30km/day on horseback

Using Attributes

As a simple rule of thumb, any task can be resolved with a MIGHT, FATE, CRAFT or LEARNING roll. The referee needs to establish for himself a difficulty number that (as in combat) must be equalled or exceeded for success. Typically this will be 10, but occasionally easier tasks might be rated

at 8, while more difficult tasks might be rated at 12 or even 14. The situations in the following sections roughly conform to this simple rule, but include a number of individual variations.

The uses of FATE and MIGHT has been detailed extensively earlier in the book, but what about CRAFT and LEARNING? CRAFT could be rolled to tie two ropes together in a hurry, to fix a cartwheel, to chop down a tree to block a path, to dig a pit trap before the sun sets, and so on. Use CRAFT when the character is faced with a physical task that doesn't involve fighting or lots of athletic movement or feats of strength. It is a measure of practicality, handiness and experience of manual labour - and it has far more uses than just 'building things'.

LEARNING is the counter to CRAFT. It measures formal schooling, education and knowledge as well as the gamut of social skills. I have kept 'intelligence' in the realm of the player in ZENOBIA. It is the player who tries to solve the puzzles, come up with a strategy, remember an informer's name and so on. LEARNING could be used to remember a fact about the Persian royal family, to recognise an NPC's hand writing, to understand the implications behind a senator's speech, to know how Minerva differs from Juno. LEARNING might also be called upon when the character tries to bribe an official, persuade a slave to let you see his master or discern extreme nervousness in the wine-trader's beautiful daughter.

As with rolls in combat, a natural roll of '12' indicates that the player can roll another d6 and add it to his initial roll. This indicates a special success and allows characters with a low score to occasionally strike lucky. Likewise a roll of '2' is an automatic failure.

Climbing

Adventurers face a whole host of vertical challenges! Pits, cliffs and city-walls are just some of the things that a adventurer might wish to scale. An adventurer can climb 2m per round. To climb a typical obstacle he must roll 2d every round, add his MIGHT score and achieve a score of 10 or more. Failure indicates the adventurer is in trouble and is stuck! Roll again at -2. If this is failed he falls from midway up the climb!

Falling

An adventurer can fall up to 2m without suffering any damage (assuming he didn't land on anything nasty, such as a bed of scorpions or a sharpened stake!). Anyone falling 3m or more suffers 1d damage, plus 1 point of damage for every metre past the first 3.

Jumping

An adventurer can jump 1m vertically or 2m horizontally with a run up. To jump a distance up to double this, the adventurer can make a MIGHT roll. If his result is 10 or over then he succeeds.

Darkness

The absence of light seriously inhibits the actions of an adventurer. Every action he takes (including combat and use of powers) suffers a penalty of -4 and his vision is restricted to only a few metres. A burning torch will give one hours worth of light that will illuminate an area up to 10 metres across (3m if placed or dropped onto the ground). There are no candles or lanterns in the world of ZENOBIA. The houses of the wealthy can be illuminated with small clay pots of oil that have their own wicks, but these devices are impractical for use in the great outdoors. Most poor people sleep during the hours of darkness.



Drowning

Any adventurer can hold his breath under water (or fine sand!) for 2 rounds. For every round after the second, he must roll his MIGHT. The third round requires that the player exceed 10. The fourth must exceed 11, the fifth must exceed 12, the sixth must exceed 13 and the seventh and subsequent rolls must exceed 14. Failure indicates choking or drowning, with the adventurer suffering 3 points of damage per round.

Persuasion & Deception

An adventurer might want to convince another character to do something, or lie to another character. To determine if these attempts succeed or not, the player must roll his adventurer's FATE. A typical persuasion or 'con' requires the player to equal or exceed 10. Allow a bonus to this roll if the adventurer offers an appropriate bribe or roleplays plausibly and convincingly.

Poison

The threat of poison can come from many places, in a poisoned cup of wine, from a secret needle guarding a treasure or from the fangs of a cobra. A typical poison will do 1 point of damage as soon as it enters the adventurer's

bloodstream, and he must make an immediate FATE roll or suffer full damage (maximum potency). If this is the case, each minute after it enters his bloodstream it will do an additional point of damage up to a maximum of its potency, which is typically 1d+5. If the FATE roll succeeds then the victim only suffers one more point of damage and feels a bit unwell.

Searching

Adventurers may need to search an area for traps, for clues or for a lost item. The referee asks each player where his character is searching, and then makes a FATE roll accordingly. A typical 'hidden object' (whether a secret door, pit trap or gemstone) requires the adventurer to succeed in a FATE roll that equals or exceeds 10. The referee may want to make this roll for the player, thus keeping the result a secret - his character would not know if failed to find something that he didn't know existed. Especially small or very well hidden items should be more difficult to find (add a penalty of -1, -2 or -3).

Concealment

Anyone can hide behind cover. An enemy who might spot the concealed character must make a FATE roll and overcome the FATE roll of the hider. If he succeeds he spots the concealed character. If it is the adventurers that are doing the searching, then the referee should of course conceal this roll from the players, since the adventurers should not be aware that they did not see a hiding person if the player fails his roll. Note that if the object or person being hidden has the benefit of deep shadows or darkness, then he or she gains a +2 bonus. Likewise if the hider has Hiding skill, he gains a +2 bonus.

Moving Silently

Any attempt to remain silent while moving is always difficult, and the adventurer attempting this must roll his FATE to overcome the FATE roll of the person he is trying to deceive. This technique can be used to sneak up on someone from behind, thus giving the adventurer the advantage of surprise (see below).



Surprise

The referee must decide when surprise is achieved by the player characters, by non-player characters or by monsters. Obviously common sense plays a large part in this. Be fair. Surprise usually gives the surprising side a free round during which the monsters or characters can attack, flee or carry out some other action before the opposition realises what is going on and retaliates. In some circumstances, where the surprising monster or character is within striking

distance of his opponent, a bonus of +3 on the to-hit roll can be awarded.

Sanity

In **ZENOBIA**, horror is never far away. The characters will often be affected by the sight of supernatural terrors and unholy creatures. Often the effects on characters will be difficult to roleplay, and so these simple rules cover such events as they occur in the game.

The FATE attribute is a measure of each character's spiritual resilience and is rolled when faced with some supernatural terror.

Terrors are rated according to the true horror and other-worldliness of them. A giant metre-long rat feasting on plague victims might be rated at 2. The undead corpse of a freshly slain enemy might be rated at 1, or two if it is headless. A demon might be rated at 3 or 4. The referee must determine himself how terrifying each encounter will be. Roll only for a first encounter, unless later encounters enlarge upon the first (this time the demon unleashes spectacular powers in an attack or there are dozens and dozens of metre-long rats, etc.).

The player must make a successful FATE roll to remain relatively unaffected by the horror. He subtracts the creature's Terror rating from his FATE score first. With minor creatures success is fairly easy, with more terrifying monsters it is very difficult. If the player failed his FATE roll, then check on the Sanity Table below to determine the character's reactions:

No. Failed By	Insane Behaviour
1 or 2	Frozen by fear - In shock and paralysed for 1-3 combat rounds.
3 or 4	Out of Action - Character feints, has a hysterical screaming fit, vomits uncontrollably, drools with mouth agape, curls into a ball or whatever... This reaction lasts for 1d minutes.
5 or 6	Driven temporarily insane - Terror shuts the character's reasoning mind and he is overcome with a mental affliction for 1-days. The affliction might be amnesia, catatonia, stupefaction, quixotism, paranoia, obsession, severe phobia.
6	
7 or 8	Driven indefinitely insane - Terror shuts the character's reasoning mind indefinitely and he is overcome with a mental affliction until cured. The affliction might be amnesia, catatonia, stupefaction, quixotism, paranoia, obsession, severe phobia. Note that recovery is highly unlikely and that the character is best removed from play by the referee.

Definitions Table

Type of Affliction	Effect
Amnesia	Loss of memory, possibly selectively
Catatonia	When left unattended the character assumes a foetal position
Obsession	A particular goal (not necessarily logical or useful) takes over the character's every waking moment
Paranoia	The character feels that <i>everyone</i> is working against him in secret
Quixotism	The character is subject to horrific hallucinations where normal objects and peoples infrequently take on terrifying aspects. No more than two or three each day, and none worse than a terror rating of 2.
Stupefaction	The character stands or sits in uncommunicatively, must be led and fed. Might babble incoherently.
Severe Phobia	Subject to a lingering fear of something (often connected with the initial event). When forced to face a fear, roll FATE. If failed by 1 or 2, the character is at 1d for all actions, if failed by 3 or 4 the character is Frozen by Fear, if failed by 5 or 6 he is Out of Action.

Theft

An adventurer might want to try and cut the purse of a wealthy merchant, or surreptitiously steal an item in plain sight of its owner. This act of theft can be handled by making a basic FATE roll. If the player's roll equals or exceeds 10 then he has stolen the item without attracting attention. If the player's roll is only 8 or 9 then he has stolen the item but has probably attracted the attention of a bystander (if any are present). If the result is less than 8, then the target of the theft has become aware of the attempt and will either resist, or make the theft known to the authorities (if relevant).

Gambling

A common dice game in the Desert Kingdoms is Pilum. Pilum is a (fictional) dice game played by soldiers of the legions from Palmyra to Thebes, The Eternal City to Londinium. On the Last Watch when all is quiet and the centurions are in bed, games are played with two hand-made dice for the remains of the last pay. It is a game for two players.

Playing Pilum

As its name suggests, the game emulates the throwing of military javelins. The aim is to get a '7' - a direct hit on the enemy. Do this three times and you've killed him! Meanwhile he's trying to do the same to you! Take turns in casting the dice. Roll first off to decide who goes first, highest wins and takes the first throw.

Betting

Of course this is a betting game. Each player has 10 denarii with which to play. Before each throw he puts a number of denarii (minimum of 1 and maximum of 3) in front of him which

he may use to 'turn his pilum toward the target'. Each coin can be used to add or subtract 1 point to the two dice result. After the throw all these coins are tossed into the pot, even if no modification to the roll was needed. The first player to score 3 hits wins the pot at the end of the game. If one or both sides run out of money, keep playing, it is acceptable to continue to play but fail to put in the minimum if your 10 coins have gone. The pot is there for the taking!

Example of Play

Maximian and Verovingus are playing Pilum while on guard duty outside the main gate of Bostra. Both have 10 denarii. They both roll the dice and Maximian wins with a roll of 9 which beats Verovingus' 3. He goes first.

Maximian puts in 3. Vero puts in 2. Max rolls 6, Vero rolls 4. Both add their bonuses - Max adds 1 to get 7 - a hit! Vero struggles to reach 6 - a miss.

Next cast. Max puts in 1, Vero puts in 3. Max rolls 6 again, Vero rolls 3. Max gets 7 again! Vero gets 6 again - another miss. Max has scored two hits so far.

Next cast. Max puts in 1 again, Vero puts in 2 (he only has 5 coins left). Max rolls 5. Vero rolls 8. Max adds his 1 coin but misses! Vero subtracts 1 coin and gets a hit!

Next cast, Max puts in 2. Vero puts in 2. Max rolls 11. Vero rolls 11 as well! Neither get to 7. Both miss.

Next cast, they check their purses. Max has 3 denarii left, Vero has 1. They both decide to put all their last remaining coins in. Max rolls 4, Vero rolls 9. Max scores his third hit!

As the winner of the pilum contest, he takes all of the winnings - his 10 denarii and Verovingus' 10 denarii too.

Tactics

The tactics are simple. If you put too many coins in at a time you may find you waste a lot of them and are reduced to 0 before your opponent. If you put too few in then your opponent will score his 3 hits first.

Additional Skills

The following skills are not part of the initial character creation process but exist in the world of ZENOBIA anyway. They can be learned using the system given in the section called 'The Gods Reward' in the religion chapter.

Acting: The character is able to mimic other accents, body languages and expressions. He can act as if he were someone else, with a different personality and emotions. He may have learnt this professionally in the theatre, or in the cut-throat world of politics. Any character may try a persuasion or deception, only the character with Acting can adopt a completely different persona and act it out.

Far Throw: This skill allows the character to throw a throwing weapon an extra 10m. The basic throwing range is only 10m so the Far Throw skill allows the character to throw his weapons out to 20m!

Healing Herbs: Knowledge of useful herbs that can be used as medicines and antidotes. This knowledge includes their preparation and application, as well as their identification. The character has been trained to find and process these herbs. He can spend four hours searching for herbs, and rolls FATE. A success means that 1-3 useful herbs have been found. It takes half an hour to process a herb, and it is then ready for application to a patient, or for storage

for up to a week. A remedy can restore 1-6 HITS or stop bleeding, or specific herbs can be located to treat certain ailments. In dry steppe-land herbs are rarer, only one will be found on a successful FATE roll. There are no herbs in the desert.

Scale Sheer Surface: The character with this skill can climb vertical or near vertical surfaces without the need for making any MIGHT rolls. If the surface is very slippery or the character is distracted (or under attack) then he must make a MIGHT roll as normal.

Seamanship: The skill of Seamanship indicates great familiarity with sea travel, sailing, boats and ocean-going activities. The character knows how to set sail, how to take the helm, about the changing direction of the wind, weather at sea, reefs and sand-banks, currents and the commonly known landmarks used to navigate around one of the seas in the world of the Desert Kingdoms. The skill is also used to resolve ship-to-ship combat.

Turn A Profit: The character is a wheeler-dealer, a merchant who has plenty of experience in barter and trade. An unskilled character can sell an item at one of two prices: half price if used, or one-tenth if broken and in need of repair. The character with Turn A Profit can usually improve on these prices, and can get full price for a used item and one-quarter of the price for a broken, but repairable, item. When this character tries to sell something as new, he will rarely lose money, nearly always turning some kind of profit or (at the bare minimum) breaking even. Outside events may, however, affect the sale and cost the merchant valuable profit.

IX MONSTERS

The world of **ZENOBIA** is a human one. It is our world, in the distant past, but as the inhabitants saw it. This means that they truly believed there were scorpion men in those far distant mountains and mermen in the oceans. Monsters and the other creatures that inhabit the world are described in **ZENOBIA** by two values: **MIGHT** and **HITS**, just like humans.

Monsters that use weapons have those weapons listed within the description. Other monsters employ their natural weapons (tooth, claw etc.). The descriptions will also indicate whether or not a monster has human-like intelligence, its armour category and how many attacks it gets in each combat round. Monsters aren't given individual armour values, but a simple description (No Armour, AV 0; Light Armour, AV2 and Heavy Armour, AV 4). A number of monster descriptions also refer to a 'critical strike' - this is a natural combat attack roll of double '6'. It only applies to creatures, not to humans. Other creatures may benefit from this rule too, if you can think of a flash attack move for a creature. Jackals and wolves, for example might get to knock down a foe with a critical hit (give the Adventurer a **MIGHT** roll to stay on his feet though!).

Following the monster section, a short section on normal creatures gives the referee some idea as to the capabilities and strengths of these more mundane animals.

The Monster List

Centaur

MIGHT 3 **HITS** 8 1 Attack
Intelligent No Armour

This horse has a human body with arms and head where the horse's head should rightly be. The centaur live on the grassy plains of the Jazira, and on the dry steppe-land that fringes the desert. They hunt and herd goats, and operate in small tribal groups. They use spears, bows, javelins and swords.

Children of Gaea

MIGHT 12 **HITS** 25 1 Attack
Intelligent No Armour

These giants from Ionian myth seem to be men from the waists up and serpents from the waist down. Some survived the Giants revolt, living on isolated islands or in distant lands. They are often distinct individuals, and can be friendly, brutish or intelligent.

Colossus

MIGHT 8 **HITS** 20 2 Attacks
Not Intelligent Heavy Armour

These animated giant (6m) statues of bronze or stone are tough to beat in a fight. Some colossi are even bigger, and invulnerable to the hand-held weapons of men. These immense colossi must be tackled with artillery or Greek Fire (or ingenuity!).

Cyclops

MIGHT 6 **HITS** 14 1 Attack
Intelligent No Armour

The cyclops are one-eyed giants living in remote areas, herding sheep and killing and eating visitors. They have no civilization, but dwell in caves. Cursed by the gods at birth, they shun society because society shuns them. They are hard, nasty and bitter. Few have the

graces of civilisation, many are cannibals and killers of the worst sort. The wooded mountains make safe hideaways for these violent loners.



Empusae

MIGHT 3 HITS 8 1 Attack
Intelligent No Armour

This vampiress can change into a cow, a dog or woman. It loses 2 HITS every week, but replenishes them by drawing one MIGHT point (permanently) out of a man it has seduced, knocking him out and wiping his memory of the event. Many empusae are able to cast Magician powers.

Furies

MIGHT 6 HITS 11 2 Attacks
Intelligent No Armour Terror 1

These monsters of divine retribution are almost women, with canine faces and black wings, serpent-hair and wielding long whips. They can fly and often know some magical powers. Only magical weapons will harm them. A critical strike indicates that the fury's whip disarmed the Adventurer.

Ghul

MIGHT 3 HITS 8 1 Attack
Intelligent No Armour

These desert goblins can hold their breath indefinitely, they hate the sun and feast on flesh, dead or alive. They

live in the rock and sand wildernesses of the Desert Kingdoms.

Giant Scarab

MIGHT 5 HITS 14 2 Attacks
Not Intelligent Light Armour

A scarab beetle as big as a horse with a black, armoured carapace to give it the equivalent of Light Armour. The scarab is common in the deserts and dry steppe-land towards the deserts around Ægypt. It will kill without hesitation.

Giant Scorpion

MIGHT 4 HITS 9 2 Attacks
Not Intelligent Light Armour

A large and deadly scorpion with an effective armour class equal to Light Armour. When it scores a critical hit, assume that it has struck with its poison tail stinger.

Giant Snake

MIGHT 4 HITS 10 1 Attack
Not Intelligent No Armour

Perhaps up to 6m long, this is a huge and dangerous snake! A successful strike by a giant snake will inflict normal damage and will also inject poison into its victim (once per day).

Goatmen

MIGHT 3 HITS 8 1 Attack
Intelligent No Armour Terror 2

A form of nature creature, the goatman has several variations. Most are human-bodied with a hairy, and primitive, if muscular, appearance. They have the hooved legs of a goat, a tail and often horns sprouting from their forehead or the actual heads of goats. Goatmen live in dry wilderness areas, in hills and crags. Enkidu was one of these creatures. Some are wise, others are tribal and dangerous to outsiders. All goatmen are prone to emotional fits of rage or depression. They are known as satyrs or fauns to the Imperials, and as serim to the Aramaeans.

Gorgon

MIGHT 7 HITS 14 1 Attack
Intelligent No Armour Terror 2

Once very beautiful, these women are now hideous monsters, with the bodies of maidens ending in a horrible snake tail, eyes of terror and hatred that turn people to stone, and hair made up of snakes. Only magical weapons will harm them. An attacker must roll FATE to avoid looking at a gorgon, or be turned to stone! Not looking at a gorgon makes it pretty hard to hit! COMBAT - 6 for such an attempt. A successful critical strike indicates that the gorgon's tail has caught the attacker in its grip. Each round it will do 3 points of damage unless he can break free (MIGHT versus MIGHT).

Griffin

MIGHT 7 HITS 16 2 Attacks
Not Intelligent No Armour

A great lion with taloned feet, an eagle's head and huge eagle's wings. These beasts feast on wild donkeys, goats and horses, as well as human travellers. They inhabit desert wastes and high mountains, living in



inaccessible caves and on remote precipices. It is rumoured that griffins have a magpie-like obsession with gold and hoard all that they find. A critical

hit indicates the griffin has been able to drag its opponent into the sky with its powerful talons.

Harpy

MIGHT 4 HITS 8 2 Attacks
Intelligent No Armour Terror 1

These horrible bird-hags with the twisted faces and necks of old crones but the wings, bodies and talons of vultures can fly, and also spread disease. A critical strike indicates the Adventurer has been lifted into the air by the harpy.

Lionman

MIGHT 5 HITS 8 1 Attack
Intelligent No Armour

The lionman is a leonine-centaur, a lion's body topped with the chest, arms and head of a human (albeit very leonine in appearance). The lionmen live on the dry steppe and grassland, they are hunters and live in extended tribes. They rarely settle in one place for long. Use bows, spears, and javelins.

Manticore

MIGHT 7 HITS 14 2 Attacks
Intelligent No Armour Terror 1

A ferocious lion-like creature with a large scorpion-tail and a human head. The manticore might display human-like intelligence, but it is also savage, violent and bestial. Some manticores are also winged. As a breed they are loners, and live by hunting goats and other wasteland game. A critical success during an attack indicates a poisoned tail strike.

Merman

MIGHT 4 HITS 6 1 Attack
Intelligent No Armour

The mermen and mermaids are dwellers of the seas. They have their own reclusive society and are mistrustful of humans. They are very wise and knowledgeable. They use spears.

Mummy, Guardian

MIGHT 4 HITS 8 1 Attack
Not Intelligent No Armour Terror 1

The desiccated body of a servant, warrior or priest, buried in a tomb to serve as a guardian for some greater noble. The guardian is a terrible, rotting and mouldy monster strong and swift. Some may carry weapons. All are vulnerable to fire, suffering 1 HIT per round as they burn. Anyone continuing to fight a burning mummy may themselves catch fire! Roll FATE each round to avoid such an accident.

Mummy, Royal

MIGHT 7 HITS 17 2 Attacks
Intelligent No Armour Terror 2

The mummified body of a pharaoh, nobleman, general, princess or other such worthy. The royal mummy is powerful, driven by some terrible purpose, and able to spend 1 HIT per hour to go abroad in daytime, looking as it did when alive. Using this disguise the mummy can put its plans into action. Like the guardian, the royal mummy is strong and swift, but it is invulnerable to non-magical weapons and is totally invulnerable to fire. The referee is urged to create special rules for individual mummies (powers, fears, curses, goals and so on).

Scorpion Man

MIGHT 5 HITS 10 2 Attacks
Intelligent Light Armour Terror 2

A large scorpion's body with a human torso, arms and head where the scorpion's head should be. The scorpion men are a bitter and twisted breed, vengeful and nasty and they live in wilderness areas away from humanity. They use slings, spears, swords and javelins. A critical success during an attack indicates a poisoned tail strike. The scorpion man has thick armoured skin giving it the equivalent of Light Armour.

Skeleton

MIGHT 3 HITS 5 1 Attack
Not Intelligent Terror 1

The animated skeleton needs a weapon to fight with. It can only be damaged properly by crushing weapons, as bladed weapons do a maximum of only 1 HIT to them. Armour depends on the individual before death.

Snake Man

MIGHT 4 HITS 8 1 Attack
Intelligent No Armour Terror 2

The Egyptians know the snakemen as 'nehebka'. They live in desert caves in small tribes. A snakeman has a humanoid body with a snake's head, complete with fangs and hissing tongue. They are cold, ruthless and evil, preying on caravans and bedouin tribes. Snakemen are effective in combat with their fangs, but they also use slings, axes, javelins and spears. The bite of a snakeman is poisonous, but each has only enough poison for one use each day.

Sphinx

MIGHT 7 HITS 15 2 Attacks
Intelligent No Armour

Sphinx are semi-divine creatures, blessed by the gods. They resemble a huge lion with a human head. The sphinx are a proud and intelligent race of desert-dwellers that live in tiny groups. They have contempt for humankind, and show no mercy to those humans who show no signs of intelligence or culture. Wise beyond words, they play much the same role in eastern culture as dragons later did in western culture. There are also two variations of the sphinx; the hawk-headed hieracosphinx and the ram-headed criosphinx. All sphinx have access to strange magical powers, some of which include:

Sphinx - create magical sandstorm, transform into human-form, glow, know intent

Hieracosphinx - as Sphinx plus far sight (out to the horizon)

Criosphinx - as Sphinx plus invisibility when motionless

Stymphalian Bird

MIGHT 5 HITS 10 2 Attacks
Not Intelligent Heavy Armour

These huge long-legged monsters are flesh-eating, bronze-feathered birds of prey. They prefer to wade through marshes and swampy ground searching for carrion. A critical strike indicates that it launches 1d6 bronze feathers as an attack. The Adventurer must roll FATE or suffer 1 HIT of damage for each feather that strikes him. Some say the birds are supposed to be afraid of strange/loud noises.

Wind Child

MIGHT 3 HITS 7 1 Attack
Intelligent No Armour

These humanoids live in the mountains of the world, apart from the cities of mankind. They are blessed by the gods. There was originally only seven, the Seven Sages. Wind Children are very wise and learned. Slow to do battle, but ruthless when pushed. They live in small groups. Wind Children use swords, javelins, axes, daggers and bows.

Weret-hekau

MIGHT 6 HITS 12 1 Attack
Intelligent No Armour Terror 1

The weret-hekau are huge snakes with women's heads, upper bodies and arms. They are very intelligent, sophisticated and cunning. They often inhabit swamps and marshes, and have well-hidden lairs deep underground. A weret-hekau is fascinated with magic and lives for the pursuit of magical knowledge and objects. She can use

powers as a Magician. Give a weret-hekau between 3 and 5 powers. A weret-hekau can transform into a beautiful woman at will, but is unable to use her magic if she does so. Imperials know the weret-hekau as a lamia, the Aramaeans know her as lilith.

She will attack with her retractable fangs if she needs to defend herself, but she can also use weapons. On a successful bite, the victim must roll MIGHT and exceed 14 or become paralysed for one hour.

Zu Bird

MIGHT 6 HITS 13 2 Attacks
Not Intelligent No Armour

The Zu Bird is a giant carnivorous bird of prey capable of snatching a horse or a man into the air. A critical attack result indicates that the Zu Bird has snatched its prey into the air. It will climb at 3m per round.

Wild Animals

Bear

MIGHT 4 HITS 15 2 Attacks
Not Intelligent No Armour

Bears inhabit the forest-covered mountains and are loners, who may attack humans if roused to anger.

Boar

MIGHT 4 HITS 8 2 Attacks
Not Intelligent No Armour

Wild boar are hunted by nobleman for sport, they are vicious wild pigs living in scrubland and forests, and they can kill a man with their long tusks.

Camel

MIGHT 3 HITS 8 1 Attack
Not Intelligent No Armour

Camels are invaluable beasts of burden in these dry desert environments. More information on camels can be found in the travel and encounters sections. Dromedaries (single-humped) are most

common, although Bactrian camels (shaggy twin-humped camels) are found in eastern Persia. They rarely attack unless severely provoked.

Crocodile

MIGHT 6 HITS 10 1 Attack
Not Intelligent Light Armour
The Nile crocodile is a nasty-tempered predator that can spring out of the water to snatch prey off of the banks. Anyone bitten is at half MIGHT due to the crocodile's habit of hanging on and spinning around in the water (!) and cannot flee. The beast will only let go if harmed, but will probably continue to attack. A critical attack result indicates that the crocodile is holding the bitten character underwater for six combat rounds. Check the Drowning rules, and remember that MIGHT is halved!

Goat

MIGHT 1 HITS 4 1 Attack
Not Intelligent No Armour
The wild goat or antelope will only attack in the most unusual of circumstances.

Horse/Donkey

MIGHT 3 HITS 6 1 Attack
Not Intelligent No Armour
Both horses and donkeys can be found wild in the steppe-land. They rarely attack unless severely provoked.

Jackal

MIGHT 3 HITS 6 1 Attack
Not Intelligent No Armour
The desert jackal roams the edge of the desert wasteland in packs of 3-8 individuals preying on anything that the pack outnumbers, or scavenging dead animals. Jackals are ordinarily timid beasts and most active early in the morning and late at night. Magic,

sorcery, the will of the Gods or hunger will drive jackals to attack mankind.

Lion

MIGHT 5 HITS 12 2 Attacks
Not Intelligent No Armour
A powerful creature living in the dry steppe-land between the settled land and the desert in small prides. The males are lazy scavengers chasing away other predators from their kills. The females are wily hunters, often teaming up to carry out carefully planned ambushes. Lions were often hunted by kings and their courtiers for pleasure, but today many are captured alive for use as entertainment in the arena.

Scorpion

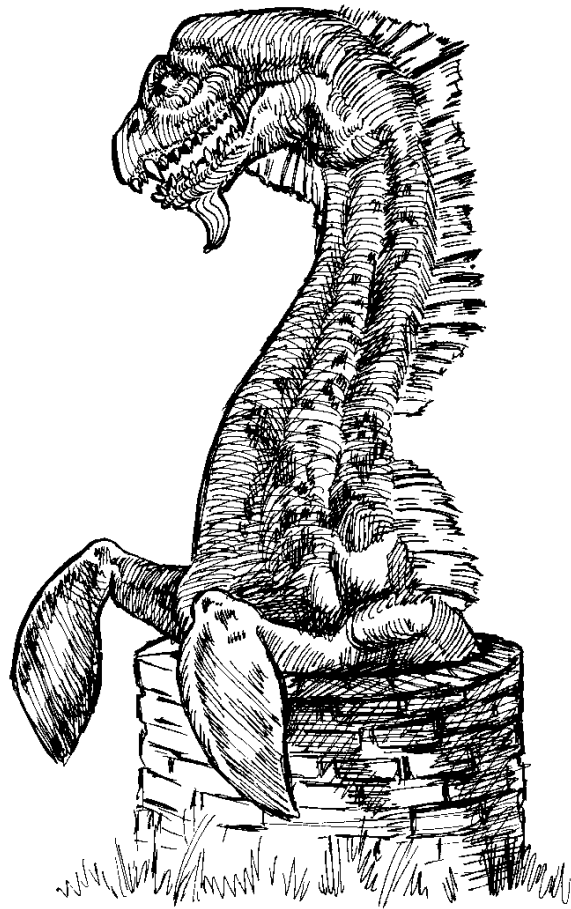
MIGHT 4 HITS 1 1 Attack
Not Intelligent No Armour
A burrower that likes cool dark places (boots, knapsacks, bedrolls, tents...). Check for concealment, rolling the scorpion's MIGHT against the potential victim's FATE. If unnoticed, roll once more to see if the sting strikes home!

Snake

MIGHT 5 HITS 1 1 Attack
Not Intelligent No Armour
May be a poisonous puff adder, saw-scaled viper or cobra. Snakes, too, like cool hidey-holes such as tents, caves, bushes, rocks and boots. Check for concealment, rolling the snake's MIGHT against the potential victim's FATE. If unnoticed, roll once more to see if the snake bites home!

Wolf

MIGHT 3 HITS 6 1 Attack
Not Intelligent No Armour
Wolves operate in small packs, rarely attacking humans unless desperate.



X TREASURES

Treasures should fit both the adventure being played and the setting of that adventure. In a tomb raid, the treasures most likely to be recovered will be grave goods left with the corpse, furniture, finely worked pottery, jewellery and other items. The treasure recovered from the house of a farmer will be non-existent! The treasure recovered from the lair of a mantichore will probably be made up of the mantichore's victims: spears, shields, silver denarii, etc. Adventurers will be on the look out for silver and for jewels. For jewels, the referee should refer to the Special Items list (below).

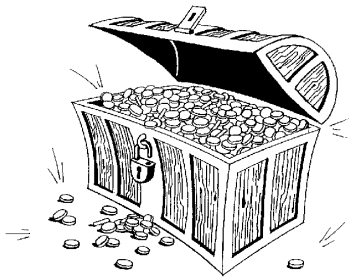
Coins & Jewels

It is recommended that the referee tailor the treasures to the adventure being played. Sometimes, however, a treasure is required out of the blue. Roll on the following table:

Random Treasure Roll

1d	Item
1-2	20 -120 Silver Denarii
3	100 - 600 Silver Denarii
4	300 - 1800 Silver Denarii*
5	Special Item
6	Special Item <i>and</i> 300-1800 Silver Denarii*

*Roll 2d and multiply the result by 150



Special Items

Special Items are certain objects, usually of magical origin, that form the true treasures of the game. The referee can place one or two of these treasures within the adventure, or wait for the table above to 'throw up' such an item. Referees should note that magic items in **ZENOBIA** are not simply swords or pieces of armour that provide some simple dice modifier, a magical item is usually magical because of 1) who has previously owned it; or 2) what it has previously done or been used for. Many of the items are unique, once-only, objects wielded in the days of myth and legend by heroes such as Hercules and Perseus. These heroes - considered gods - imbued their weapons and equipment with a portion of their mythic presence and these items continue to display magical powers. But remember - each of these heroic items is unique. Those in this list are of particular interest in the Desert Kingdoms of the East and some will be virtually impossible to find in the Classical Civilisations or the Northern Forests. Feel free to utilise the pages of myth and legend to come up with more special items. What about the Golden Fleece? The staff of Moses? Ulysses' hunting bow? Nero's lyre? And so on ...

Aeolus' Magic Pouch

A pouch used by the demi-god of the winds, Aeolus, that contains a magical gale that can be released to perform a task once each day.

Amulet of Bes

This lucky charm prevents the wearer from suffering the effects of any fumble!

Amulet of Sebek

Blue-green glazed image of two crocodiles. This amulet wards off crocodile attacks and prevents Sebek from ever possessing the wearer.

Aqua Noxious

A terrible poison that can kill a weak or wounded man outright or severely wound a healthy adventurer. See the poison rules.

Aqua Somnus

A potion of sleep that lasts for eight hours.

Aqua Vitae - Potion of Healing

This potion of healing holds enough to heal up to 30 HITS and can be drunk by as many people as need it until all 30 points are gone.

Arrow of the Hydra

When Hercules had slain the many-headed hydra as one of his labours he dipped his arrows into its venomous blood. One or two of these arrows of Hercules still exist. The wounds they inflict cannot easily be healed. When such an arrow hits a victim, it not only lowers the victim's HITS score, but also the victim's MIGHT score by the same amount. If MIGHT falls to zero or below then he dies instantly. Otherwise he is permanently crippled by the agonising poison of the hydra in his veins. The blood of the hydra is only useful for one attack.

Arrow of Imdugud

This magical arrow, symbolises the star Sirius in the night sky. The Arrow of Imdugud is made with the tail feathers from a Zu bird and will *always* hit its mark (if visible and within range). Unless the victim makes a successful FATE roll, his HITS score is reduced to 1 (otherwise he just takes 3 points of

damage). So powerful and feared is the Arrow that ancient kings sometimes wielded them like sceptres, keeping their courtiers in fear.

Cap of Darkness

When the hero Perseus visited the nymphs of Hyperborea on his quest to slay the gorgon Medusa, they presented him with a magical cap of darkness, fashioned by the god Hermes. This leather cap of invisibility renders the wearer and all he carries invisible while it is worn, with the proviso that the wearer does not make any attacks (if he does he becomes briefly visible). The cap does not prevent the wearer making a noise as he moves, or leaving tell-tale signs in mud, water, rain, smoke and mist. The referee should note that this item is very powerful, and might rule that it only operates (as its name implies) at night.

Coat of Many Colours

In the long, flowing style typical of Phoenician robes, this Coat of Many Colours is a fabulous and luxuriant garment. It is a match for any royal robe, but unlike the rich purple and gold of royal costume, this Coat shimmers with a kaleidoscopic light. Its hues are vivid, its patterns ever shifting. Once owned by a Phoenician called Joseph who had become vizier of Ægypt, the wearer of the robe can call upon the powers of the garment to aid him. The robe will entrance an observer for 1-3 rounds, even stopping an attacker in mid-strike. While under its spell, the observer is open to friendly suggestions from the robe's wearer. When the glamour of the robe wears off, the victim only remembers the bright colours and swirling patterns of light, and usually the friendly suggestion if one was made. Each use of the robe in this way costs 3 HITS.



Eye of Horus

A small blue-glazed amulet of the Egyptian eye of Horus. If the wearer participates in magical or spirit combat, it gives him a +1 bonus.

Firesand

A leather bag of Firesand holds 3 handfuls. When thrown the sand ignites whatever it lands on, usually an area 3m x 3m.

Forbidden Scroll of Osiris

This scroll contains full information and the true name of a wealthy dead (and mummified) person. It can be used by an evil exorcist to reanimate and control a mummy (who will appear as a normal human being as it did in life).

Girdle of Hippolyte

Hippolyte was Queen of the Amazons and she was cruelly slain by Hercules, since one of his labours was to fetch her girdle (a bronze-studded leather war-belt) for King Eurystheus. The girdle gives anyone who wears it great bodily strength. For any actions involving lifting, pushing or carrying, the wearer receives a +4 on his MIGHT roll. In addition, any damage inflicted on a victim in hand-to-hand combat is increased by 1 point.

Golden Ankh of Ra

Symbol of eternal life. The Egyptian gods are often seen holding an ankh to someone's lips this is considered to be an offering of 'The Breath of Life'. The breath you will need in the afterlife. This magical item is worn around the

neck. It will restore its wearer to life **once** and then turn to copper forever. Restore the dead man's HITS back to its initial level.

Golden Fly Necklace

A carefully-crafted necklace of several golden flies, this item is a symbol of disease and death, and gives the wearer total immunity from any disease.

Hes-Vase

A green-glass Hes-Vase liberates a person's ka. The ka is usually translated in Egyptian as 'soul' or 'spirit'. The ka comes into existence when an individual was born. It is believed by the Egyptians that the ram-headed god Khnum crafts the ka on his potter's wheel at a person's birth. It is thought that when someone dies they 'meet their ka'. A person's ka lives on after their body has died. Some Egyptian tombs include model houses for the ka to inhabit. Offerings of food and drink are left at the tomb entrance so that the ka can eat and drink.

The tall, wide-based, Hes-Vase is traditionally used in funeral rites for the pouring of libations. This vase is covered with symbols of the ka - basically a small bird with human head and two up-raised arms sprouting from the chest. When the vase is filled with good wine it is ready for use. The user anoints himself with the wine, then pours the rest onto the floor in a magical circle around himself. He lays down and frees his mind. His ka separates and the user enters a trance while his invisible spirit is free to wander for up to 15 minutes and anywhere within 5km. While so separated the user is treated as a spirit. If the body is harmed or disturbed or the circle of wine crossed, the user wakes and his ka returns instantly.

Jewel

Any one of several semi-precious stones (roll on the table below for ideas). Worth 500-3000 denarii for a typically modest-sized jewel (roll 2d x 250).

<i>1d</i>	<i>Semi-Precious Stone</i>	<i>Typical Colour</i>
1	Jasper	Mottled Red, Green or Yellow
2	Amethyst	Purple
3	Carnelian	Reddish-Yellow
4	Quartz	Milky White
5	Chalcedony	Bluish-White
6	Turquoise	Blue-Green or Sky Blue

Khesbed Jewellery

An individual piece of khesbed (lapis lazuli) jewellery is worth 500-3000 denarii. It is a holy deep blue stone, flecked with silver like the stars set in the night sky. The Ægyptians believe it to be the flesh of the gods. Khesbed has 1-6 points of ‘energy’ embedded within it that can be used to activate Magician’s powers or to take the blow of a weapon. The energy expended in using powers or taking damage is renewed at sunrise. Two examples follow:

Khesbed Amulet

The amulet has HITS 4, for use in casting powers as a pool of energy or taking damage from a weapon.

Khesbed Ring

The amulet has HITS 2, for use in casting powers as a pool of energy or taking damage from a weapon.

Pectoral of Horus

The pectoral is an Ægyptian item of jewellery worn around the neck by priests of Horus and pharaohs in dynastic times. The winged solar-disk is gold inlaid with lots of silver and semi-precious stones and lies across the upper chest. The winged solar disk is a form that the god Horus Behudety (Horus of Edfu) takes in his battles with Set. The god Thoth once used his magic to turn Horus into a sun-disk with splendid outstretched wings. The goddesses Nekhbet and Uazet in the form of uraeus snakes joined him at his side.

When the sun is out and visible, and the wearer is at least one-storey up, he can call on the Pectoral of Horus and he will sprout wings and fly! The cost is 4 HITS and the power lasts only for 4 minutes (though more HITS can be spent to keep those wings a little longer once acquired). They can fly as fast as a horse, and like a horse can put on short bursts of speed. Taking off and landing takes one complete combat round, and any dangerous, delicate or unrehearsed manoeuvres must be rolled against MIGHT.

Pegasus Bridle

When Bellerophon went in search of the winged horse Pegasus, he had in his possession a golden bridle given to him by Athena. The hero was able to slip it over Pegasus’ head and in this way tamed him. When the Pegasus bridle is used on a horse, the intelligence of that horse is liberated. The horse can communicate with its rider by speech, it can think as well as a human and is loyal to the one who bridled it. Such a horse can be given instructions and it will follow them as best it can. When the bridle is removed, the horse reverts to its unintelligent form and will

remember nothing. If re-bridled the horse becomes intelligent again, but will not remember previous adventures with the rider.

Potion of Natron

Gives the drinker total immunity from the magical powers of spirits, ghosts and demons for 10 minutes. Enough for three doses.

Rosette of the Goddess

This leather wristband has a rosette made of lead or faience mounted on it, symbol of Ishtar. The wearer has an affinity with all animals. Horses and cattle will be obedient and compliant, savage creatures such as lions will stay away. Has no effect on intelligent or supernatural creatures.

Scarab Servant

Called the dung beetle because of its practice of rolling a ball of dung across the ground. The Egyptians observed this behaviour and equated it with the ball of the sun being rolled across the sky. They confuse this balled food source with the egg sack that the female dung beetle lays and buries in the sand. When the eggs hatch the dung beetles seem to appear from nowhere, making it a symbol of spontaneous creation. In this role it was associated with the sunrise. Khepri is the scarab-headed god. When thrown to the ground, this small scarab carved from turquoise will turn into a giant scarab that will fight the owner's enemies to the death. It has only one use, the scarab then burrowing deep into the earth.

Scroll of Irem

This valuable scroll details the journey of a merchant in search of the Nameless City. It details various incense routes and unknown oasis in the deepest deserts of Arabia.

Scorpion Ring

This bronze ring has a scorpion design - and protects the wearer from the effects of all poisons.

Silver Dagger

Curved knife blessed by the moon goddess Luna, capable of harming 'creatures of the night'

Silver Ankh

The wearer of this ankh will recover from wounds far quicker than anyone else. Instead of regaining 1 HIT point per day, he will regain 4 HIT points per day! Worn around the neck.



Snake Servant

Magical cord only a foot long that transforms into a venomous snake when thrown to the ground. The snake cannot be commanded by the owner, but it will not attack him in any circumstance. If the snake survives for more than 6 rounds it turns back into a lifeless length of cord ready to be used again.

Stormsand

A leather bag of Stormsand holds 3 handfuls. When thrown the sand creates a blinding sandstorm that lasts 4 combat rounds. Everyone in the area (3m x 3m) makes a FATE check and if failed is blinded for 10 minutes afterward (everyone is blind within the storm!).

Uraeus Amulet

The cobra is an emblem of Lower Egypt. It is associated with the king, and kingdom of Lower Egypt. It is also associated with the sun and with many deities. This cobra (or Uraeus)

represents the 'fiery eye of Amun-Ra', in which two uraei can be seen on either side of a winged solar disk. The uraeus once appeared as a symbol worn on the crown or headdress of Egyptian royalty. It is used as a protective symbol, the Egyptians believed that the cobra could spit fire at any approaching enemies. By lowering his HITS by a variable number of points, the wearer of this amulet (carrying the Uraeus symbol) can spit fire into the eyes of an enemy within 5m. The victim suffers twice the number of HITS spent by the character and is blinded and in agony for the same number of combat rounds.

Was-Sceptre

An staff which is forked at the bottom with a canine head at the top. Ancient

Ægyptian kings believed it contained the powers of the dog as a protective spirit. It symbolised life giving powers and also well being and happiness. The wielder can use his FATE points to power the sceptre, it has the three powers of the priestly ritual Sacred Animal. It only relates to dogs.

Zisurru

Zisurru is holy flour, blessed by a high priest of Bel-Marduk and used to create a magical circle around a person or place. A single leather bag of Zisurru contains three handfuls, each of which can create a circle around a bed (or bed-sized object). No demon or evil spirit may cross this magical boundary. The boundary lasts for a night-and-a-day, or a day-and-a-night.

XI LANDS & PEOPLE

The Desert Kingdoms and Beyond

ZENOBIA focuses on a complete geographical region: the Desert Kingdoms. These are the lands around the Fertile Crescent and beyond. With the diminishing power of the Empire and the ascendancy of both Persia and Palmyra the entire balance of the region has shifted. Independence has come to lands that have long been subjugated. The Desert Kingdoms have a new lease of life. What are termed Desert Kingdoms here are in fact just lands or realms. The government may not be a kingship but a provincial governor (Ægypt or Pergamum), it may be the vassal state of some larger power

(Aria), or it may be truly independent (Armenia).

Whatever the present state of affairs, things may change. Historically (from our perspective), the Empire swept back in and re-conquered old provinces to become a renewed power (at least in the East). Persia, too, grew from strength to strength and lasted for hundreds more years. The referee's campaign may have a different outcome. Whatever may occur in the referee's campaign, he should note that many facts within the following entries are historically accurate, while others are half-truths and half-fabrications, a patchwork of facts designed to both lend credibility **and** provide entertainment and excitement.

<i>Kingdom/Land</i>	<i>Traditional Ruler</i>	<i>Current Ruler</i>
Africa	The Empire	The Empire
Ægypt	The Empire	The Empire
Armenia	Independent	Independent
Axum	Independent	Independent
Bithynia	The Empire	The Empire
Cappadocia	The Empire	The Empire
Chaldea	The Empire	Persia
Charax	Persia	Persia
Cilicia	The Empire	Palmyra
Colchis	Independent	Independent
Cyprus	The Empire	The Empire
The Decapolis	The Empire	Palmyra
Galatia	The Empire	Independent
Nabataea	The Empire	Independent
Osrhoene	The Empire	Independent
Palmyra	The Empire	Independent
Pergamum	The Empire	The Empire
Persia	Independent	Independent
Phoenicia	The Empire	Palmyra
Sabaea	Independent	Independent
Solyma	The Empire	Palmyra

Each entry in this section gives a brief cultural and geographical summary of a Desert Kingdom. The larger entries (i.e. *Ægypt* and *Chaldea*) are expanded with sub-sections. Any interesting geographical features or important cities are listed separately under each relevant entry.

Africa

Africa is divided between the mountain fastness of Mauritania off to the west as far as the Pillars of Hercules; Numidia, which is a small province that controls the Numidian Mountains and the lowlands north to the sea; and the Proconsulate, which is a heavily urbanised region opposite Sicily; to the east of the Proconsulate is the desert-land of Tripolitania with its cities strung out along the coast. Between Tripolitania and *Ægypt* lies the fertile coastal territory of the Cyrenaica. For centuries, back to the days of the *Ægyptian* pharaohs, the African people have dwelt in peace in this land. Then the Carthaginians came and began to colonise the coastline during the earliest days of the Eternal City. The two cities were destined to go to war and epic battles were fought between the two powers with the Eternal City emerging as the victor. The Carthaginian territories of Africa became the Empire's first acquisitions. Today the Empire still retains its grip on Africa, and has divided the region into the five provinces related (above).

The climate is hot and dry, and the landscape generally one of fertile hills and plains. The region is dominated by three profound geographical factors: the Middle Sea to the north, the endless sea of sand that is the Libyan Desert to the south, and the rugged Atlas Mountains that are the source of the region's rainfall and rivers. Even then, water is not a universal commodity and the large cities must hoard what they have in

underground cisterns, and transport it from near-by hills via aqueducts. The Eternal City has long depended on these African provinces for its supply of corn and will defend them to the death. It also depends on this hot country for a regular supply of exotic beasts for the gladiatorial games. Ostriches, leopards, lions, giraffes, elephants, even rhino can be found on the grasslands between the edge of the desert and the provinces proper. Olive oil is Africa's other famous export. The Atlas Mountains deny easy access into the African interior, forming an east-west barrier through southern Mauritania (capital Iol Caesaraea) and separating the desert from the fertile coastal plains rich in wheat, farms and lush olive groves. The province of Numidia displays a variety of terrain. To the west the el-Hodina lake and its surrounding farmland marks the eastern end of the magnificent Atlas chain. This lowland continues as it crosses eastwards through Numidia south of the smaller Numidian Mountains. Numidia's capital is Cirta, further north on the well-watered and rich plain that faces the sea, a region of rolling hills and small but thriving towns like Thamugadi, Thevestis, and Lambaesis. The Numidian lowland is peppered with marshes and low-lying lakes, but rises again to steppe-land and eventually desolate sand sea.

The Proconsulate is the ancient Carthaginian centre. Carthage was laid waste by the Empire, but a colony with the same name has since been established on the same spot. It is a magnificent and powerful coastal city, surrounded by impressive neighbours such as Utica, Thysdrus, Thugga, Neapolis and Hadrumentum. This once Carthaginian heartland is now an Imperial bastion and its citizens powerful, proud and happy with their delightful cities with all their comforts. This region has bred a number of

emperors and many hundreds of fine orators and thinkers.

Even further east the desert boundary (marked by the steep Gebel Escarpment) edges closer and closer towards the sea, but a strip of fertile land continues along the narrow coastal plain (the Gefara Plain). There are settlements here receiving water from sporadic rainfall and from the seasonal streams of the otherwise dry wadis (such as the Zamzam and Sawfajin) that feed toward the sea out of the rocky desert uplands. The province is called Tripolitania, and boasts wealthy cities like Leptis Magna, Sabratha, Misurata and further inland on the dry steppe, Tenteos and Ghirza. In the desert, acting as a lone frontier town stands the dusty oasis city of Ghadames, 200 km south-west of the nearest city, Tenteos.

Cyrenaica is almost an island of wealth and prosperity amidst the rocky barren-lands and sandy deserts of Libya. This Imperial province sits on a huge promontory in the Middle Sea and its only routes of communication are by sea to the Eternal City, Alexandria and Antioch, and by desert caravan to the western oasis of Sabe on the route to Ghirza in Tripolitania. There is no well-used land route between Cyrenaica and Ægypt other than caravan travel in the deep desert and across the Quattara Depression. Once known as the Pentapolis because it could boast five grand trading cities, Tripolitania now has a number of prosperous settlements, including Cyrene (the capital), Berenice, Hadrianopolis, Arsinoe, Ptolemais, Olbia, Apollonia and Darnis. The economic life of the province is made possible by the existence of the Gebel el-Akdar, a well-watered coastal ridge. Apollonia is the main port of the province and it is flourishing. The region has recently suffered from a number of damaging earthquakes, and it

remains a target for the opportunistic tribes of the desert.

Ægypt

Ægypt was once the superpower of its day, a powerful and wealthy kingdom dominated by the god-like pharaoh, his governors, priests and temples. But that was long ago. Pharaohs came and went, to be finally replaced by a long line of conquering Emperors from the Eternal City. The emperor is a pharaoh *in absentia*, and this rich kingdom is his own personal fiefdom. Senators from the Eternal City (every one a potential rival) are not allowed to set foot in Ægypt. To run this private Imperial estate for him, the emperor routinely chooses an Imperial military officer of lower rank and he administers it from Alexandria. This man he can trust. The land of Ægypt runs along the life giving river Nile as it sweeps majestically through the desert. Ancient pharaohs built fabulous pyramids and obelisks, constructed immense tombs and carved colossal statues of themselves. Egypt is a land of grand monuments.

The People: The Ægyptians are a rich and very ancient people that have enjoyed a life of isolation from the rest of the world. Almost every harvest is a good one. Here, the local governors (the 'strategoi') rule their own provinces for the governor. Ægyptians believe that the things that are eternal are truly important, not individuals, achievements or wars. Life, death, health, nature and the rhythm of the universe are all worshipped through a vast number of huge and colourful temples - each run as estates by the enigmatic and very pious bald-headed priests. If the strategoi run half of the kingdom, the priests run the other half - and the Emperor-Pharaoh **owns** it all.

Ægyptians are a black-haired, dark-skinned people who wear simple white

kilts for most occasions. Women wear long dresses and elaborate makeup and jewellery. Wigs are common amongst the nobility. The people are generally complacent, proud and powerful. Ægyptians despise all foreigners who they consider always bicker and fight amongst themselves for food and treasure. Ægypt is a land of plenty.

Ægyptian history is long (over one thousand years), rich and cultured. Architecture, poetry, myths and literature, the crafting of jewellery and the work of painters and sculptors are exquisite. They practice skills handed down over 60 generations. The scribal class is mostly made up of Ionians who settled here under Alexander the Great, and keep everything running smoothly. This middle class of Ionic administrators wields great power. The written word is power in Ægypt, not the uncouth spear, axe or scimitar. Only barbarians (like Imperials or Aramaeans) have any skill with these nasty tools. Ægyptians use brains, not brawn. The unpalatable truth, however, is that the Ægyptians are a crushed underclass in their own ancestral land. As more and more pressure is applied to force out more and more corn from the province to feed the hungry masses in the Eternal City, the Ægyptian peasants are becoming desperately poor and suffer terribly. With the economic catastrophe wracking the Empire, the Ægyptian peasantry suffers ever more.

The Land: Ægypt is the 'black land', the rich fertile farmland running alongside the River Nile to the sea. Beyond is the 'red land' - the desert, the nomads and death. Red is a symbol of bad-luck and death, black of fertility and life. Large unwallled villages (often wrongly called 'cities') dot the river bank. There are only really three major cities in Ægypt: Alexandria, Ptolemais and Naucratis. None have the typical

town council but are governed by an Imperial official for the governor. Traditionally, the seat of Ægypt's power had been Thebes, but this once grand city is now a collection of dusty villages, clustered around the sand-choked ruins of the semi-buried city (smashed centuries earlier by the Persians). The once fabulous Temple of Amun-Ra amidst the villages is now a billet for Imperial troops who patrol the area on foot or on horseback. Pharaohs are buried in the desert cliffs over the water in the Valley of the Kings. At the mouth of the Nile far away is the delta ('Lower Ægypt') which is a huge area of rich farmland, rivers, swamp and lakes. Most of Ægypt's food comes from here and much of it goes to the Eternal City in vast sea-going grain-ships. There are few trees in the kingdom - much wood comes from the Phoenician cities of Tyrus and Sidon. Papyrus is cut from the swamps and turned into scrolls for writing. Mines are worked in the Sinai mountains and the Eastern Desert - often by slaves and criminals. The borders of Ægypt are the deserts, which have kept invasions to a minimum.

The History: With the earth, air and sky in place, with the green plants and the abundant animals, the god Ra abandoned his creation for the Netherworld, and set himself up as Judge of the Dead. Each night he sailed through the Netherworld on his Night Barque and emerged with great joy in the east at dawn. There his Day Barque ferried him across the twelve hours of the sky to set once more in the west. To comfort mankind while he journeyed through the Otherworld, Ra set up the moon.

In Ra's absence Shu ruled the gods, but his reign was troubled by the destruction caused by Sekhmet and by the evil forces of the demon-serpent

Apophis. For centuries Shu ruled, and eventually the god Geb urged Shu to abdicate. After much quarrelling, he agreed. Geb assumed the throne and soon peace descended onto the earth. His reign also ended peacefully with the crown being passed on to his eldest son, Osiris.

Osiris ruled well, his was a Golden Age of beauty, tranquillity and happiness. He often descended in person to earth in order to teach mankind all the arts of civilisation. Isis, his loyal sister and wife, took over full responsibility for the government of the universe in his absence. Set, Osiris' brother was jealous and bitter about his brother's success, and coveted the throne for himself. He attempted to seize the kingship by ordering a coffin to be made, a splendid painted and richly adorned coffin that perfectly fitted Osiris' measurements. At a party for the gods thrown by Set, the evil god have the coffin brought in to gasps of amazement. Set declared that he would give the box to anyone who fit inside it comfortably. When Osiris tried the coffin, Set suddenly slammed shut the lid, sealed it with lead and flung it into the River Nile. The coffin sailed out to sea.

Loyal Isis heard of the crime and vowed to find her brother. Her search carried her to all the ends of the earth, but eventually she discovered the coffin in Canaan. It had washed ashore at the city of Byblos, the oldest city in the world. There, a tamarisk tree had sprouted up below it and trapped the coffin within its trunk. The local carpenters have cut down the tree and fashioned the timber into a pillar for the palace of Malcander, King of Byblos. After entering the palace in the guise of a nurse, Isis revealed her identity to the king and queen of Byblos, and they readily consented to let her take the pillar away with her. As a sorceress of great repute,

Isis was able to bring the body of Osiris back to life on the banks of the Nile. There they were happily reunited and conceived a child. Set was furious that his plan had been thwarted and he ambushed Osiris and hacked him to death, disposing of the pieces by throwing them into the twisting marshes of the Nile delta. Again Isis tried desperately to track down the pieces of her husband's body, eventually gathering them all up and carefully reassembling them. Through this attempt to resurrect her husband, Isis created the sacred art of mummification. Despite her great knowledge and skill, Osiris could not be brought fully back to life a second time, the twice-slain god descended to the Netherworld where he began to rule.

Though the throne of the gods was now empty, the other gods would not let Set take the crown. Perhaps they were stalling for time while Isis, a fugitive from the forces of Set, carried Horus, the son of Osiris, within her. When the god-child was born, Set sent his forces against it in an attempt to end the lineage of Osiris, but to no avail. Horus grew up to avenge his father. He first brought Set to trial before the Great Council of gods, with Ra presiding. The trial dragged on for some considerable time, and in the end the council requested that Ra give the judgement over to Neith the goddess of wisdom. She ruled in favour of Horus.

The two gods fought a pitched battle against one another for the kingship of the universe. As the fighting raged Set was emasculated by Horus, while he in turn lost one of his eyes. Hathor kindly restored the eye of Horus, and the original became a god, the 'wadjet', the Eye of Horus. After the intervention of Osiris to convince the gods to unite in support of Horus, Set was made to swear by powerful oaths to accept the

kingship of Horus. Set has taken up the titles of a war god and god of desert storms, but he is not consoled by such gifts. In due course Horus handed over the throne, now called the Horus Throne, to a human successor. Every king of Ægypt now became 'The Horus', every dead king 'The Osiris'.

Horus in turn gave up the throne to a human king - the first of a long line of pharaohs. This ruler was named Menes. Menes unified both Upper and Lower Ægypt to create a strong and vibrant land. King Menes established his court at a newly established city of Memphis where Upper and Lower Ægypt meet. To create enough land for this building project Menes diverted the flow of the Nile with a vast dam, still in operation today. Menes fought the Nubian tribes to the south of Ægypt throughout his long reign of 62 years, and he was eventually killed on a hunting trip by a hippopotamus. His body was buried in the sacred necropolis of Abydos - the site of Osiris' own burial.

Many native-born pharaohs ruled Ægypt in dynasty after dynasty, climaxing with the amazing reign of Pharaoh Ramses II. But soon the priests grew powerful enough to have a dynasty of their own. Ægyptian power waned in a period of great rival empires. There were Nubian dynasties, Libyan dynasties and then horror! The Assyrian Empire invaded and wrought devastation on Ægypt. Soon after the Persians did the same. Finally all hopes of a return to native Ægyptian glory were dashed when the Ionian general Alexander defeated Persia and conquered Ægypt. His general Ptolemy established his own dynasty and he became Pharaoh. His descendants ruled Ægypt with the help of a powerful new class of Ionic administrators - a new aristocratic class that pushed Ægyptian nobles out of the way. All the best jobs

were taken by Ionians. The last Ptolemy, Queen Cleopatra, could not resist the power of the Empire and Ægypt fell to Emperor Augustus. Understanding the power and wealth of this exotic land the emperor decided to change it as little as possible - but now its revenues fed the poor of the Eternal City and no longer went into temples and palaces. The Ionic scribal class continues to organise the province's government as before, the local Ægyptians struggle to earn a living or earn any rank of distinction. Imperial nobles and philosophers visit this strange land but soon return from whence they came. Imperial legionnaires are garrisoned there, but on the whole, few Imperials come to Ægypt to stay.



Ægyptian scribes have devised a scheme for the recording of the house lineage. It is divided into dynasties, each one forming a distinct blood-line. Although the human blood-lines sometimes stop and re-start as new pharaohs take up the crown, upon the coronation, the usurpers become the god Horus, son of Osiris, and so the link is maintained. By burying their predecessor, the new pharaoh becomes the son Horus burying his father Osiris. In this way House Osiris can be said to stretch back two thousand years. The Royal House of Osiris has ruled the valley of the river Nile, the kingdom of Ægypt, for thousands of years.

Alexandria

The city of Alexandria was founded by Alexander the Great and greatly improved upon by the Ptolemaic kings who came after him. It is his greatest legacy, the most fantastic city on earth. It is a vibrant and cosmopolitan centre, and still retains a strong Ionic cultural identity. It is a well-laid out city, well-planned and organised. Only the Eternal City surpasses Alexandria in size, although it easily surpasses that city in sophistication and intellectual distinction. Alexandria is a prosperous clearing house, an impressive trading centre that has become the axis for trade between East and West. Corn ships for the Eternal City leave from the vast harbour complex, along with smaller merchantmen carrying cargoes from Meroe, Axum, Sabaea, Telmun, Melhuhha and far distant lands of myth and legend. The Solymans have a large population here with their own political organisation, this often puts them in conflict with the real power-base - the Ionians. The architecture of the city is wonderful, and the city planners established much of Alexandria between Lake Mareotis and the Middle Sea. The island of Pharos off shore, was long ago connected to Alexandria by an ancient causeway and the city has expanded in that direction too. On the island stands the impressive Pharos lighthouse. One the eastern side of the causeway sits the Great Harbour, on the western side a number of lesser anchorages. Within the city proper stand magnificent structures: the Library of Alexandria (the 'Museum'), a fabulous temple of Serapis, palaces (once occupied by Queen Cleopatra), temples, beautiful colonnades, fountains and public precincts. Ionic philosophers have resided at the Library for centuries - it is a centre of learning, experimentation, science and literature. Many famous philosophers were trained at the Library which is run by a high priest of Apollo appointed by the pharaoh-emperor.

Babylon Fossatum

On a ridge overlooking the River Nile, somewhere between Memphis and Heliopolis stands Babylon Fossatum, a powerful Imperial fortress housing three legions. So much water is needed by this great garrison that 150 prisoners are forced to work a gigantic human treadmill which keeps freshwater flowing. Memphis and the pyramids lay on the opposite, western bank.

Canopus & Herakleion

Along the same bar of land that separates the Middle Sea from Lake Mareotis in the Ægyptian delta stands the city of Canopus, and two satellite towns - Herakleion and Menouthis

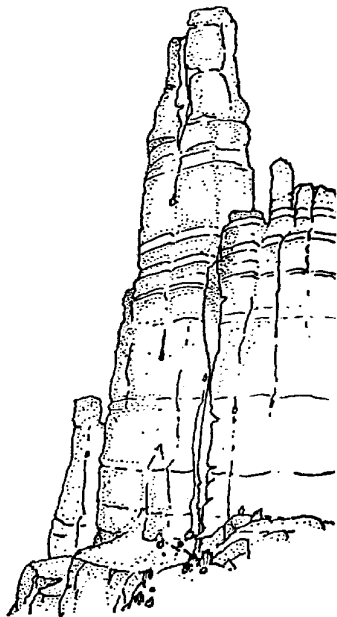
(away from the sea). These three cities stand on a branch of the River Nile called the Canopic Arm. Herakleion is famous for its temple of Hercules, a place of refuge for runaway slaves and reputedly the site of a visit by Paris and Helen on their way to Troy. The city is a tiny port that cannot compare with Alexandria, not too distant. Canopus sits on the salty plains near the sea and the animal-headed jars used to hold the viscera of mummies in the tomb are manufactured here (hence their name - Canopic jars). The city had a thriving market which was lifted wholesale to Alexandria. Canopus does retain an impressive temple to Serapis, constructed by Ptolemy III. It had been dedicated to Osiris, but that god's image now lives within the temple of Hercules at Herakleion. Once a year an elaborate ceremony takes place. Osiris is brought out to be carried by barge to Canopus. Canopus attracts many, many pilgrims and other visitors, and the festivals of Serapis are spectacular events attracting thousands of people. The celebrations are well known for their licentiousness and sexual abandon. Many Alexandrians cram into boats to reach Canopus for the pleasure filled festivities. The temple of Serapis is also known as a place of miracle cures. Canopus is a fashionable resort full of wealthy ladies, tourists and aristocrats enjoying the cool breezes and luxuriant hotels. A temple to Isis dominates the suburb of Menouthis 3km away. It has a huge reputation and pilgrims come from far and wide to consult Isis of Menouthis. She too helps the infertile and can cure the sick - and her rites are also accompanied by scandalous behaviour and dancing. The Canopus canal links the Canopic Arm to Alexandria along the bar of land in front of Lake Mareotis. This forms a main route for pilgrims from Alexandria to Menouthis, Canopus and Herakleion. Two other small towns sit on the coast and link to the Canopic canal, Taposiris (near Canopus) and Nicopolis, closer to Alexandria.

Armenia

Armenia is an ancient kingdom that has suffered the attentions of either the Empire or Parthia for centuries. Straddling the mountains between the two vast states, where the Zagros meet the Taurus, Armenia has long been a bone of contention. The kingdom represents a strategic 'high-ground' dominating the northern curve of the Fertile Crescent. Armenia remains a great prize for any would-be empire.

Long under the Achaemenid Persian aegis, the kingdom has a very strong cultural flavour of that land. The Armenians have long been open to influence from Persian culture, with Ahura Mazda and Mithras being the chief gods of the nobility and wealthy elite, and Persian costume being adopted universally throughout the kingdom. Soft hill boots with curled toes are very common.

In centuries past Armenia was known by other, less well known titles, as Urartu or Ararat. Centred on the lakes of Mannai and Nairi and the fertile mountain valleys of the eastern Taurus, Armenia is a strong mountain-orientated kingdom. Mount Ararat sits at the centre of the land. For centuries a vassal of stronger states, Armenia eventually threw off these shackles under a new Persian-born dynasty to found a line of great kings, kings like Tigranes who boldly challenged the Empire. Armenia is rich in metal and a source of strong hill horses. It has a formidable army with a good cavalry arm, giving the kingdom a degree of power. The greatest expansion came under King Tigranes who conquered the



Decapolis two-centuries ago, but subsequently lost those conquests to the Empire. The unruly and wild Sarmatian tribes occasionally raid Armenian valleys; some stay on to become mercenaries in the pay of either Armenia, Persia or the Empire.

The Armenian kingdom is divided up into small mountain provinces, each governed by a member of the nobility. These governors reside at fortified provincial capitals, complete with storehouses, stables and garrisons, and have at their disposal a contingent of the king's standing army. This is supplemented by a provincial levy of shepherds, archers and peasant spearmen. Armenian cavalry is composed of tough cataphracts (men of the royal family, other high-born family members running the provinces) and horse archers (lesser nobility running large farms and villages for the governor). The royal capital is Artaxata in the rich valley of the easterly-flowing Arax. Like all Armenian cities it is heavily fortified with stone walls strengthened by buttresses and towers. Cities, palaces, irrigation canals, storehouses and temples are all constructed with great energy. The kingdom's wealth comes from a combination of iron-working and agriculture (including orchards and vineyards as well as grain). These cities and valleys are connected by high mountain trails and passes. The steep and treacherous mountains of Armenia are covered with thick snow for months in winter; deep ravines, high peaks and impassable ridges make Armenia a formidable environment.

The Armenian landscape is typified by a complex of plateaux and high peaks, the tangled uplands where the Pontic, Taurus and Zagros Mountains meet and coalesce. This mountain-land is freezing cold in winter and scorching hot in

summer. Any journey through Armenia is a slow one, but one with spectacular scenery. Numerous clear blue lakes are nestled between fabulous but barren scrub-covered mountains. Banks of reeds proliferate around the shore-lines, reed-beds teeming with storks, ducks and herons. The lower more fertile slopes of these peaks are littered with pyramids of cow-dung, to be burnt in the wintertime as fuel for peasant fires. Lake Nairi is a vast inland sea that plays host to vast flocks of white storks and pink flamingos. Poppies grow on the slopes around it, and a local breed of wild cat can sometimes be spotted. These fishing cats can swim and have one blue and one green eye. In the cliffs to the west and overlooking the lake is the Rock of Nairi, a towering pinnacle of rock, full of rock-cut chambers and ancient Urartian tombs.

Axum

Colonised by Sabaeen princes many centuries ago after a period of intense warfare and bloody conquest. Axum is the fortified capital of this exotic kingdom. Adulis is Axum's main port, lying as it does, on the Erythraean Sea. Traders meet there from Meluhha, Africa and Sabaea. The kings of Axum are given the honorary title of Nagashi and claim descent from the wise King Solomon of Solyma and the fabled first Queen of Sheba (Sabaea) who visited him and gave the king a son. Because of this, the Axumite royal house is called the Solominid dynasty. The other powerful noble family in Axum is the Zagwe, of the Lasta region, high on the central plateau.

Axum is a high table-land, a vast plateau split from the north-east to the south-west by a gargantuan rift: the Dark Valley. This plateau is cut by many rivers and deep canyons, and capped by mountain peaks - especially in the north around Lake Tana. In the north-east

toward the Erythraean Sea the plateau ends in a series of steep escarpments dropping over a thousand metres to the sun-baked coastal plain and the Denakil Desert. Along the western fringes of the Axumite highland, the drop is less dramatic and ends at a searing desert deep in the interior. To the south the plateau drops gently to Lake Turkana. Much of the plateau has a sparse covering of desert shrubs, thorn-bushes and savannah grass. The valleys and canyons, however, are rich with tropical tree and plant-life. All kinds of African wildlife roams the Axumite wilderness, from giraffe to leopard, hippo to monkey, antelope to rhino, elephant, lion, hyena and jackal. Many of these are hunted by Imperial beast-men, rounding up fabulous animals for the beast-shows in the arenas. The fertility of the area is helped by the torrential rains of the wet season (June to September), which is followed by a dry season that can sometimes be broken in February or March by another short rainy season.

Bithynia

An ancient kingdom of Asia Minor lying between the Propontis Sea in the north and Pergamum to the south. It dominates the entrance into the Pontus Euxinus and is therefore strategically valuable. It also gives access to the major crossing point between the continents of Asia and Europa. Its inhabitants are all of Thracian origin, they originally settled west of the Halys River when driven across the Thracian Bosphorus (the crossing point) by the ancient Mysians and Teucrians. Nicomedes became its first independent king in 475 AUC after it emerged from the ruins of the Persian Empire as a satrapy. It was King Nicomedes IV who bequeathed Bithynia to the Empire almost exactly two-hundred years later. The chief cities are Nicomedia (the ancient royal capital), Nicaea, Sinope,

Abonuteichus, Amastris and Chalcedon, all of which are Hellenised.

Cappadocia

This very mountainous and ravine cut land lies north of Cilicia and west of the upper Euphrates river. It is a high plateau, a tableland intersected by lofty mountain chains. The region has had many overlords, from the Medians to the Lydians, the Persians and then the Seleucids. It is now a remote Imperial province. Once extending northwards to the shores of the Black Sea, Cappadocia now only encompasses the high interior of Asia Minor, with northern Cappadocia now a separate kingdom called Pontus. It has only four small hill-top cities; Mazaca, near Mount Argaeus, the residence of the Cappadocian ruling house, Tyana, Archelais and Sebastea. Smaller cities of some note are Melitene, Comana and Arabissus.

Cappadocia is a land of soft-rock cliffs and mountains, eroded over time by wind and water to create a spectacular landscape. In some places cones of soft rock have been hollowed out to create entire villages. A region characterised by steep-sided gorges, all exposing layer after layer of brightly coloured rocks, Cappadocia is also home to fruit and vine cultivation on a massive scale. It is a very fruitful region.

To the north Cappadocia has swallowed the ancient territory of Pontus, once a Persian satrapy, then a magnificent kingdom that challenged the might of the Eternal City. Pontus occupies the south-eastern shores of the Pontus Euxinus and that section of the Taurus Mountains behind it. Its greatest ruler was King Mithridates VI and many of its kings had that name or the name of Ariobarzanes.

Chaldea

Introduction: Chaldea encompasses the great cities of the Land Between The Rivers ('Mesopotamia'). Farming is the greatest industry - the river valleys are farmed intensively using a complex irrigation system of ditches and canals. Where crops aren't cultivated, palm trees grow or livestock is grazed. This is the source of Chaldea's incredible wealth. With little timber, stone or metal, the Chaldeans have to trade extensively. Their caravans trek out to the Decapolis and curve south to Phoenicia and Ægypt, or east into the Zagros Mountains. Cteisphon is the current capital of Chaldea.

The immense cities of Chaldea are built almost solely without stone, instead baked mud brick is used. From palaces to walls, temples to town houses, every thing is built in mud brick - since mud and straw are the land's greatest commodities. Towns, cities and villages have their own assemblies which any citizen of the community can join. Reed huts cover the marshes and are the homes of the local farmers and fishermen. Reed boats are used by locals on the rivers. Larger sail-boats ply great rivers between the trade cities. The people, villages and cities are very well organised by the current Persian over lordship and its efficient administration, and the cities are teeming with Chaldean civil servants, scribes and secretaries. Many work for the vast temples of the gods - the huge stepped-pyramids called ziggurats. Chaldeans know their place - they are 'owned' by the gods and are all his servants, so rebellion is almost unknown. All goods flow into the temples for redistribution and the rest is used in great trading ventures. The great gods of Chaldea are Marduk, Nabu and Ishtar.

The Land: Chaldea is called the 'Land Between The Rivers'. This is because it is a low-lying land crossed by three rivers, bordered on the north by the Zagros Mountains, the east by the Persian Sea, the south by the Desert of Lost Souls, and the west by highlands leading into a mountain range known as the Pillars of An. More than any other factor, the three rivers dominate Chaldea.

The foremost of the rivers is the Euphrates, which runs south-west out of the Pillars of An, and then due east towards Chaldea, and the Persian Sea. This great river is navigable nearly all the way to the Pillars of An. The second river is Tigris, which runs more directly towards Chaldea. The Tigris runs faster and deeper than the Euphrates, but is not navigable nearly as far. The third river is called Iltanu. It is the northern most of the rivers, which leaves cities on its shores more exposed to barbarian invasions from the Mountains of Kur.

The rivers flood once every year, in spring, when the crops are already growing in the fields, so their overflow must be controlled and used. As such, the inhabitants of Chaldea have become experts in the art of creating dikes and irrigation canals. This one fact of life has shaped Chaldea's society more than any other factor. To maintain this water system, inspectors must monitor all facets of the system, and large work forces must be used to keep the canals in proper working order.



Climate: Water is the chief concern of the inhabitants of Chaldea, but for all that, they receive very little rainfall.

Chaldea's year begins with summer, when crops are stored, and the flocks taken into the mountains. During summer, it is not unheard of for temperatures to reach 120 degrees Fahrenheit in the shade. The winds come in off of the Desert of Lost Souls, bringing not moisture, but a fine, dusty sand. As such, the inhabitants take shelter during mid-day in dark inner-rooms in their houses, or in cellars dug in the ground. At late afternoon they emerge to do what business must be done, and then sleep on their roofs in the comparatively cool night air.

In autumn the sun ceases to blast the land, the flocks are brought back down out of the mountains, and the crops are planted in preparation for the next spring's harvests. Winter is a comparatively cool time, when frost appears, in particularly cold years. For several days, the land might experience heavy rains, the only time during the year when this is possible, which can test the condition of the dikes and canals. Spring is a time of work, when the canals must be maintained and protected during the annual floods, and then the harvest is brought in, to be followed by a twelve-day New Year festival.

Resources and Trade: The soil of Chaldea is rich, allowing abundant harvests of food, but otherwise it is a very poor land. Being an alluvial plain, the land has almost no native sources of rock or minerals. It is for this reason that the people of Chaldea have become experts in building with mud-bricks made from the rich clay that they have in abundance. These bricks are hardened by being baked in the sun, but as might be expected, these bricks do not last very long. As such, buildings in Chaldea must be periodically demolished and rebuilt.

For more important structures, these mud-bricks are baked in a kiln which renders them much harder and durable. However, with so many clay items being produced in Chaldea, such as pots and important writing tablets, only the more important structures are built with kilned bricks. When the bricks are to be decorative, the bricks are glazed red, green or blue.

The gold, silver and copper, which the craftsmen of Chaldea are such experts in, are nearly all imported. The one exception to this is along the northern shore of the river Iltanu, where gold has been found. Some minerals are acquired from the wildmen tribes of the Zagros Mountains, but the hostility of these barbarian tribes make this an unreliable source. Minerals are also imported from Makan and Melhuhha.

Even in terms of trees, the land of Chaldea is not blessed. The only tree which thrives in this environment is the date-palm, which has a wood that is unusable for building. This makes wood of surprising value in Chaldea. For example, when a house is rented, the renter is expected to provide his own



door! Some merchants ply their trade by making an annual trip up the Euphrates and Tigris rivers with a donkey train of export goods to the mountains. There, they purchase wood and a few other items. The wood is built into barges, which are then floated down to their respective cities, where they are broken-up and the wood put to other uses.

The exports that Chaldea uses to support the continual importation of minerals and wood are manufactured wares. Textiles are made from wool and

flax, and are exported heavily. Also, the objects of iron, bronze, silver and gold that are created by Chaldea's smiths and artisans are in demand in most of the Desert Kingdoms.

City-States: The basic unit in Chaldea is the city-state. That is, a large city in Chaldea will control as much land as it can around its circumference, for its own enrichment. How much is decided by the Persian satrap (governor) of Chaldea. Small cities and towns are pulled into the sphere of influence of one of these large cities, and their inhabitants are considered citizens of the large city. Each city-state is analogous to a religious commune. In this case, there is no substantive separation of the temple and the government of the state. In the Chaldean view of their city-states, one particular god is the owner of the state, in much the same way that an absentee landlord is owner of his manor. All citizens of the city are servants of the owning god, and are equal to each other in that sense. The citizens have an assembly at which all men can attend. The elders of the city are able to control various factions and clans. Clan and family feuds form part of the colourful political life of the Chaldean cities. To a Chaldean his city is his universe. Overlords come and go, but the city, with its clans and guilds remains.

Due to the view of the city-state as belonging to a god, individual property, though existing, is not paramount. All citizens of the city-state are expected to labour for the city, and as such the god, whenever they are called to by the authorities. For most of the population this labour is in the form of working in the temple fields, and working on the system of dikes and canals that irrigates the land. For skilled craftsmen, some of their work in their craft will be for the temple-state. In payment for these

services, the citizenry is paid by the temple-government either in food, usually barley, or in silver. The temple maintains warehouses of grain, which are used for paying for services, and held in case of a drought.

Buying and Selling: The analogy between Chaldean city-states and a manor has many ramifications in the general economy. In general, the temple owns between one quarter and one half of all of the arable land, with the rest belonging to free citizens. The Persian king (through his representatives the tax collectors) will always be the largest land-owner, with the rest owned by various important people, who might be referred to as 'freemen'. The freemen maintain a large amount of wealth compared to the common people, but not enough for them to constitute a leisure class. That is, they still will work in their own fields, or in their own workshops. The land not actually farmed by the freemen is rented out to tenants, who farm it and pay rent in the form of a percent of the food that they raise on that land. Grain raised on the land belonging to the freemen is generally consumed by the people who actually raise it, with the excess being sold to the temple. Other foods may be sold at various gates of the city, which does not maintain a formal 'market-square.' Common foods sold this way include onions, cucumbers, dates, figs, pomegranates, sesame oil, and honey.

The other part of the economy is the workshops, or factories which are maintained by the freemen. These workshops produce iron weapons, bronze items (such as mirrors, shaving razors, and other metallic items), and clothing and textiles of all forms. Items are not generally sold directly from the workshops, but are also sold at the gates.

The Citizens: The citizens of Chaldea can be viewed as belonging to four classes. Those of the highest class are referred to as the 'freemen.' These are the land-owners, the overseers and the priests. This class owns all of the land, and all of the tools of production in the city-state. This does not grant them a tyranny over the entire populous, however. This seeming hegemony is balanced by the overwhelming number of the tenants, the power of the governor, and the dictates of the gods.

The second class is the tenants. These are the people who work the land of the temple, the Persian king and the land of many freemen. They also create the items manufactured in the workshops. Their lot is often hard, but the mixed nature of the Chaldean economy does allow them to build up wealth and perhaps move into the freeman class.

The third class is comparatively quite small, and they are the slaves. The slaves of Chaldea are most often enemies captured in battle, or commoners who went too deeply into debt, and voluntarily accepted slavery in payment of those debts. Slavery in Chaldea is not overly harsh, and slaves can work extra hard, and earn enough to purchase their freedom. This is not to say that slaves are tenants under a different name. Slaves are bound to whoever owns them, and the owner determines where a slave will work, and runaways are often branded on the face, or lose an ear as punishment. Slaves are easy to spot, due to the distinctive hairstyle they are required to wear.

Finally, there is a fourth class who are referred to as 'clients.' These are people who are not citizens of the city-state where they reside, and are not part of the commune structure. These people work for a wage, either for the temple or for a patrician, and pay taxes against

this wage. There is no real way for a client to become a citizen, but if they marry a citizen and have children by that citizen, then the children will automatically be considered citizens.

Literacy and Education: The only sources of formal education in Chaldea are the scribe schools maintain by the temple. At these schools (*edubba*), a master scribe (*umma*) teaches young men and women the art of being a Chaldea scribe. This process takes years, and cost a great deal of money. As such, only members of the free class send their children to school. However, after the education is complete, the literate individual can either become a scribe in the pay of the temple, a priest, a merchant, or perhaps an officer in the army. Therefore, education acts as the gate-keeper for the Chaldean social hierarchy. Only children of freemen can afford to be educated, and only the educated can operate in the freeman class.

Clothing and Fashion: Chaldea is a land of extreme heat, and as such, the natives have had to adapt their clothing to the environment. Coolness is the chief aim of Chaldean clothing, and linen is the most common material used. Open nudity is not prohibited in Chaldea, and people will often remove all of their garments when performing strenuous labour. In many ways, clothing is used to display the wealth of the wearer. Simple farmers often wear clothing of poor quality and labour naked, while rich patricians will wear fine linen clothing, dyed brilliant greens, yellows or scarlet. Footwear, while important, is not required in Chaldea. Those who wear footgear tend to wear simple sandals, while those journeying into other lands will wear boots of soft leather. Chaldeans have shoulder-length hair and often finely

curled-beards. Short little hats or simple headbands are common.



The most basic item of men's clothing in Chaldea is a linen kilt, one that extends from the wearer's waist to his knees. Sometimes, especially in the cold, the kilt is made from a combed fleece. During relatively cold weather, a further article of clothing is a shawl that is normally worn over one shoulder, leaving the other one bare. Some men shave their faces, especially the priests, who shave all of the hair off their body to ensure purity. However, most men grow their hair and beards long, combed and carefully curled.

Women wear a long, loose-fitting dress, caught at one shoulder, and hanging down to their feet. Long, dangling earrings and necklaces of stones and shells are the preferred ornaments, with the wealthy wearing khesbed (a magic stone imported into Chaldea), carnelians

and gold. To highlight their eyes, Chaldea women will often blacken their eyes with malachite. Unlike the men, Chaldea women wear their hair parted down the middle, braided, with the braids fastened around the head like a crown. Very young Chaldea children will often go around naked, while older children are dressed like adult members of their sex.

Seleucia-on-the-Tigris

This once-prestigious city sits on the left bank of the wide river Tigris. The city was specifically planned to act as the terminus for caravans travelling from Khorasan to Ecbatana and Media, and formed a perfect crossing point to the mighty city of Ctesiphon on the right bank. A magnificent Royal Canal constructed at great expense at Seleucia connects the river Tigris to the river Euphrates, and by linking these two great rivers has greatly transformed communications and trade in the region. Seleucia is no longer the vast city it once was, with sprawling districts and long straight avenues, but a dusty wind-swept town of hovels, wine shops and trading posts surviving in the lee of massively fortified but crumbling fortifications. The city was very cosmopolitan and a Chaldean ziggurat was once constructed by House Seleucus for the benefit of worshippers of the native gods. After it was taken by the Parthians and used for commerce and minting, its role declined. On the southern Silk Route, goods from Ecbatana passed into the Decapolis via the route through Chaldea to Seleucia or Ctesiphon. The founding of Parthian Vologasia, the increasing importance of the Parthian city Ctesiphon immediately across the river and the destruction wrought by successive Imperial invasions has hastened the decline of the old royal city of Seleucia.

Ctesiphon

City built by the Parthians immediately opposite Seleucia-on-the-Tigris, possibly for billeting troops. It was captured by Emperor Trajan around 150 years ago, but only after the Parthian general Pacorus had escaped. The daughter of Osroes and the golden throne were captured. Ctesiphon has eclipsed its Ionic rival Seleucia and become a powerful and wealthy city visited by caravans from the West and the East as well as delegations, Saracens, mercenaries, pilgrims, travellers and exiles. Ctesiphon occupies a crucial point along the Tigris.

Charax

Charax is a major commercial site within the Persian economic sphere. It's best-known son is the philosopher Isidore of Charax whose work 'Parthian Stations' lists the various useful and important stopping points along the trade route running from the Decapolis across to Osrhoene, across the Zagros Mountains into northern Persia, Hyrcania and beyond the Celestial Mountains to Cathay. Isidore was active during the reign of the Emperor Augustus. Unfortunately there is no mention of Charax in that work as the town is located on a much more southerly trade route. Isidore also wrote a larger study called 'Around the Parthian Empire'.

Charax is located on an artificial elevation between the Tigris and the Choaspes Rivers at the point where they meet, very near the Persian Sea. Pliny the Elder describes the foundation of the city by Alexander the Great. This 'Alexandria' is an uncertain identification, but a colony was most definitely formed there by the Seleucid King Antiochus IV as 'Antiochia'. The colony was later destroyed by flooding, but was restored by Hyspaosines who was the son of a local Saraceni ruler named Sagdodonacus after whom it took the name Charax. Under the Saraceni potentate, Hyspaosines, the surrounding country was rapidly conquered and thus was founded the kingdom of Charax.

The city is on elevated ground, and it needs to be, since the land of Charax is a land of shifting waterways, mires, sun-bleached swamps and lagoons. Both the Euphrates and the Tigris empty into the Sealand, the half-water/half-land miasma that is the kingdom of Charax. It is almost impenetrable to land attack, and thus a safe haven for exiles, refugees, traitors

and criminals. Local Chaldeans can trace their ancestry back to the beginning of the world and claim that the remains of Eridu, the First City, lie within the Sealand. The local economy is dependant on trade levies from caravans and ships entering the Sealand. Fishing provides much needed food and crops can be grown in abundance. For the poor Chaldeans living outside of the mud-brick cities, homes are made of woven reeds, as are mats, doors, baskets, shields and almost everything else one can think of! Long skiffs negotiate the narrow waterways and carry cargoes ranging from freshly cut reeds to a family on their way to a temple, goats ready for slaughter or a family's men-folk out fishing.

Cilicia

A province of the Empire in south-east Asia Minor. It is separated from northern Syria by the Amanus Mountains in the east, and from Cappadocia in the north by the lofty Taurus range. The important Iron Gates control the strategic pass within the province that connects the inland plateau to the Cilician plain and northern Syria. The Cilicians are reputed to take their name from Cilix, a son of Agenor who came to the land in search of his sister Europa and, abandoning his search, decided to settle there. During Achaemenid Persian rule, the Cilicians paid a tribute of 360 white horses and 500 talents of silver annually. Cilicia is renowned for its fearsome pirates. The coastline is dotted with coves and shelters where the mountains meet the sea, and the pirate fleets rest here during the winter months. Tarsus is the mountain capital of Cilicia, a Hellenised city that can boast a school of philosophy.

There are two main regions of Cilicia - Cilicia Tracheia (Rugged) and Cilicia Pedias (Plain). Pedias to the east is rich

grassland, well watered and well farmed. The Cilician plain is one of the most fertile parts of Asia Minor, and is cut by the rivers Pyramus and Cydnus. Flax, vines, olives and corn are grown in abundance. In the small town of Olba there once existed an ancient priestly dynasty that claimed its descent from the heroes Teucer and Ajax. The dynasty ruled for several centuries. Tracheia is a wild and mountainous district, its chief products are woven goods and timber for shipping. This latter resource is chiefly exploited by the bands of pirates that are well established along this rugged coastline. Cilicia Tracheia is formed mainly by the Taurus Mountains as they skirt the coast of the Middle Sea. Villages here cling to the thin coastline in the shadow of soaring mountains. In the valleys are tiny farming communities, tending orchards and herding goats. Paths wind through attractive gorges with rocks rising steeply on both sides, plunging the surging water-courses into shadow. Shepherd boys swim in the river below and frothing water cascades over rocky outcrops.

Tarsus

The capital city of Cilicia, which can claim as its founder either Triptolemus, Perseus or Heracles. The chief industry of the city is linen production, but Tarsus is a central staging point on the merchant trade routes. The inhabitants have a strong affinity for Heracles and keep up many shrines to their hero. The old royal dynasty of the now defunct Cilician kingdom was called the Syennesis, and it has given the city a proud and beautiful palace.

Taurus Mountains

The mighty Taurus Mountains form the 'backbone of Asia', essentially dividing the world into a cool northern and warm southern region (at least according to Dicaearchus, c.460 AUC). The range soars to an average of 2,100 metres and runs from south-western Asia Minor eastwards along the coast of Lycia. On the border of Cilicia the vast range throws off the Antitaurus which march north-east to meet the Pontine Mountains and approach the northerly Caucasus. Meanwhile the Taurus continue ever

eastwards, first throwing off a mighty southern range, the Zagros. The Taurus continue on through Armenia to skirt the southern shore of the Caspian Sea as the Elburz and on to the Paropamisus (Hindu Kush) and the mythical Imaus Mountains, finally ending, so it is said, on the shores of the Eastern Ocean at Tamus Headland.

Cimmeria

The land of Cimmeria is an independent kingdom, it has been free and unconquered for much of its history. It dominates the chilly northern shores of the Pontus Euxinus, and in particular a huge peninsula of land known as the Cimmerian Peninsula. Between this and the northern shore is an isolated sea called the Sea of Maeotis. The entrance to this sea is called the Bosphorus. The Cimmerians are an indigenous people, both warlike and savage who are related to an ancient tribe of fierce steppe nomads. The Cimmerians were a tribe of terrifying barbarians; blood-curdling savages who ran into battle covered in war-paint and accompanied by trained war-dogs. From 50 AUC onwards they infiltrated the Caucasus Mountains and began to ravage the towns and cities of Urartu, Assyria (northern Chaldea) and Lydia. The mountain streams ran red with the blood of their victims. The Assyrians (no stranger to horrible deaths) were shocked by the barbarity of their customs. They impaled prisoners alive on stakes, they hunted heads and took scalps, and drank their victim's blood from the hollowed out skulls of previous victims. It was the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal who finally defeated the Cimmerian warlord Lygdamis at the Iron Gates in 117 AUC. The Cimmerian conquerors were conquered by the Assyrian military machine - as tough and as ruthless as themselves. Many Cimmerian survivors became mercenaries in the pay of one state or another, others settled in the region of the Sea of Maeotis to establish the kingdom of Cimmeria. In 643 AUC

King Mithridates VI of Pontus allied his kingdom with Cimmeria to attack the other Asia Minor states and plan an attack on the Eternal City itself via a march up the Danube valley! The plans came to nothing, however. Pontus was conquered by the Empire. Cimmeria still remains free and untouched, an island of fierce barbarity fighting off Gothic raiders from the north as well as Sarmatian hordes riding in from the eastern steppe. Many Goths have plundered villages and towns on the northern shore of the Pontus Euxinus to steal galleys and merchant ships for use in wide scale piracy. This is how Goths reached Ionia and its capital, Athens. Some Goths, fresh from their forest homes, have manufactured great floating rafts able to carry hundreds of warriors, and set off across the sea without any sailing ability in the hope of reaching dry land. The Cimmerian chieftains and their king regularly raid the Goths and their temporary encampments, but the barbarian tide may be too strong even for the Cimmerian warlord.

Colchis

An ancient and obscure land rarely visited by outsiders. The River Phasis flows into the Pontus Euxinus from the Caucasus Mountains and this lush, green river valley forms the heartland of the Colchian kingdom. In early times the Ionian hero and sea captain Jason sailed the Argo and its Argonauts to Colchis in search of the magical Golden Fleece. Only this would restore his kingdom of Thessaly to its former glory. The Colchian king Aeetes refused Jason the prize, but the treachery of his own daughter Medea (a priestess of the witch goddess Hecate) saw Jason succeed and slay the Hydra that guarded the Fleece. The River Phasis has been a source of river gold, and is collected using the fleece of sheep, but Colchis is not rich through

this meagre resource. The current king, Phraates III is master of little that does not lie outside his valley, and the conflicts of the world rarely interest him. The land was once united with Pontus during Mithridates VI's attack on the Empire, but has since become once again a very isolated, mist-wreathed land of hidden dangers, dark forests and sinister secrets. The Ionian philosopher Herodotus claimed that the original Colchians were Ægyptians descended from the Pharaoh Seostris who came here and left behind settlers. The great city of the Colchians is called Aea and has within its walls a splendid temple to Helios. It is said that Colchians bury their dead women, but wrap their dead men-folk in ox-hides and expose them on platforms in sacred trees to be devoured by vultures.

Cyprus

The island of Cyprus has two great cities: Salamis (on the east coast) and Paphos (on the west coast). Paphos is the reputed birthplace of Venus, and she has a great temple there. The Imperial poet Virgil called Paphos the 'Navel of the World'. Other cities are Citium in the south-east and Amathus on the south coast, and in the centre of the island stands the old Phoenician mining city of Tamassus. The limestone mountains of the island have always been famous for their copper mines. There is a range across the northern shore and another along the southern, culminating in a Mount Olympus. Between the two lies a fertile plain. The Cypriots have always been of Ionic culture, but the island has often been conquered by greater powers, the Phoenicians, the Assyrians, the Ægyptians, the Persians and then the Ptolemaic kings of Ægypt and finally the Empire. Today it forms part of the Imperial province of Cilicia. With the drop off in Imperial influence in the region, and the Palmyrene conquest of



Cilicia, the island of Cyprus has become a safe haven for pirates of every kind. Some are Phoenicians ready to strip Imperial ships of wealth, some are refugees from Ægypt, others are Cilicians (keeping up a three-century tradition), but most are Goths, Germanic Vikings plundering everything they can. Cyprus plays unwilling host to these disparate and anarchic forces. City governments are breaking down.

The Decapolis

Ten 'sister' cities long ago made an alliance to defend one another and participate in a trade agreement. The greatest of these ten cities (or 'decapolis') is Antioch and this city dominates the hot land of Syria, the home of the Decapolis. Syria has never been a united kingdom, as it sits at a cross-roads and other powers have always dominated the land. Syria is a region of great wealth and agriculture (with rich wheat and barley fields), mineral deposits, springs and rivers. It is a land of warm rains, fertile valleys and mountain chains that is caught between the Middle Sea to the west and the desert to the east. North lies the barrier of the Taurus Mountains, and south the fertile landscape is dominated by impressive sea-ports (Phoenicia). The major river of Syria is the Orontes, which flows north through Antioch to meet the sea at Seleucia-by-the-Sea. For

millennia powerful caravan cities have flourished in Syria as traders have passed through, sought shelter and paid taxes. The people of this land are canny merchants all; thieves, con-men, sellers, cajolers and smooth-talking tricksters. The Empire billeted its three Syrian legions within the cities and this caused a complete loss of discipline within those legions - such are the comforts and distractions of the Decapolis!

The ten cities of the Decapolis are: Antioch, Emesa, Beroea, Hieropolis, Seleucia-by-the-Sea, Laodicea, Cyrrhus, Apamea, Europus, Zeugma.

Amanus Mountains

A mountain horseshoe separated from the Taurus range by the deep gorge of the Jihun. The Amanus are crossed by two great passes: Amanid Gates (Baghce Pass), Syrian Gates (Beilan Pass).

Orontes River

The chief river of Syria, 272 km long, set in a very fertile valley which has become the main route followed by both traders and armies.

Antioch

Antioch lies on the left bank of the river Orontes, 24km from the sea. As an Ionian colony city, it has a grid-plan. Most of the inhabitants are Aramaic, but the city also boasts a large Solyman population. - whose privileges go back to the days of Seleucus I. The city's wealth is derived from its crucial centre as a military and administrative capital, and its favourable position on the road from the deserts of Asia to the Middle Sea. The greatest local industry is wine production, but almost every trade and craft is practised within the city walls. Antioch is a constituent part of what is known as the Decapolis, an alliance of ten proud Syrian cities founded by House Seleucus that operate in concert. They refer to one another as 'sister-cities'. Antioch is by far the largest and Seleucia by far the strongest. Antioch is ringed by a huge defensive wall, and consists of four districts, each with its own set of fortifications. Thus the citizens of Antioch are doubly protected. Antioch is the metropolis of Syria and once the royal capital of the Seleucid Empire. In power and size it does not fall far short of Ctesiphon and Alexandria in Egypt. Seleucus I is reputed to have brought the descendants of

Triptolemus to the city and so the Antiochenes honour him greatly like a hero, complete with a festival that is held on Mount Casius close to Seleucia. On Mount Casius the monster Typhon overcame Jupiter in his battle against the gods and cut the sinews of Jupiter's hands and feet.

Down-river from Antioch (about 7km) lies the small town of Daphne with a large shaded grove (diameter 14km) dedicated to sibling gods Apollo and Diana. The Antiochenes hold an annual festival within this grove. The chief-priest of the sanctuary was an appointee of the king himself, such was the responsibility of the post.

The main road of Antioch is very wide, constructed with large stone slabs and flanked by pavements. On either side are pillared colonnades under which are all manner of shops, stalls and gatherings of people trying to stay out of the heat. Many of the city's inhabitants are artisans, farmers, merchants and slaves. Trade flourishes and the city plays a central role as a destination for camel caravans from further east. The city deity is Minerva Tyche, representing good luck. Statues represent the goddess sitting on a rock, with a head-dress of fortified walls. At her feet the god Orontes emerges from the river. The city stands close to the banks of the river Orontes which rises in Coele Syria and flows through Apamea towards Antioch, reaching the sea near Seleucia-by-the-Sea.

Seleucia-by-the-Sea

Seleucia-by-the-Sea at the mouth of the river Orontes is the port for the city of Antioch, which lies further up the river. It has become a powerful naval base for the Classis Syriaca (the Imperial Syrian Fleet) with garrisons, shipyards, warehouses, training grounds and slip-ways. Currently the fleet is in the hands of Palmyra. Antiochus I buried his father, Seleucus I, here and built a temple over the site. Surrounding it is a sanctuary to the cult of the dead king called the Nikatereion (belonging to the Conqueror).

Seleucia is sometimes known as Seleucia-in-Peria, the name of a neighbouring mountain which adjoins the Amanus. Seleucus had originally identified this city as his capital, but Antioch I, his son, moved the seat of the empire to Antioch instead. In those early days, the city was named Hydatos Potamoi (Water Rivers). Seleucia, as already noted, is a very well fortified city, and is thought to be virtually impregnable. The city is one of the most cosmopolitan after the Eternal City, Ostia (the

former's port) and Alexandria. The following cults have sanctuaries in Seleucia: Jupiter Olympias, Jupiter Coryphaeus (the mountain-peak), Apollo, and the dynastic cults of all of the deceased Seleucid kings.

Laodicea

Laodicea, in comparison, is a very beautiful sea-port with a sheltered, well-built harbour. The surrounding land is a great producer of many crops, but the local vineyards are of particular importance, stretching away up the mountain slope inland, almost up to the summit.

Apamea

Apamea is dominated by the towering mountain rising on its seaward side. The city has a well fortified acropolis. The city in general is well sited for defence, being located on a steep hill that sits in a bend of the river Orontes. The land all about is a flat plain, cut by marshes and water meadows suitable for grazing cattle and horses. Because of its impregnable situation, the city is sometimes known as Chersonesus (peninsula). House Seleucus once housed most of their war elephants at Apamea, as well as much of the army and thousands of horses.

Galatia

The Celtic tribes who ravaged Macedon and Greece in 473 AUC crossed into Asia Minor in 475 AUC and settled with the booty taken from the cities of the north-west. They were restricted to the sparsely populated highlands of the region now known as Galatia. Galatia is divided into three tribal districts, reflecting the Celtic tribes who have settled there. They are the Trogmi (who built Ancyra), the Tolostobogii (who built Tabia) and the Tectosages (who built Pisinus). Since the Seleucid kings could not destroy the Galatians, they harnessed their war-like tendencies, and regularly hired tribesmen as mercenaries. Today the Galatians are less war-like but still rowdy and uncouth, prone to following ecstatic religious cults. Galatia is still a part of the Empire.

Galatia occupies the most forbidding region of Asia Minor, the high undulating plateau well away from the coastlines. This plateau is a dry steppeland, which rises up to the Taurus Mountains in the south. This area is called Pisidia and is a southerly region of high mountain valleys and indigenous local people - hardy shepherds. It is bounded on its eastern side by Lycaonia, the land of high peaks and remote lakes, with its centre at Iconium.

Golden Meroe

The land of the ancient Nubians is a historical vassal of dynastic Ægypt, but now a powerful and confident kingdom of black-skinned men and women. Meroe stretches from the island of Elephantine (the southern border of Ægypt) to the stretch of the Nile called the Shendi Reach, where it divides into the White and Blue Nile. The Nile is vital to life in Meroe (both the kingdom and the capital of the same name). As it runs northwards, the Nile passes through different types of terrain. The Shendi Reach cuts through rich, well-watered grasslands. The Hamed Reach, next, is characterised by a grim and rocky landscape - dry and desolate. The next section of the great river is the famous Dongola Reach, home to the flat-topped Holy Mountain of Amun-Ra and the city of Napata. The Dongola Reach has fertile grasslands. North of Dongola, Meroe becomes dry and desolate sand desert, rocky wilderness and craggy outcrops that defy human settlement. Golden Meroe has a burning climate for the most part; rainfall is unknown north of Dongola. A caravan trail through the hostile Bayuda Desert connects Napata to the capital Meroe on the Shendi Reach, cutting out the tremendous (and impassable) river

rapids and waterfalls, and the rock wilderness of the Hamed Reach.

As its name might imply, Meroe is blessed with natural resources, despite its forbidding climate and terrain - in particular gold and copper, and fantastic building stone such as beautiful and holy granite rocks. From the dark jungles of Axum and the Mountains of the Moon flow a supply of black slaves, ivory, ebony wood, incense, exotic animals and other luxuries.

The city of Meroe is the capital of this Nubian kingdom and the royal residence. The king is actually an 'over-king' and his twelve viceroys or governors and referred to as 'under-kings' or Lords of Horses. Royal burials are conducted here, like many aristocratic burials, under small stone-built pyramids fronted by mortuary temples. Bodies are mummified and buried with grave-goods, Ægyptian-style. The kings of Meroe have long insisted on taking their human retainers with them to the Afterlife. Typically a long street like trench is dug and a procession of retainers, gifts, goods and cattle solemnly walks into it. To music and the cries of priests, fresh earth cascades down on the procession and it is buried alive. The Meroites do not hold human life as dear as the Ægyptians. Meroe sits on the east bank of the Nile and is a huge settlement that includes an impressive temple to Amun-Ra, approached by an avenue of stone rams, and a central Royal City. There are many more palaces and temples within this Royal City. Meroe is a centre of iron production, and it is a good region for crops and cattle herding. Large reservoirs (called hafirs) have been constructed which collect rainfall. Golden Meroe has a very organised society. Besides Meroe other great cities include Napata, Naga and

Faras. In warfare the Meroites employ war elephants, and many Nubian tribesmen as light archers and skirmishers. They war with the new and dynamic Sabaeen kingdom of Axum to the south as well as with the Nubian desert raiders. Spears and bows are the preferred weapons and their arrows are often poisoned. Many warriors have ritual scarring and an array of tattoos that denote experience and the number of hand-to-hand kills. Most military fortifications take after the mud-brick edifices of the dynastic Ægypt period.

Foreign visitors to Meroe are rare. Ultimate power lies in the hands of the king and the priesthood of Amun-Ra. It is said that the cult has power over the king and can compel him to commit suicide. Black women enjoy great status throughout the land, the queen is given the honorary throne name of Candace. Civil and religious control is in the hands of a few Meroitic families, and the varied regions are under the authority of a number of Pesatos - a Meroitic viceroy. A permanent frontier with Imperial-occupied Ægypt has now been in place for 200 years. It enjoys profitable commercial relations with the Empire.

Meroe has its own language, its own papyrus script and its own form of Ægyptian hieroglyph. Religion (like much of Meroitic society) owes a great deal to dynastic Ægypt and the gods of that mystical land have mighty temples constructed here in their honour. The temple of Isis at Philae, near Elephantine, the northern border of the kingdom, is a place of pilgrimage for many affluent and many poor Meroites (and even some nomadic Nubian tribesmen). Several Nubian gods-of-old are also popular, from Apedemak, a leonine war-god, to Arensnuphis to Sebiemeker - a god of creation.

Golden Meroe has become a very introverted state, trade routes now are under-used; the Empire trades directly by sea with Axum. The kings of Meroe are severe and dictatorial, crushing the spirit of their subjects with the iron-will of Amun-Ra. As Nubian nomads increasingly raid Meroitic villages, towns and camel caravans, the kings become ever more militant and defensive. Human sacrifices are becoming more and more common.

The Nubian tribesmen of the eastern wastes share the land with the mysterious Troglodytes, savage human-like monsters inhabiting the desert caves in the mountains along the shore of the Erythraean Sea. The Troglodytes have clashed with Imperial patrols in the past, as well as the military columns of Meroe.

Nabataea

The stunning capital of Nabataea is the rock-cut city of Petra south of the Dead Sea amidst the winding wadis of the harsh stony desert. The Nabataeans are of mixed Saraceni and Aramaean stock, and their home territory are the Shara Mountains south of Petra. For two centuries the Nabataeans have colluded with the Empire and assisted them in expeditions and military activities in the

region. Great merchants and long distance traders, the Nabataeans have always been firm with the Saraceni and patrolled the desert wastes with camel cavalry. This they back up with horse-archers and light troops. Now that the Empire has gone, the Nabataeans are a force to be reckoned with, masters of the desert, unwilling to tolerate nomad raiders or bandit gangs within their territories. One of their clever tactics is to play one Saracen tribe off against another.

Nabataea protects its trade routes with fortified posts constructed on hilltops. With their desert experience, the Nabataeans can conduct hit-and-run attacks in the nomad manner, and can also lure an enemy into pitiless desert terrain to be harried and attacked from fortified sites. With good quality light-cavalry and camel-troops, the Nabataeans enjoy excellent communications along their trade routes allowing swift and efficient policing. The Camel Corps operates for many weeks out in the desert, checking wells, underground cisterns, caravanserais and watch-towers, looking over travellers and nomads and reporting back. Lonely temples dot the wilderness roads, acting as places of refuge and as places to gossip and trade. The Nabataean network extends as far east as Wadi Sirhan and as far south as Medain Salih. Both were marked with fortresses. In the north the Nabataeans have established Bostra to protect the road from Petra north to Damascus. The northern interest of Nabataea lies in the direction of the commercial honey-pot of the Syrian Decapolis (the Ten City League).

The chief god of the Nabataeans is Dushara, 'He of the Shara', a god of the oases and palm tree, symbolised by rock cut shapes and holy stones. He is the Old King, and other gods are



worshipped including Allat (al-Uzza), Baalshamin and Amm - the Moon God. The Nabataean cities boast fantastic rock-cut tombs for their leaders and for wealthy merchants, tombs with elaborate ornamental rock-cut facades. Other cities of the Nabataeans include Bostra, Avdat, Shivta, Nessana, Ruheiba, Elusa and Mampsis. Each utilises wonderful water-channelling techniques, including tunnelled aqueducts, catch-pools and cisterns. These cities are impressive settlements of the Negev Desert, each an oasis of both water and humanity. But none compare to Petra - the Rose-Red City. Petra is a holy city with a small permanent population, but with a great population of pilgrims, wanderers, caravan drivers, mercenaries, nomad Saraceni and others.

The economy of the Nabataeans grew rapidly from the time of Alexander, and these people entered the civilised realm with cities and settled ways. They have always been traders, merchants and caravan leaders, and the exotic incenses of the southern lands have become their mainstay. This trade in the holy substance of incense - used to send a worshipper's prayers up to the gods, as well as for purification - has been seen by some of the Nabataeans as a holy calling. In Sabaea it is grown in communal orchards quite freely, by the time it reaches Alexandrian warehouses it is guarded by hundreds of men at a time. Incense is traded at an average of 25 denarii per kilogram, myrrh is traded at 50 denarii per kilogram. Since a camel can carry 300 kg of incense at a time, a caravan of twenty camels can arrive in Alexandria with 150,000 denarii-worth of incense!

The earliest rulers of the Nabataeans were tribal sheikhs, but with the cities and the new kingdom came a need for a single ruler. The most famous kings

ruled in the period just prior to Imperial conquest, and the dynasty ran from Aretas I to Aretas II, Obodas I, Rabel I and on to Aretas IV, Malichus II and Rabel II. Kingship ended in 859 AUC when the Nabataean nobles decided to become part of the Empire. Now they are independent once more and flourishing amongst the renewed trade of the Desert Kingdoms.

The Nabataeans love freedom, and do not use or trade in slaves. They are fantastic agriculturists, able to tease out plant-life from dry fields around their cities by their ingenious use of hydraulic engineering. The desert dominates life. The only true border to the kingdom lay to the north with Solyma, to the east and south it extends out seemingly without end.

King's Highway

The King's Highway is an ancient route passing from Phoenicia south to the Narrow Sea and the Negev Desert - leading to both Ægypt and Sabaea. It is used by traders, pilgrims, adventurers and armies and winds south from Philadelphia. The road first travels through the now defunct kingdom of Moab, an open limestone plateau of open, rounded hills east of the River Jordan. Passing through the dusty town of Madaba under the shadow of Mount Nebo, the Highway then crosses the Wadi Mujib, a vast canyon feeding water intermittently into the Dead Sea. The road twists and winds its way down 900m to the bottom of the wadi. Buzzards float on breezes at eye-level as the road descends southwards and it then rises again and is back onto wide green plateau of farmland and pasture. The path leads up the summit of Mount Shihan. In spring its slopes and the surrounding hills and wadis come alive with wild flowers. Nomads graze their goats on the land. The road passes through the tint town of Rabbathmoba and then Characmoba before following the hills to descend gently into the Wadi Hasa. Traditionally this marked the border of Edom, a land of small stretches of cultivable land between steep little valleys. South of Wadi Hasa is the Plain of Tafila, famous for its olive groves. The King's Highway then passes on through desert to Petra, and on to Aila and the Wadi Rhum.

Wadi Rhum

South of the heights of Ras an Naqabis south of the city of Petra is the Quweira Plain, an expanse of pinkish sandy desert some 600m below. Pinnacles and broken ramparts of rock are stacked one behind the other to a distant hazy vanishing point. This vast tract of desert is known as Wadi Rhum, actually a whole network of wadis providing the easiest passage for Nabataean caravans en route to or from the Desert of Lost Souls or the southerly realm of Sabaea. The region is characterised by great sandstone crags, rich red desert sands and bizarre rock sculptures, twisted and eroded by the wind. On the eastern face of the high Jebel Rhum are intermittent springs forming pools and waterfalls that support lots of wildlife in this desert paradise, from hares and foxes to ibex, jerboas, sand-cats and all kinds of bird.

Osrhoene

Osrhoene is a kingdom of great wealth of strategic importance to the Desert Kingdoms. The kingdom is situated on the fertile plains between the Upper Euphrates and the River Khabur (a tributary). Caught between Persia and the Empire, it has been a bauble to be bartered and fought over for centuries. The kingdom's great wealth is derived almost solely from trade.

Fantastic caravan cities are home to wealthy trading houses and merchant princes; goods from across the world pass through the gates of these cities and travel on to their markets. The cities have traditionally been independent (when not occupied by a foreign power) and some have existed for millennia. Today the Persian province of Osrhoene is an independent kingdom governed from the powerful city-state of Edessa. In the first days of Imperial domination (the year 691 AUC) the Imperial general Pompey set up the Saracen dynasty of Sheikh Abgar as king of Edessa and Osrhoene. His successors ruled until the Parthians later absorbed the city into their territory. With the demise of the Empire in the Desert Kingdoms, Osrhoene is seeking out its own destiny. One of the wealthiest families of Edessa, the Shoudahk, have seized power and its leader has proclaimed himself King Abgar X. The city has rallied around him, and the city-states have acquiesced to his rule. They feel he can provide protection from the menace of a Persia re-born.



Carrhae

This city in Osrhoene has a very long history. For centuries it has come under the domination of more powerful forces. It is an important cult centre of the moon god Sin and the god's temple there is richly endowed, being lavishly rebuilt by the Chaldean king Nabonidus, whose mother was a priestess. The city sits on the prime caravan route of the region, on the Bilichus river, a tributary of the mighty Euphrates. It was at Carrhae in 701 AUC that the Imperial general Crassus was killed in battle and his forces vanquished during a battle against the Parthians. Many of his legionnaires escaped into the desert.

Edessa

The current capital of the new kingdom of Osrhoene. It is situated on a limestone ridge, an extension of the ancient Mount Masius in the Taurus mountains of southern Anatolia. Here the east-west highway from Zeugma on the Euphrates to the Tigris meets the north-south route from Samosata to the Euphrates via Carrhae. Edessa was held successively by the Seleucids, Parthians, and the Imperials and was a mint under Antiochus IV, which suggests a degree of autonomy and importance in the Seleucid period. Coins of the Parthian ruler Vologases IV were minted there also. When Seleucid power declined as the Empire began to encroach, Edessa became the capital of a small kingdom, ruled by the so-called Abgar dynasty, generally allied with the Parthians, and under strong Parthian cultural influence. The Imperial philosopher Pliny the Elder called the inhabitants of Osrhoene "Arabes," and the ruler was also known as "Phylarch" or "Toparch" of the Saracens. It was upon entering Edessa in 867 AUC that the Emperor Trajan received the title Arabicus. From that time onward Edessa came increasingly within the Imperial sphere.

Palmyra

History

The site of Palmyra was once a tiny oasis settlement of desert nomads called Tadmor. Tadmor was first established over one-and-a-half thousand years ago in the days when Egypt and Babylon were great rivals. For almost endless centuries this watering hole remained just a patch of greenery in the sand until the rise of the Ionia and the Empire and the huge increase in merchant caravans crossing the deserts to bring in more

and more exotic goods for the rich and wealthy. These caravans brought with them Ionians and this little oasis town soon blossomed, growing rich on tolls, taxes and tribal endowments. Ionian styles dominated the new building works. Palmyra was growing. As the Empire began to dominate the West and Parthia the East, the tribal elders of Palmyra found they were able to exploit their independence and autonomy. It was able to remain neutral, although the Empire eventually began to overshadow its existence. The Emperor Septimus Severus gave the city the honorific rank of 'colony' in 953 AUC. Racially the Palmyrenes were desert-carved Saracens, culturally they were Persian with some Ionian influence, politically they were aligned to the Imperials.

Palmyra had suffered the attentions of the Empire as far back as the days of Marcus Antonius who laid siege to the city but failed to seize its fabulous wealth, which was spirited away across the dunes on camel-back. For many decades the prosperous trading city acted as a buffer state between the Empire and the kingdom of Parthia to the east. After the Emperor Tiberius dispatched a member of his family to Palmyra in 771 AUC the city was incorporated into the Imperial province of Syria. But the wide desert still isolated the caravan city geographically. The Palmyrene's looked east, west, north and south all at once. They have always found such allegiances difficult and have enjoyed a degree of autonomy envied by other Imperial cities. Palmyra was proclaimed a free city by its Imperial masters in 882 AUC. The lonely oasis town had been a staging post between the coast and Chaldea for over a thousand years. Under Imperial tutelage it prospered beyond every expectation.

The chief families of Palmyra organise the caravan trade that forms the life-blood of the city. The routes stretch out eastwards to the River Indigna and thence to the Gulf and Melhuhha. In recent times the military might of the merchant families has become so great that the city can challenge any force directly. The old king, Zafir died four years ago in a tribal dispute and his wife, the cunning Queen Zenobia became heir to the throne and regent until her son, Vaballthus, can be proclaimed king upon reaching manhood. Zenobia has declared herself 'King of Kings', a traditional oriental designation, and has taken a consort - Septimius Odaenathus, the general of her army. The Empire awarded her with the political Imperial office of consul, and after she led her forces successfully against the Persian invasion of 1005 AUC, the title of Augustus (in effect co-emperor, her ruling the East, outside of Ægypt and Asia Minor, on behalf of the Emperor). Queen Zenobia is no normal eastern ruler, nor is she a normal woman. She is proud, beautiful, intelligent - a scholar, politician, huntress, and desert warrior. She is a woman of fantastic ambition.

The queen desired to expand her territories, and the retreat of the Persian forces from their invasion seemed too good a chance to miss. Her camel riders, legionnaires and cataphract cavalry also crossed the Euphrates and seized the old Imperial province of Mesopotamia. Her redoubtable general (some say lover) Odaenathus quickly followed up this success by marching on Emesa, an important holy city in Syria that had backed the rebellion of two officers of the Empire. Emesa was seized and the Empire lost yet more territory. But Zenobia had taken Emesa in the name of the Empire 'to crush a revolt' and without more money, more resources and more troops there was

little that the Empire could do about it. Her ambitions were now given free reign, and as the Empire seemed about to crumble with the loss of Emperor Valerian, she launched an offensive against the remaining eastern provinces of the once mighty Empire.

As Gothic barbarians rampaged into northern Asia Minor, Zenobia sent out an army across the mountains to defeat them. It did not return until the ravaged provinces had acquiesced to the will of Palmyra. Queen Zenobia and her youthful son Vaballathus now stand at the head of a powerful and head-strong desert kingdom stretching from the high mountains of Cappadocia to the wealthy cities of Syria, down to the religious land of Solyma and south to Nabataea - home of rich merchant princes. North-eastwards her kingdom crosses the desert to encompass the fabulous cities of Upper Mesopotamia. It is unlikely the Empire will ever find the strength to recover these exotic lands. A new age has dawned in the east ...

The City Environs

Dominating Palmyra, the fabled 'City of Palms' stands the awesome temple of Bel, constructed in 772 AUC. A fabulous colonnaded avenue leads away northwards from the temple, through a monumental arch, and passes through the city. It acts as a major thoroughfare. To the left of the arch stands the temple of Nabu. Beyond the immense temple of Bel, set within its own spacious and colonnaded precinct, are quarters for the priests and the Palmyrene nobility, as well as the gateway that leads to the trees of the oasis proper, the source of much of the city's drinking and irrigation water. Impossible to enclose within the walls, the oasis could be abandoned by the city-dwellers under siege. Cisterns and underground aqueducts supply much of the city's drinking water.

Halfway down the wide central avenue are, on the left, the theatre, and next to it the forum. From the colonnade on both sides streets lead away to craft districts and residential areas. There are smaller temples there, too, including a meeting house for the Cult of the Anointed One, and a temple of Baalshamin. Before the avenue meets the city wall at the north gate, another colonnaded street cuts across, and the left-hand section leads to the west gate and the magnificent temple of Allat. Travellers entering the western gateway as they follow the line of an ingenious rock-cut aqueduct come face to face with the temple of Allat, standing boldly within the walls there. Standing next to this temple is the magnificent fortified palace of Queen Zenobia and her husband Septimus Odaenathus. There are also impressive fortified gateways in the city's north wall and its east. Peppering the ridges, rocky bluffs and cliffs of the main wadi running eastwards along the southern wall are hundreds of rock-cut tower tombs, the final resting places of many esteemed Palmyrene ancestors, many of them wealthy merchants. The road that follows the bed of this wadi is the main approach into the city and it rises up to pass through the south wall, to emerge at the top of the central avenue before the entrance to the temple of Bel itself.

The Military

Queen Zenobia has raised a troop of heavy cavalry from both her personal bodyguard and from the four tribes. At full strength this army might be able to field 1,000 heavy cavalry and 9,000 tribal horse-archers. The heavy cavalry consist of cataphracts, horsemen sweating in head to toe iron mail, riding horses clad in a similar fashion. Elite tribal nobility provide the cataphracts, lesser clan chiefs and their sons field horse-archers. The Palmyrene army is formidable, made up mainly of light

horse-archers and the heavy cataphracts - Persian style. Just like the Persians, the Palmyrenes use the horse-archers to break up and demoralise a foe, and send in the cataphracts in a shock attack to smash the weakened force. Like the Nabataeans, the Palmyrenes also have a Camel Corps dedicated to long range scouting and patrol of the trade (and potential attack) routes. The chief of the corps is the grandly titled Master of the Camels. Such patrolling has its uses in the stony desert. Where the trade routes enter steppeland, Palmyrene cavalry patrols take over the job of patrolling. To make the job easier forts have been established along the routes, in the wadis and ravines, and garrisoned by heavy infantry. It isn't just the Persians which pose a threat, but discontented Saraceni too.

The recent conquest of the Decapolis has meant that the Imperial legion stationed there (the III Legion) has been amalgamated piece-meal into the tough Palmyrene army. These legionnaires, from all over the Empire, seem quite happy to serve this new desert queen - she does have the stamp of Imperial approval after all, being given the legitimate command of the East during the Persian crisis.



Society

Four influential Saraceni tribes dominate the region around the 'City of Palms' (the Thamud, the Azad, the Tanukh and the Judham). They dominate the political life within that city oasis too. These fierce camel tribes provide troops for the city's powerful army. The city has become a desert metropolis, a place for Saraceni to settle and civilise themselves. Today Palmyrenes are a breed apart, cultured sophisticated city-dwellers with the heart and soul of their ancestors - the desert sheikhs. They are tougher, more enduring of hardship, simpler and more motivated than many other city-dwellers. They have a primal link with the desert that surrounds them, but retain a sophisticated urbanised air. Palmyrenes are dangerous. Their city is of Imperial design and architecture, as are many of the city's material comforts. But the Palmyrenes worship gods like Dushara, Allat, Arsu god of camels and Azizu god of horsemen, Saraceni gods. The costume of a typical Palmyrene is dressed in a long tunic with baggy trousers or leggings. Typical of Saraceni - even the most cultured Palmyrenes carry around a dagger ready for use, some carry a long sword too.

Pergamum

This ancient kingdom in Asia Minor is now a province of the Empire. It rose to prominence under Attalus in the century following the death of Alexander the Great. The last of the Attalid kings, Attalus III had no heir and in an increasingly Imperial-dominated world decided to bequeath his kingdom to Imperial safekeeping in 620 AUC. The city of Pergamum lies in Mysia about 75 km north of Smyrna. It is renowned as a centre of learning and culture and its Library almost rivals that of Alexandria. Such is the need for writing materials in Pergamum that the city became the centre for the production of

parchment (treated writing 'skin'). It is also a city well known for the famous tomb of King Mausolus - the Mausoleum - a fabulous architectural wonder.

The territory of Pergamum has been extended to cover most of western Asia Minor, much of its ancient territory, and the Empire officially designates the province 'Asia'. Everyone else knows it as Pergamum, recognising the power and might of the ancient city and its near-impregnable citadel. Much of the ancient kingdom (and the current province) is made up of captured regions, and it controls the gateway to the Pontus Euxinus - the land called the Hellespont. The local Mysians are related to the neighbouring Lydians. The Lydians have a high level of civilisation, great wealth and a history going back to King Gyges, five hundred years ago. Some say they are descended from the survivors of the Trojan War. Sardis is this region's greatest city. The more southerly Carians, around the seaport of Miletus have a tradition of sea-faring, their ancestors were islanders fleeing the tyranny of King Minos. They are brothers of the Lycians along the eastern coastline, as well as the Mysians. The chief Carian cities are Miletus, Halicarnassus and Priene.

Persia

The great kingdom of Persia is ruled by the awesomely powerful King of Kings from the old Parthian capital of Cteisiphon. Below him are the princes who govern his vassal states - the satrapies. Some of these princes are Parthian nobles, who have recognised the authority of the new Sassanid King of Kings and been allowed to remain in their posts. Others are heads of the seven Great Clans of Persia. These princes ensure that troops are available for war, and lead their own clan armies in battle. On the very edge of the

Persian empire, the satrapies form defensive frontiers against the nomad barbarians beyond.

There are five powerful Great Clans (the Suren, Sassan, Mihran, Zik and the Nahr Tira), and the King of Kings is also the leader of one of Clan Sassan. He commands complete loyalty from his own clan, less so from the other clans. The clan leaders form a wealthy aristocracy that owe their position to the loyalty of lesser clans and families much further down the social scale. The King of Kings is not entitled to hand over the crown to his son without the clan chiefs first expressing their opinions. They may veto a worthless choice. They may soon come to dominate the monarchy as the Parthian clans did before. At the bottom of the clan system are the petty nobles (dihqan) and village headmen, responsible for tax collection and organising the levy. The commoners themselves are no better than livestock, and are bought and sold as part of any estate, along with land and livestock. Their menial status is matched by their legal status - Persian peasants are treated brutally and both torture and trial by ordeal are common.

The right hand man of the King of Kings is the Grand Vizier - a powerful potentate who controls the Persian administration and its diplomatic affairs. Below him are the divans, the government ministries, run by nobles who excel in the field that each one covers. The Persian economy is sophisticated and diverse. Banking is well developed as is trade. Commodities from the edges of the known world arrive in Persian bazaars, including silk from Cathay, glass, amber, papyrus, pepper and other spices.

The estates of the powerful Persian nobility resemble fortified enclosures guarded by elite garrisons against possible peasant revolt. The nobility enjoy feasting, hunting, the women of their harem, the beauty of their cultivated parks ('paradises'), music, martial training, riding, archery and literature. Their life is good.

The armies of the King of Kings are led by a Supreme Commander, a post held by a member of the royal family. Lesser posts are held by the Great Clans and include the Commander of the Cavalry and Adjutant-General. The majority of the army is made up of heavily armoured cavalry ('cataphracts') provided by the wealthier nobles, and light horse-archers provided the less well-off nobility (as well as nomad mercenaries). The best of the infantry are the well-trained archers and slingers; the peasant levy is untrained and next-to useless - at times even being chained together to prevent spearmen from fleeing the battle! Fully-armoured elephants usually bring up the rear of a formation - these impressive beasts provide a massive psychological boost and act as mobile firing platforms for javelinmen and archers.

The better-trained and most hardened of the nobles join the elite Persian cavalry force - the guard cavalry (Asawira). Each guard cavalryman rides a superbly trained warhorse, and both rider and mount are clad in scale armour from head to foot. Even the rider's face is shielded by an iron face-mask. The sight of such a formation, glittering in the sun like martial statues of gleaming silver, row upon row, rank upon rank, is enough to send shivers of fear coursing through an opponent's army. The Asawira number six regiments and they are loyal to the King of Kings. Another unit formed of veteran foot-soldiers is the royal bodyguard, two regiments of

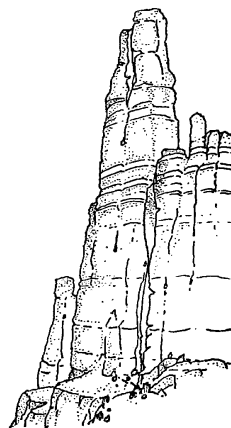
tough and blood thirsty troops called the Shahanshahai.

Persia is a vast land of many different terrains, many of them rugged and inhospitable. The kingdom is dominated by a central plateau ringed by mountain chains on all sides. To the north running parallel to the southern shore of the Hyrcanian Sea are the Elburz Mountains, containing the incredible Mount Damavand. Hyrcania is a wild and mountainous but fertile district; a country split between grassy plains extending to the shores of the Hyrcanian Sea and the lushly forested northern slopes of the Elburz Mountains behind. The Hyrcanian Gates are the safest way through the mountains. The land is hilly and inhabited by hill-tribes. Zadrakarta is the central city of the kingdom. Alexander the Great campaigned here and set Heracleides with a party of shipwrights to build a fleet of galleys that might explore the Hyrcanian Sea and prove once and for all whether the sea was truly a sea (as his tutor Aristotle had taught) or whether it was in fact a gulf of the Ocean.

To the west the Zagros Mountains divide the plateau highland from the lazy rivers of flat Chaldea. A high grassy plateau cut by seasonal rivers and fertile gorges is formed by the northern end of the Zagros Mountains and this satrapy is called Media. To the east of the Persian plateau are lesser mountains. There are two deserts in Persia, the harsh salt desert called the Black Desert in the centre of the plateau, and the sand and rock desert called the Desert of Sighs. Both are uninhabited and desolate. In the springtime and winter, small streams flow into the Black Desert, creating little lakes and muddy swamps. At other times the deserts are dry and barren. The region between the southern flanks

of the Elburz Mountains and the terrible desolation of the Black Desert is called Parthia, a wind-blown steppe of wild horses and wild nomads who settled here five centuries ago, and once controlled the entire Persian kingdom.

The hot mountains and high salt lakes at the southern end of the Zagros chain form the satrap of Persia Proper. Persia Proper is the original home of the Persian royal family, and the seat of the original Achaemenid dynasty. The cities of Persepolis and Pasargadae flourished here in lush, well watered river valleys. The region is still wealthy, rich and fertile - a place for Persian nobles to relax and enjoy the fruits of their luxurious lifestyles. Further east along the coastline are the Carmanian Mountains, a low warm hill-land with fantastic pasture and easy access down to the fertile coastal plains. This satrap of Carmania is focused on the Straits of Salmus, and the satrapal capital and wealthy port of Salmus.



The Persian plateau drops away to the east to a lower level and the satrap of Zarangia. Sited on the shores of Lake Seistan, Zarangia's capital is Zaranj (established by the Parthians). This lower land has a number of salt lakes fed by rivers gushing down from the mountains that rise up formidably to the east - the vast and frightening range of the Hindu Kush. Many of Persia's rivers

are seasonal, flowing only during the wettest parts of the winter and spring. There are lakes dotted across the plateau, but they are small, salty and prone to shrinking in the high heat of summer. Persia is so huge that different parts have very different climates. The table-land of the Elburz Mountains is cold and chilly, the southern areas near the Persian Sea are extremely hot, and elsewhere along the plateau the climate is temperate.

Satrapal Capitals of Persia

Arachosia - Kandahar
Aria - Artacoana
Atropatene - Phraaspa
Bactria - Zariaspa
Carmania - Salmus
Chaldea - Ctesiphon (see entry)
Charax - Charax Spasini
Elymais - Ahwaz
Zarangia - Zaranj
Gedrosia - Purah
Hyrkania - Zadrakarta
Isfahan - Isfahan
Media - Ecbatana
Parthia - Hecatompylos
Persia - Istakhr
Sogdiana - Marakanda

The plateau is generally grassy steppeland used by locals for grazing cattle and sheep. Nearer the arid deserts the landscape turns to thorn and scrubland. The seaward slopes of the Elburz are fertile and lush, as is the Hyrcanian plain on the shore of the Hyrcanian Sea. Deciduous trees stand proud in sprawling forests, and vines are cultivated. The Zagros Mountains are covered with a semi-humid forest cover of oak, pistachio, walnut and elm. Many species of wildlife live on the Persian plateau and the mountains surrounding it, including hyena, jackal, bear, ibex, wolf, leopard, porcupine, pheasants and partridges.

The Further Satrapies of the Persian Kingdom lay east of the central Persian plateau. From the most northerly, up on the grassy windswept steppes of Sogdiana, southwards to Bactria, Aria, Arachosia and finally Gedrosia, these provinces virtually form separate kingdoms of their own, since they are so far removed from the Persian capital at Ctesiphon. The distances involved are mind-blowing, but these Further Satrapies *are* part of the mighty Persian Kingdom.

Sogdiana is a frontier satrapy lying north of the mighty river Oxus, and is a region of dune fields, harsh scrub-land and rocky hills. It is unforgiving, cold and bleak. The sole city of note, and the satrap capital, is Maracanda. The eastern territories of Sogdiana rise suddenly to become the western end of the impressive mountain chain called the Celestial Mountains. South of the Oxus and the western tip of the Celestial Mountains lies the satrap of Bactria with its capital at Zariaspa. Bactria is a cool, temperate land of rugged hills and mountains that descend northwards to river valleys that can support many farming communities. But ever southwards the land rises higher and higher until the Bactrian trails lead high into the daunting snow-covered peaks of the Hindu Kush. This formidable mountain chain heads off east through the clouds. It is an extreme barrier to travel and there are only two passes through the entire mountain chain. South of the Hindu Kush a number of high river valleys support comfortable farming towns and these have become the satrap of Arachosia. The cities here are Quetta, Kandahar and Ghazni. Mountain passes eastwards through the Solomon Range lead down into the fabled river valley of Meluhha. Otherwise Arachosia turns south and south-westwards into sandy desert interspersed with salt flats and

rocky hills. This complex of harsh lands and wasteland (the Arachosian Desert) continues southwards until it reaches the high and hot Makran Mountains. Between the Makran and the sea lies the deadly Gedrosian Desert that caused Alexander the Great and his huge army so much hardship. This barren desert is a wind-scoured, red-rock wilderness. Queen Semiramis and King Cyrus the Great both attempted to cross this wasteland, and only just survived, the queen with twenty survivors, the king with only seven - or so it is said. Nothing grows in the Gedrosian Desert except thorns, tamarisks and the occasional palm tree. The burning grit swallows carts and horses, poisonous snakes terrorise walkers, laurel-like shrubs send animals mad, and a prickly cucumber squirts a blinding juice ...

To the west the Gedrosian Desert becomes scrubland and is home to the capital of the satrap, Purah. A fishing village called Gwadar exists precariously on the coast, backed by the awful might of the desert. Even further west a traveller will reach Carmania and is on his way back to the Zagros Mountains.

Ecbatana

Under the Parthians, Ecbatana was the satrapal seat of the province of Media and it stands on the Silk Route that leads from Aria to Rhagae to Ecbatana where the city controls the major east-west route through the central Zagros, the so-called High Road. From Ecbatana, the goods pass into the Decapolis via the Fertile Crescent or across the desert via Palmyra, or a more southerly route through Chaldea to Seleucia or Ctesiphon. Old Parthian buildings in the city include the citadel on the Mosalla hill.



Susa

After the death of Antiochus VII, the ancient Persian city of Susa reverted to Parthian rule. Susa was evidently among those cities that retained some form of Hellenistic city-state status under Parthian control. The Sassanid Persians continued to have a great deal of governmental administration operating from this grand city.

Phoenicia

Phoenicia once formed the highly prosperous heartland of the Seleucid Empire. Whereas the Persian Empire had its capital cities (and thus its focus) high on the Iranian steppe, the Seleucids focused more on international trade and commerce - and thus on the sea. Phoenicia is an ancient land delineated by the Middle Sea on one side and the Lebanese mountain range on the other. It is approximately 300 km long and barely 50km wide at its maximum point. It was the rich resource of its two great rivers (the Upper Orontes and the Leontes) which are fed by the snows of the Lebanon, coupled with the energy and drive of the people that turned Phoenicia from a coastal plain to the prosperous and cosmopolitan region it now is. The cedar trees of the mountains (although now found only on the higher peaks) are highly valued for the construction of both buildings and ships. Sandy beaches provide sand for glass production, and a purple sea-snail called the murex allow the production of precious 'purple dye'. On the plains and the lower mountain slopes are orchards, gardens and plentiful fields of grain. The inhabitants of the region, the Phoenicians, are able sailors and maritime adventurers, and have sent out many colonies that have grown up and prospered far afield (the most powerful of which was Carthage in the far west).

Phoenicia is a fertile strip of territory with several good anchorages that is backed by two mountain ranges, one after the other. The Phoenician climate



is warm with moist winters and hot dry summers. The mountain ranges are the Lebanon, and across the Bekaa Valley to the east, the Anti-Lebanon. The Bekaa is well-watered and deep, and supports thriving farming communities. The southern end of Phoenicia is a jumble of grassy, wooded basalt hills, cutting the land off from the hills of Upper Galilee. South of Damascus, on the fringe of the Stone Desert and dominated by the snowy peak of Mount Hermon, the Golan Heights overlook the lush plains of Galilee around the Sea there. The powerhouse of Phoenicia is the narrow coastal strip between the Middle Sea and the Lebanon Mountains. Water for irrigation is in ample supply from mountain streams, with the added advantages of simple canal systems with well-terraced mountain fields.

Aradus

Aradus is a powerful Phoenician city located on an island some 2km from the shore. Once ruled by its own dynasty of kings, it later became an essential part of the Seleucid Empire and was allowed to rule itself through an assembly, under Seleucid guidance. During the fratricidal struggle for supremacy between Seleucus II Callinicus and his brother Antiochus Hierax, Aradus sided with Seleucus, but had an agreement with him that if any refugees from his kingdom that should flee to Aradus, they could remain there without fear of extradition or retribution. These exiles made great donations

of territory to Aradus, greatly increasing the city's influence and when the conflict ended these exiles were allowed home. They would remember the kindness that the government of Aradus had shown them.

Aradus has always shown diligence, thrift and foresight, it has prospered through honest trade and it never collaborated with the Cilician pirates. The village of Baetocaece stands in the territory of Aradus and is the site of a holy shrine dedicated by Antiochus Soter to Jupiter Baetocaece. Fairs (free from tax) are held in the god's honour twice a month and the god himself selects his chief priest.

Damascus

A wealthy oasis town that nestles at the foot of Mount Kassium on the eastern slopes of the Anti-Lebanon range, within a large basin watered by the Barada River. It stands at the centre of a complex of lush oases.

Stone Desert

To the east of the cities of Phoenicia is the Stone Desert, a bleak basalt plain, with black basalt cliffs. Rain from the west scarcely penetrates and there are few oases. Large sections of this desert are impassable, especially the basalt region south-east of Damascus. To the north-east are forbidding black basalt lava wastes, plains covered with dark limestone and flint flakes, and a tract of sandy desert along the Wadi Sirhan reaching out toward the south-east and the Desert of Lost Souls. The Azraq oasis sits at the meeting place of these three types of hostile environment. Azraq is a wonderful paradise of birds and is home to lots of steppe wildlife, ostrich, wild donkey and antelope. At the centre of the oasis is a network of pools and seasonal streams.

A track runs east from Dira across the rich red soils of the Hauran Plain toward the old volcano of Mount Bashan. The Hauran is littered with basalt boulders from the volcanic activity of the mountain. The volcano is not one but many dormant volcanic cones. It is a strange, bare and wild landscape with many sombre black villages perching on the edge of the desert. Their inhabitants farm the slopes of Mount Bashan, but in a land with few trees, most buildings are built of black stone. The centre of the region is the Nabataean city of Bostra. There are more dead black volcanic cones near Shahba and to the north-west is a land called the Ledja, a giant island of solid lava (Safa is a similar site even further east). The Ledja is a horrible black nightmare sea of twisted rock, not frozen but curdled. It is the lonely lair of brigands and runaways.

Tyrus

Tyre is the oldest and next to Sidon the most important of the Phoenician city-states. It consists of an ancient town on the mainland connected by a causeway (built by Alexander the Great during his famous siege) to an island. The island originally only contained the temple to Melkart and a number of warehouses, but the two locations were unified into a single city under King Hiram, a contemporary of King Solomon. Tyre quickly outstripped Sidon, its mother city, as the greatest settlement in Phoenicia. It sent out colonies across the Mediterranean, to Sicily, Sardinia, Spain and North Africa (Carthage). The city paid tribute to first the Assyrians and then the Persians, but it proved impregnable. The Assyrian king Shalmaneser IV besieged Tyre for five years, and Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, once besieged the city for thirteen years! Eventually it was Alexander the Great who finally brought the proud and powerful city to its knees following his infamous nine month siege.

Today Tyre is neither as proud nor as prosperous as it once was, but it is still a prosperous and busy place producing metalwork, fine textiles and purple dye. Its merchant princes engage in commerce across the seas. The Imperial Syrian Fleet stations a large portion of its galleys here, and so many thousands of galley slaves are needed every year.

Sabaea

Beyond the Blessed Mountains (blessed with welcoming rainfall) of the southern deserts lies the exotic kingdom of Sabaea (also known as Sheba). The kingdom is rich in fruits of the field as well as cattle, dates and incense. It borders both the Erythraean Sea and the Persian Sea. Between these two the Sabaeen coastline is dotted with sheltered bays, safe harbours, trading cities, royal palaces, and rivers and streams coming down from the Blessed Mountains. These fruitful valleys open out onto lush plains by the sea. Water is channelled into canals and aqueducts and used by the rich cities as well as by the terraced field systems. The most famous crops are the myrrh and incense trees, a source of great wealth, and a holy substance used by temples across the world. Sabaea has dominated and absorbed its historical rivals (Hadramaut, Qataban and Himyar) and is governed by the constitutional monarchy of King Abkarib the Thrice-Blessed in consultation with a senate of tribal chiefs. Decisions are taken by “the king of Sabaea and by Sabaea”. His cities and towns are renowned for their luxury, town houses boast rich furnishings, there are vessels of gold and silver, houses, gates and walls are adorned with gold and silver, ivory and precious stones. The country people are organised into communes of peasants and herdsmen, while town dwellers live in quarters allocated to specific tribes, subdivided into clans. The king’s governors are civil servants, noblemen with advanced scribal and priestly education called ‘mukaribs’. They have very ill-defined and flexible roles.

The three greatest cities of Sabaea are Muza, Timna and Marib. Timna is the ancient capital of Qataban and boasts an amazing 65 temples. Its famous south gate is flanked by two massive towers of undressed stone. The city, like all Sabaeen architecture, displays many Ionian influences. Marib is focused upon the great temple of Awwam, devoted to the god moon-god Almaqah, which lies at its heart. The temple has a huge oval precinct 100m in length and an ornate portico and colonnade. Outside Marib are three great dams built to supply water, each has a wall 15m high. Muza is a great port where traders from across the world gather to exchange or ship pearls from the Persian Gulf, ivory, silk, textiles, rice, pepper, slaves, monkeys, gold and ostrich plumes. These products are sent north through passes in the Blessed Mountains by caravan. Sabaeen merchants are busy men! The Sabaeen priesthood is highly revered. Worshippers make pilgrimages to holy temples and sacrifice both animals and incense. There are many taboos to be followed and those who break them must pay for a written confession to inscribed on a bronze plaque and hung within the temple. Athtar is the Morning Star, Sin the Moon and Amm is a powerful sun goddess.

In war the Sabaeans rely greatly on Saraceni mercenaries to do much of the fighting for them. These nomads also hire on as caravan guards and guides for the merchant expeditions. Saracens corrupted by the wealth and extravagance of Sabaea borrow from wealthy merchants of the towns, get into debt and must sell themselves into slavery. Some foresee the disintegration of the tribes by this iniquitous process. Large and prosperous markets are springing up wherever new trade routes

happen to cross such as those at Ukaz, Medina, Mecca, Ta'if (a hillside resort south of Mecca) and also throughout the Wadi l-Qura (the 'Wadi of Towns') - a continuous line of oases in the northern Hejaz, many with settlements of Solyman colonists and farmers as far south as Medina.

King Abkarib, like Sabaeen monarchs before him, would love to unite the Saraceni people (distantly related to the Sabaeans) under a Sabaeen banner and go forth into the world as an all-conquering power beside the Empire and Sassanid Persia.

Solyma

The former Imperial province of Solyma is a land with a proud and defiant religious tradition, a tradition that stretches back to the days of the first ruler, King Saul, twelve centuries ago. Dominating the lives of the local Solymans (and expatriate Solymans of whom there are very many in Antioch, Alexandria and elsewhere) is their deity, the Nameless One. The Nameless One has no image, and recognises the existence of no other god or goddess - not even the divine Emperors of the Eternal City (a strange belief, since of all the gods, the Emperors require the least faith to believe in - for they patently exist on earth and can be seen and touched). It is a strict authoritarian god that demands obedience and loyalty, that has set the Solymans a great number of religious rules and customs to be followed daily. The Nameless One is a jealous god that is angered by the worship of other deities. His only ritual object is the menorah, the crescent-shaped, seven-headed candlestick.



The Solyman people had previously been a nomad tribe of shepherds, a tribe that escaped bondage in Ægypt and fled into the desert behind the first great Solyman leader - Moses. Much later the Solymans settled in the land they now occupy. The Kingdom of Solyma was first established by King Saul. His successor was David, and *his* successor the wise King Solomon. A succession of warring kings followed until Solyma was conquered by the Empire and organised as an Imperial province. Now that the Empire has receded, the aristocratic priesthood of the Nameless One (a wealthy and privileged group called the Sadducees) is in control. One of their number, the high priest, is virtual monarch of Solyma, and he rules with the help of the Sanhedrin - the wise council of elder priests. The Sadducees, as a group, claim descent from Zadok, the mighty priest of King Solomon. The capital is the ancient city of Jerusalem (now rebuilt and known only as Hierosolyma) It boasts a fabulous Temple to the Nameless One on the hill called the Temple Mount. This Temple is the centre of every Solyman's universe. The only place that their god visits earth.

The Solymans have hated the Empire and continually fought against its interference in their religious customs. In 784 AUC a Solyman terrorist called

Barabus was to be executed for leading his cult of assassins (the Zealots) in a crusade against Imperial tyranny. He survived to keep his sect going, when a magician calling himself the Anointed One was crucified in his place. The Solymans openly rebelled in 819 AUC and suffered terribly for their pride. When the Solymans rose up again under the Emperor Hadrian, the legions marched in to sack the capital city Jerusalem. The Emperor rededicated their Temple to Jupiter and he slaughtered tens of thousands of Solymans. Gradually, though, Solymans returned to the city (now called Hierosolyma) and were later able to rededicate the Temple to the Nameless One.

The typical traveller to Solyma (and Hierosolyma) will find a whole range of strange customs and rituals to cause confusion, embarrassment and frustration. To avoid such hassle, the Adventurers are advised to use a guide or meet up with a friend who can guide them through the culture without causing offence.

The land of Solyma has a fairly distinct geography, bordered on the west by the Middle Sea, the east by the Dead Sea and the River Jordan which flows into it from the north, on the north by the Lebanese Mountains of Phoenicia, and to the south by the harsh and stony Negev Desert. In general Solyma is a fertile land, relying on rainfall to ensure its crops flourish. But the dry wilderness and drought is never far away.

The land of the southern hills in Solyma adjacent to the Dead Sea is called Judaea it and includes the bleak Judaeian Hills west of Hierosolyma that lead up to the Mount of Olives and Mount Scopus, before dropping down again to the desert-like Wilderness of Judaea. It

is a region of tough shepherds and poor villages bypassed by all of the major trade routes, which have either followed the coast or turned inland to go around the Dead Sea. In the south, along the coastline of the Middle Sea, the sand-dunes have encroached (ancient Philistia); further north the coastline is very fertile and corn, olives and vines are cultivated. Even further north along the coast as far as the headland of Mount Carmel lies the Plain of Sharon, a marshy swamp with reed beds and impenetrable and lush vegetation. Running north to south down the middle of Solyma are the Shephelah, a range of hills that support vines, woods and fruit picking; behind them to the east rises a limestone ridge which rises higher and higher. The Shephelah form the backbone of the land, and are cut by the important east-west Jezreel Valley, giving access from the coast to the interior through these hills. This important valley meets the sea at Mount Carmel and the ancient site of Megiddo. The northern tip of the Shephelah lies between the sea and the Sea of Galilee. The highest point here is Mount Tabor. The region to the north-west of the Sea of Galilee is called Galilee and is an area of well cultivated highlands, well forested and fertile. To the north near the Litani gorge Galilee is a high tableland with springs and glades and plenty of rich farmland.

River Jordan

The River Jordan is a fertile barrier, flowing southwards first into tiny Lake Huleh through swamps and reed beds, then through the Sea of Galilee and into the Dead Sea. It has a strong and even current with high banks overgrown with willow and palms. Land is fairly desolate on both sides of the Jordan. East of this important river rises a steep escarpment up to a plateau that shades away into the Desert of Lost Souls.

Negev Desert

A huge triangular area of rocky desert cut by wadis. A rough deeply eroded wilderness with cultivation only really possible around the oasis of Beersheba. The desert is criss-crossed by the hardy Nabataeans and their wilderness settlements are dotted here and there.

The Tribes

On the fringes of the Desert Kingdoms exist a number of great nomad confederations, a mass of disparate tribes that continually threaten, raid and menace the settled lands. Sometimes these tribes live in harmony, at other times they declare war. Most of the time these barbarian hoards provide a continual state of 'nuisance'.

Libyans

When the mighty city-state of Carthage in Africa was conquered by the Empire, the only forces outside of Imperial control were the Libyan tribes beyond the Atlas Mountains. They have ever since fought the Empire's attempts to subjugate them. Some went over to the Empire and have fought as mercenaries for the legions. Africa is the Imperial name for the hot and dry desert-land south of the Middle Sea. The African coastline is fertile and heavily cultivated - it is a prosperous land of farms and cities. Inland, Africa is a terrifying desert of sand dunes and rocky plains. Few travel into the African wilderness, none return - some say that Libyan tribesmen can navigate this sandy wilderness on camel-back, and murder all strangers ...

The dark-skinned Libyan tribesmen of Africa have shaved heads, and sport black pointed beards; often the hair at the back of their heads is in long dreadlocks. The basic social unit is the 'ikh', a clan consisting of several

families. Two or three 'ikhs' inhabit a village, and around twelve villages form a tribe with its own lands. When faced with a great threat the tribes may come together to form a 'soff' - a tribal confederation under an elected military leader. The mountain villages provide a simple, settled lifestyle, protected by passes and the villages themselves being guarded by tall wooden towers. Mountain Libyans (Mauretani) fight on foot and know the mountains well.

On the dry African steppe the tribes are horse-borne (Numidians) and fiercely proud of their independence and freedom. They ride bareback with no reins, just an informal nose rope. Waterskins are slung under the horse's belly. These tribes fight as irregular cavalry. Each tribal nobleman is an expert horseman and warrior, and is followed into war by his servants and bearers. The best tribal troops are horsemen, each one a farmer or clan leader. Libyan horsemen are brave, but superstitious, mobile but unreliable. The steppe tribes can retreat to mountain strongholds if need be, and can carry out ambushes and lightning raids on horseback. Libyans have also been known to tame elephants for use in war and for ceremonial occasions.

The desert Libyans (the Garamantes) also use camels, and can make them kneel in a huge defensive circle to act as a shield against attackers. Enemy horses fear the camels. Other animals are roped together to create an inner barrier, with caltrops scattered outside the main circle. Spearmen defend this fortified encampment, and javelin-men man the perimeter. Libyans of the desert (Lamtuna) use large rectangular leather shields and prefer to cover their faces with veils and hooded cloaks. All Libyans wear soft sheep or goat-skin cloaks and long, flowing un-belted tunics reaching to the knees. The

Libyans use captured Imperial swords, broad-bladed javelins and spears. Garamantes spears have strange 'cut-out' spearheads.

Goths

The Goths are a menace to the Empire and to the most northerly of the Desert Kingdoms. They are northern barbarians hailing long ago from the shores of the German Sea, and having migrated southwards through the dark northern forests over the past century. The Goth confederacy is made up of many disparate clans, warrior bands, rogue tribes and mercenaries. They are tough, merciless and uncultured. The self-styled 'King of the Goths is Kniva - a huge and terrifying barbarian warlord. Their frequent raids over the last twenty years have forced many towns to erect sturdy walls, but with no time or money, many towns have had to reuse pillars, monuments and tombstones, which have been ripped up without ceremony.



Some Goths are mounted, but most go on foot. They move ever south and eastward with their great 4-wheeled wagons, and form up into a defensive laager when attacked. The chieftains reward their Goth followers with the spoils of war - horses, cattle, slaves, weapons and food, to form a warrior-elite. The most successful chieftains thus gain great numbers of retainers. These warriors will do all of the fighting for a successful tribe. The Goths favour the longsword, a weapon ideal for the cavalry raiders that typify the best of the Gothic hit and run

raiding parties. These riders are often armoured. Lesser warriors are common fighters, fighting on foot and usually unarmoured. Goths are a tall, muscular people with flowing blonde or red hair. In past times the Gothic 'nation' was separated, tradition has it that during their early migrations the breaking of a bridge sundered the Gothic tribe into two. The Ostrogoths marched eastwards, the Visigoths westwards. They have never been reunited since. So goes the story.

The Goths emerged out of the forests onto the Scythian Plains to meet and fight with the barbaric Sarmatian nomads as well as the more settled Cimmerians. When they reached the Pontus Euxinus many Goths stole galleys and began raiding ports on the coastline. Some manufactured great rafts that could hold entire clans, their horses, war gear and plunder and set off into the great unknown. The high point of Gothic expansion must surely have been the sacking of the city of Athens in Ionia and the sea-borne raids throughout the Aegean Sea three years ago.

Saracens

According to Ionian philosophers the Saracens have lived in the arid lands they now occupy (the Stone Desert and Desert of Lost Souls) since time immemorial and no-one can recall that any other people had been there before them. The home of the Saracens is vast, sparsely populated and has very little rainfall. It is a huge desert. In some places it has not rained in the memory of man. The deep desert extending out to the south-east is called the Desert of Lost Souls and is characterised by dunes rising up to great heights; it includes the Nafud desert and the Al-

Khali Desert. Other areas of the Saracen homeland are covered by old lava fields and dry river beds (especially the Stone Desert of the north-west).

Saracens are nomadic and pastoral, herding camels and goats or sheep from pasture to pasture. In oases there are small settled populations that thrive where trees, shrubs and bushes and crops grow. Some agriculture is possible and it produces lots of date palms and various fruits and vegetables. These oases are isolated in a sea of desert - the realm of the nomad Saracens. The oases dwellers buy protection from the nomad tribes in service or in kind; this extortion is laughingly called the khuwwa or 'brotherhood tax'. The other form of tribal-oases interaction is honest trade. The camel covers up to 90 km in one day and is reputed to go without water for up to 20 days (more if green fodder is available). The trade caravans provide a link between the Fertile Crescent and Sabaea (beyond the Happy Mountains), carrying goods from Meluhha, Axum and the Far East as well as from all over the Middle Sea. Saracens take a toll on everything passing through their territory. A number of markets and fairs have grown up, some permanently by a spring or water course or religious sanctuary. These camps soon become scattered townships ruled by chiefs (Sayyid) of the tribes who rule their wandering kin from such a settled place. There is a principle of equality within the tribe. Elected leaders are called Sayyid - a ruler who needs to keep up his prestige. Obviously, some tribes are richer than others, but a period of sustained drought could impoverish them all once more. A number of tribes (especially those with some degree of iron-working capability) are scorned by the others as low-caste. The Saracens

admire men of eloquence, especially when such eloquence is displayed when speaking with the tribal council or giving a quick answer to an awkward question. Sages and poets are highly thought of; oratory contests between rival tribes are usually held at the nomad fairs.

A popular Saracen past-time is the ghazu or raid. The aim is to steal camels and other livestock from a rival tribe without loss of life to either side. These vendettas and rivalries are very important and keep the Saracens in a constant state of military excitement. Saracens are realists. Almost continual hunger and thirst drives them on to great feats and greater instances of endurance. The Imperial, Ammianus Marcellinus wrote: "I would not wish to have them either as friends or enemies." They hold honour above all things, even above religion, and are devoted to courage, endurance, loyalty, generosity and hospitality. Insults and the consequent loss of honour are the quickest way to anger any Saracen. Every Saracen warrior believes that only Fate itself is the limit to the honour he can achieve. Long hair is popular amongst the dark-eyed Saracens, and they favour trimmed beards.

The Hejaz Mountains running south down the coastline of the Erythraean Sea form a trade corridor that avoids the most barren deserts of the Arabian interior and provides easier access to Sabaea. A famous wadi called Wadi l-Qura ('the wadi of the towns') is home to a continuous line of oases in the northern Hejaz as far south as the oasis of Medina. The Wadi of the Towns has many Solyman colonists now working hard as farmers in this dry and hostile environment. One of the oases on this route is Mecca. Ta'if is south of Mecca and forms a hillside resort full of fruits, vegetables and wines for Meccans. The

settled Saracens are dominated by sharifs, noble Saracen families who exercise local authority. Mecca is ruled by the Quraysh, for example, a clan that is also the traditional custodians of the Khaaba shrine, the holy stone that is dedicated to Allat, the consort of Dushara.

Sarmatians

The Sarmatians are a wild nation of horse nomads that dominate the grasslands of the Pontic Steppe, north of the Pontus Euxinus. Emerging out of the east at the time of Alexander the Great, they lived in a state of rivalry and war beside the equally barbaric Scythians. Soon the Sarmatians vanquished the Scythian tribes and began to dominate the region. Short and pale-skinned, the Sarmatians live in the saddle of their rugged steppe ponies. They live by herding horses and from boyhood each Sarmatian, warrior not, is an excellent rider. Their preferred weapon is the composite bow and this can be wielded with consummate ease by Sarmatians in the saddle. It is said they eat, sleep, work and even relieve themselves from horseback. A Sarmatian tribe goes to war as a unit of light cavalry, a unit with incomparable speed, mobility and endurance. Chieftains and their families go to war in scale armour suits and wielding long lances. This heavy cavalry has the advantage of the metal stirrup, a bizarre new Sarmatian invention that has yet to catch on elsewhere. These shock troops, with their armoured horses, break up enemy infantry formations that have been demoralised by continual raids by the horse archers. They have no need of shields - their magnificent armour is their shield.

Sarmatians despise weakness, cowardice and the soft trappings of civilisation such as bath houses, writing, exercise, warm wine, soft silks and

elaborate temples full of incense and corpulent priesthoods. The art of war is civilisation enough for any Sarmatian and his loyal war-band. These warriors are competing for manly honour and usually take heads in combat. If not heads, then scalps. A test of manhood usually follows back in camp, with the victors drinking the blood of the vanquished from the upended and hollowed out skulls of previous victims. These head-hunters and skilled leather-workers may also fashion bow-cases, moccasins or headgear from the flayed and sun-dried skin of an enemy warrior. These guys are primitive, brutal and barbaric. But saying that, they still retain a stunning skill in bronze-work, leather craft and other arts. They are religious and devout, meeting seasonally at burial mounds (kurgans) where ceremonies to the ancestral dead are carried out. The great difference between Sarmatians and Scythians is that the Sarmatian women-folk fight alongside their men on horseback! Indeed, no Sarmatian maiden can wed until she has slain an enemy in battle! Once they have done so, the female devotes her life to the tent of her husband and forsakes the martial life. And so the warrior women of the Amazon tribe were born: a wild and unforgiving clan of Sarmatian women that fled the Sarmatian tribe to become reclusive mercenary warriors, unwed Sarmatian virgins dedicating their lives to the slaughter of their enemies.



Sarmatians move with their horse herds and their ox-carts carrying huge round leather tents and supplies. Traditional costume consists of baggy trousers and long-sleeved tunic, both vividly colour-

ed and embroidered, soft pointed caps, and soft boots. A Sarmatian has a short pointed beard and long braided dark hair. Besides bows and spears, the Sarmatians favour battle-axes and short-swords.

Free Mercenaries

Sons of Sobek

These Ægyptian peasants have turned bandit and also hire themselves out as mercenaries. They often use legionary equipment captured from Imperial soldiers, but also manufacture their own armour (equivalent to leather) from crocodile skin. The Sons of Sobek have abandoned their home province, never to return. They are a decent bunch of men, but perhaps a little strange (they revere Sobek the crocodile god - and they are Ægyptian, after all ...).

Myrmidons

The Myrmidons are nearly all former gladiators, mostly freemen, who were able to escape from the city of Trapezus on the Euxine Sea as it was being destroyed by Gothic raiders. They have been travelling ever since and making a good living hiring out as mercenaries and bodyguards. These men (and women) are cool and calculated, professional and cold. The Myrmidons are named after the loyal fighting brotherhood that followed Achilles to the siege of Troy.

Dark Brotherhood

These thieves, murderers, cult criminals, army deserters, runaway slaves and others, have formed a rough-and-ready brotherhood - a tough mercenary company. It is as unpredictable as it sounds, but it can be very effective. The Dark Brotherhood can be very intimidating, although they are not the most reliable or loyal of

employees. The Brotherhood uses a varied mix of Eastern weaponry.

The Jackals

The Jackals are displaced Saracens from the northern tribes, victims of Palmyrene expansion and domination. They are highly experienced and skilled in desert operations, utilising camels, bows and all the trappings of caravan traders and Eastern merchants. They are cunning and treacherous, but also highly effective, being able to attack a city by entering it in disguise as just another small caravan.

Secret Societies

There are several societies in existence across the Desert Kingdoms that create bonds of unity between different people doing similar things in different places. These people form close-knit brotherhoods which vow to help one another and to respect one another's rights. Loyalty to these secret societies cuts across any cult or kingly loyalty. A few of the most important of these secret societies are:

Amemets

The Amemets are Egyptian killers naming themselves after the Amemet or 'Devourer' - the supernatural monster that devours the hearts of impious Egyptians in the Underworld. The cult operates on a very loose basis without a formal hierarchy of any kind. There are gang chiefs and initiates, but not much organisation past that. The Amemets hire themselves out as assassins, strong-arm boys, spies and thugs of many colours. They once flourished during the brief Persian occupation six-hundred years ago as rebels and guerrilla fighters. Once the Ionians took over and established order, the Amemets became a mercenary organisation. The new landlord, the

Empire, never had any use for mercenaries and under Imperial rule the Amemets have gone (literally) underground. Often they become the weapons of some inter-governmental feud. They are based in the old catacombs and tunnels of Alexandria, their legitimate centre under the Ptolemaic kings. Their leader is Zozer, a seasoned and clever fighter and street politician.

Moloch

This was the fire-god of the ancient Moloch, a desert tribe living east of the Dead Sea. Today the worship of Moloch only survives in secret, kept alive by fanatics. Living sacrifices are made, men, women and children cast screaming into the flames. Moloch is a terrible and destructive cult. Many hundreds of years ago, its high priest called down fire and brimstone upon the twin cities of evil, Sodom and Gomorrah during a bitter war. The cult's evil priests are Fire Wizards.

Men of Zoar

Also called 'the Sodomites', this sinister cult of killers and sexual deviants are descended from the survivors of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah - the twin cities of evil. It is a godless cult and rootless, and, like the Thuggee cult of 19th century India, its members travel the caravan routes searching for suitable victims. On the trail the Men of Zoar commit atrocious crimes, horrific sexual murder and mutilations. They rank themselves according to the number of kills they have committed. Some operate alone, but it is more common for these sadists to operate in small groups. Tradition demands that they bury their victims and hold a small feast over the site - the campfire helping to hide the presence of the burial. Victims are chosen seemingly at random and can be men

only. Women and children are never harmed, although no-one knows why. The Men of Zoar believe that each act of sexual ecstasy brings them closer to Heaven. In a world where every human being pays homage to the gods and recognises their power, the Men of Zoar are unique in their dismissal of the gods. It is rumoured that any man who turns away from the gods is destined for a life as a Man of Zoar, but this may be a cautionary moral told by priests. Once a year all of the Men of Zoar come together at an agreed site somewhere on the King's Highway (the Imperial road running north to south along the desert edge east of the Dead Sea) to carry out ritual murder and discuss their beliefs as well as more earthly problems. They then meet up again in the ruins of Sodom or Gomorrah. When not 'on the trail', Men of Zoar have normal lives, normal professions, wives and children.

The Cult of Sutekh

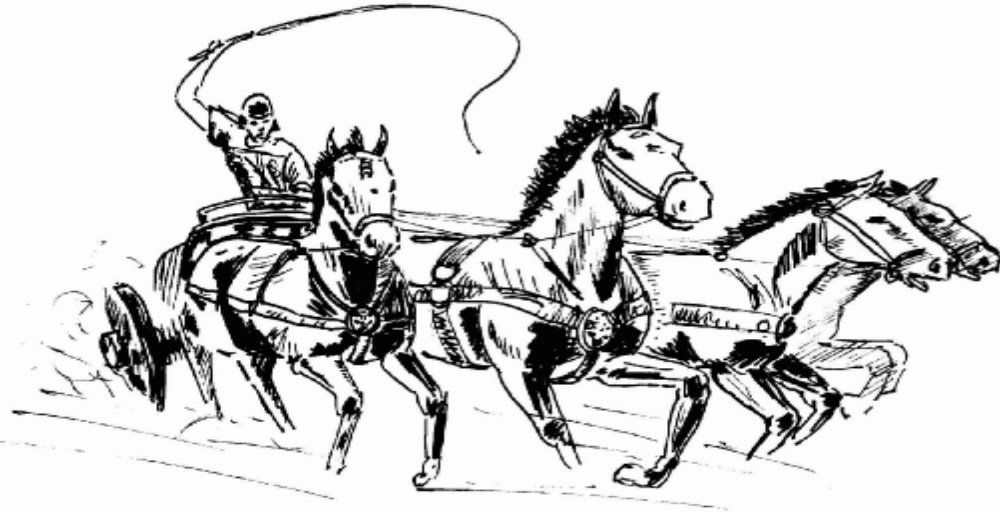
This brotherhood is an evil organisation dedicated to murder, assassination and terror. Based in the city of Thebes in Ægypt, it operates throughout the Desert Kingdoms, its dread influence enveloping cities, cultures and kingdoms in an invisible network. The head of the cult is unknown but is rumoured to be one of the government

officials or high priests of Thebes. It is financed by the secret plundering of royal tombs in the Valley of the Kings. This plunder is also reputed to be the source of the cult's dark magical power. Using caravan routes, agents of the Cult of Sutekh are sent out into the world to consolidate or expand the power base. Imagine it as an organised crime network. It doesn't yet have real hold over kings and officials, but that may be its aim. Present policy is to try and manipulate affairs so that the Empire is pushed out of the Desert Kingdoms forever, then strong foreign governments replaced with weak ones. Ultimate power is the real goal.

Candidates must commit murder in order to join, make an offering in silver and make a vow never to reveal the cult's secrets. They also become initiates of a sinister god called Sutekh. Members must have a cover occupation and will become known by that profession: the 'Weaver', the 'Potter', the 'Letterwriter' etc. Cult champions are top agents and assassins called 'Favoured Sons', while priests who establish chapters in foreign cities are known as 'Fathers' or 'Masters'. See the historical account of *Paweraa - Mayor of Thebes* and his criminal activities in the reign of Ramesses IX.



XII ADVENTURE TOOL-KIT



This chapter concentrates on giving referees information and advice on how to construct a scenario. There are three basic adventure types, and these can be used exclusively, or more usually mixed together to create a more interesting game. The three types are: the Labyrinth Adventure, the Wilderness Adventure and the City Adventure.

Labyrinth Adventures

A labyrinth is a term used in the ancient world to describe a maze-like network of tunnels or paths, either natural or man-made. The term originated with the famous Labyrinth of Knossos, home of the Minotaur, but here we use the term to describe any building, cave system, tomb or other structure that forms the focus of an adventure. Other fantasy roleplaying games sometimes refer to the labyrinth as a 'dungeon'. A labyrinth forms a challenge for a group of adventurers because of its monsters or other hostile denizens (ghosts, spirits, skeletons etc.), traps and puzzles, magical obstacles and human inhabitants. These dungeon obstacles should never be thrown in without first

being thought out. The labyrinth should have a reason for existing, it might be a royal tomb or a pyramid, a palace or a set of haunted caves. With a firm concept, the referee can go on to fill it full of believable dangers and antagonists. See the section later on for more detail.

Wilderness Adventures

These take place almost exclusively outdoors in the uninhabited parts of the world, wastes, deserts, forests, hills and mountains. The adventurers are free, by the very nature of their environment, to wander where they like, and the referee must take care that they can find the various elements of the game that exist in that wilderness. Possible encounters to be used in creating a wilderness plot include rivers to cross, waterfalls, caves, quicksand, hollow-trees, hermits, bandits and outlaws, wild creatures, and monsters of every description. The emphasis is on travel, combat, survival and overcoming physical obstacles. Because the Desert Kingdoms are obviously close to and bound up in the desert environment, this terrain and its

dangers will often form a major part of an adventure. To this end a section devoted to deserts follows on from details of running wilderness adventures.



City Adventures

City adventures take place in a town or city, and the emphasis is on social interaction. Player characters cannot use violence to overcome problems or the local watchmen or soldiers from the city garrison will charge in and ask questions later. Plots will centre on deception, murder, intrigue and sinister secrets. There can be plenty of opportunities for violence, with rebellions, sieges, dangerous cults and street gangs, but these should not be too frequent - peace and prosperity are the hallmarks of a typical city. The referee must be prepared to improvise, since adventurers can go almost anywhere and talk to anyone. The action becomes compressed. A well-prepared city adventure is a marvellous thing, and if refereed well can often give the city the appearance of a living, breathing world. Referees need not detail every building and every inhabitant, but must be able to give the appearance that wherever the adventurers go, they will find real people to meet, with real problems and real hopes and dreams of their own. Because the best city adventures require the referee to create quite a great deal of information about people and places, many referees find it helpful to base a number of adventures in the same city. This is a city *campaign*, and more advice on this subject can be found later on in the game.

Labyrinth Adventures

There are many places the adventurers will inevitably find themselves in their quest for treasure, including caves, tunnels, tombs and ruins. The referee can easily sketch out the layout of such an objective. Of course the owners or defenders of this treasure will not take kindly to the unwanted intrusion of the adventurers and will do something about it. Traps, monsters, puzzles, hostile magic and armed warriors are all perfectly feasible, but they must always appear in context. A tomb may be inhabited by ghosts of the dead or skeletons and rats. Its designers may have included traps in its design, and may even have given it magical protection. Living creatures (other than carrion-feeders) and humans are not going to be found there. Likewise, the cavern lair of a bandit-gang will not have any monsters or magic, but a large population of irate bandits! A few sample labyrinths suitable for a **ZENOBIA** adventure follow.

TYPES OF LABYRINTH

Cave System: This could be just a few caves or a vast network with many levels, underground rivers, shafts, tunnels and crawl-holes. It might only be inhabited by natural creatures (and one or more supernatural beasts) or could have been appropriated by humans: bandits, a renegade sorcerer, refugees, tomb robbers, a band of assassins, a secret cult ... whatever.

Fort: Most forts are made up of an open courtyard surrounded by a high fortified earth, baked brick or stone wall complete with watch-towers. A number of fortified gateways allow access, and there will be accommodation buildings, stables and storerooms and a

commander's building within the courtyard. Forts built by the Empire (many of which litter the East) are built on a very regular pre-determined plan. There will be plenty of soldiers in a fort (unless it is ruined, in which case other inhabitants might have moved in, and might be ghosts, or worse ...).

Island: A small isolated island is a good place for adventurers to explore, and there are plenty of them in the Middle Sea. They can contain exiles, robber-chiefs, pirates, monsters of every kind and strange magics from the days of the gods.

Mine: An abandoned mine can hold supernatural (as well as very real!) terrors. In **ZENOBIA**, a mine is usually a shaft (up to 20m deep), with galleries going off from it. Galleries are usually not very extensive due to the fear of collapse.

Mountain: A single mountain will have trails that can be followed, and will often have an array of human inhabitants (or travellers) on its slopes, ancient magical secrets, natural and supernatural creatures. And what is at the summit that lures the adventurers? This objective can be combined with cave systems, valleys (see below) and other types of building.



Oasis: An oasis is an isolated place where the adventurers have to face whatever they find. Many are lakes or swamps in a desert depression, often surrounded by a fertile area of grassland

and palm trees. If heavily used by the local nomads, such as Taima, there may be a small permanent village there. Nomads pose the greatest threat, but what about an ancient curse or the arrival of desert monsters?

Palace: An Eastern palace in **ZENOBIA** is usually also a vast storehouse with countless storerooms, workshops, scribe's offices, libraries, courtyards and audience chambers. If a palace is in use, complete with human guards and inhabitants, is a confusing and challenging place to negotiate, how about a ruined palace? Here monsters, traps, ghosts and illicit 'colonists' guard whatever portion of the palace's vast wealth remains.

Pyramid: The most famous of tombs, the pyramid holds a great challenge to the adventurers. Somewhere within it is the treasure of a pharaoh, of a member of the royal family, or of a royal official. There also will be his mummified body. A pyramid has many corridors, traps and magical defences. There may be spirits to fight and even the mummy itself! Even monsters might have been enlisted to guard the treasure within. The concealed entrance is halfway up a pyramid, and the chamber with the body is usually deep below ground level with subsidiary burials or chambers higher up within the body of the structure. Pyramids of Ægypt and Meroe are often built alongside others in a sacred 'necropolis' on the edge of the desert on the west bank of the Nile.

Swamp: A swamp can be used as an 'objective' because it can essentially be formed of shallow lakes overgrown with tangled reed-beds, and dotted with islands of firmer ground. Each of these islands can hold some key to the nature of the swamp - which is great place for monsters to dwell or humans to hide. The Nile Delta and the Sealand are

massive swamps cut by rivers and streams.

Temple: There are many temples in the world of **ZENOBIA**. When in use, they rarely allow access to anyone outside of the god's priesthood. Some, especially those of *Ægypt* and the Mesopotamia, resemble palaces and often serve the same purpose, since most temples own huge tracts of land, villages and workshops.

There will always be treasure in a temple, with guards to guard it, potent magical defences and even monsters aligned to the worship of that temple's god. A very formidable place. A ruined temple is less of a challenge. But why is it ruined? And what magics and monsters remain?

Tomb: A typical tomb is not very extensive, perhaps two or three chambers cut into a cliff-face or buried under the ground with access from a shaft (as in *Ægypt*). These simple tombs are built by wealthy men and women who cannot afford royal tombs or pyramids. Many will have some kind of trap to defend the owner's moderate grave treasure, and there may also be ghosts (it all depends on the story behind the death of its owner). Royal tombs are vast rock-cut complexes going deep into the cliffs complete with shafts, pits, maze-like passages, magical defences, monsters, ghosts and mummies. Not for the beginner!

Valley: A valley can hold secrets, have caves, lost temples or tribes, be the home of bandits or exiles, the lair of monsters or the resting place of some treasure. The linear nature of the valley means that the adventurers cannot go anywhere at any time and ruin a perfectly good plot!

Village: A village can form a good 'objective' being out of the way and home to a limited number of non-player characters, their problems and secrets. See also City Adventures.

Ziggurat: A ziggurat is a stepped pyramid-temple in Mesopotamia and several of the ancient cities there have one. Each is made of baked brick, and formed of a rectangular base with numerous additional levels on top getting smaller and smaller. Three staircases meet at the top level. Traditionally only the top level could be entered, and fertility ceremonies involving the king and queen were conducted there. In **ZENOBIA**, the top level might lead down into a warren of chambers and tunnels, the real heart of the temple and its magical secrets.

TYPES OF TRAPS & TRIGGERS

Traps create uncertainty and ensure that a adventurer has to use his brains to succeed, not just his spear or sword. They cannot be out-talked either, but must be out-thought. A trap is composed of two parts, the trigger and the result. Think carefully before putting a trap into a particular environment. Should it be there at all? Why is it there? If access is being prevented, why is it a trap and not a stone wall? There must be a successful way past it, otherwise - why bother building it?

Triggers

Triggers can vary enormously, and a list of ideas includes:

- **Close Door/Lid:** A trap might be cunningly sprung when a door or lid is closed!
- **Lifting Object:** The trap might be activated when an object is lifted up (perhaps a small statuette, an item of treasure, a weapon etc.).

- **Magic Use:** A rare type of trap (used perhaps in a temple) could activate when someone uses magic, either a magical item or a power.
- **Open Door/Lid:** When a door is opened or the lid of a chest lifted, the trap might be sprung.
- **Presence:** The very presence of the adventurers in a tunnel, room or chamber might be enough to activate a trap.
- **Pressure:** Perhaps a stone slab in the floor has a tilt-mechanism or breaks away to activate the trap. Pits and slides can be activated by falling through a trapdoor or clay floor. Either any weight will activate a trigger, or the referee can actually state that a certain number of people are required.
- **Speaking:** A magical trap could be activated when someone speaks, or when somebody utters a certain word or phrase. Alternatively, if a password is required, then the trap might be activated if the correct password is not given.
- **Touching Object:** The trap might be activated when an object (statue, painting, carving etc.) is touched. Perhaps it must be touched a certain number of times before it activates a trap.
- **Trip-Wire:** A trip-wire will always be activated by the lead character, although the result might effect him, someone further back or a door or wall.

Trap Types

The following list gives a complete run-down of trap types, any of these results could be activated by a trigger already described.

- **Alarm:** The trigger might only activate an alarm that signals to someone or some monster that there is an intruder. In a temple it may even signal the god, who will inform his priests, or use magic to deal with the intruders.
- **Blade:** A blade might spring up, or swing down or out from a wall. A typical blade would do 1d points of damage, a very large blade might do 1d+3 HITS. The referee might allow a chance to dodge out of the blade's way with a FATE roll.
- **Creature:** A creature might attack the character, especially useful in this respect are scorpions and snakes. They might appear from a secret compartment or from a concealed door.
- **Darts:** A concealed arrow might fly out to hit a character (there should be little chance of dodging such an attack), doing 1-3 points of damage. Some may even be poisoned.
- **Falling Item:** Something heavy comes crashing down, possibly a heavy stone block or an amount of rubble. A small stone block would do 1d+2 points of damage, a large stone block perhaps 1d+5 points of damage. The referee might allow a chance to dodge out of the block's way with a FATE roll.

- **Deadly Prison:** A subtle referee could use a slower and frightening trap result. The trigger could lock the doors in and out, and begin pouring sand, water, scorpions or snakes into the room. What must the player characters do to survive? Or the roof could begin to close in on the floor, eventually squashing the adventurers. Or metal spikes start emerging from the walls and ceiling, eventually skewering every player character in the room. There must be some way to deactivate these lethal traps, however. The magic that activates the trap could increase the heat or decrease it, in an attempt to freeze the characters to death.
- **Gas Cloud:** A gas cloud could be released affecting anybody with a short range. The gas could be poisonous or have some other effect (sleep, paralysis, sickness etc.) when a FATE roll is failed.
- **Illusion:** This magical trap is a visual trick. An illusion is an image of something which is not there. Such a trap might be an illusory bridge or wall, an illusory monster or attack. Damage inflicted by an illusion is not real (although the victim might not think so - treat damage done as Stuns), but falling from a great height because of such an illusion would of course do real damage. No illusion can be disbelieved, but if the illusion is suspected (there are often clues) then the victim can avoid it / walk through it / not feel harmed by it.
- **Light:** A bright flash of light could blind everyone present. The referee could give characters the chance to avoid blindness by rolling FATE. This blindness might last a few rounds, minutes or hours.
- **Pitfall:** This can be a trap-door covered pit, or perhaps a section of the floor which gives way. The pit may be any depth, and could be bare, or could be filled with all manner of nasty surprises! One, two or more of the adventurers could fall into the pit. The referee might allow a FATE roll to jump back in time. Remember that characters falling 3m or more suffer 1d damage, plus 1 point of damage per metre over the first 3. The placement of spikes/water/sand/crocodiles/scorpions or snakes might inflict additional damage. If there are lots of spikes at the bottom of a pit, the referee might want to roll 1d to determine how many hit the victim; on 1-3 assume that many pierce the victim, on 4-6 assume he was lucky and avoided them all! A typical spike might do 3 points of damage.
- **Slide:** Like a trap-door, but the slide curves off to some other destination, depositing the unfortunate victim one level (or more) away and an unknown distance from where he began.
- **Poisoned Needle:** This could spring out when a door or lid is opened, or when any trigger relies on touch. The poison could cause damage, or might alternatively have a more exotic effect (see Gas Cloud).
- **Firetrap:** Fire can prove to be a very deadly menace. The trigger could activate a wall of flame blocking further progress, or create a circle of flame getting ever narrower. A magical fire-ball could be activated, plunging

toward the adventurers and burning all those who fail to dodge out of the way with a terrible 1d+5 points of damage. Fire-pits could be dangers to be negotiated, perhaps a stone ledge has to be lowered over the pit, or some other way found of turning down the flames.

- **Undead:** The undead - spirits, ghosts, skeletons, demons and mummies - can be activated by a trigger, and depending on the scenario, could pour down corridors in an attempt to block off the adventurer's escape, or slowly stalk them. Or the undead could be restricted to one particular location (perhaps the burial chamber itself). The various attributes of some undead are given in the Monsters chapter.
- **Wall Movement:** The trigger could activate the movement of a wall, perhaps bringing down a wall to cut off part of a chamber or a corridor, or opening up such a wall allowing access to undiscovered areas. The same could be said of stairs. Or chambers could rise or fall to almost become huge elevators, again allowing access to new areas.

Wilderness Adventures

For many first-time referees the prospect of running a wilderness adventure can seem quite daunting. The question arises: how can the actions and destinations of a group of player characters be catered for when they can go absolutely anywhere? The answer is fairly simple. Although characters *can* wander about the wilderness in any direction, the basic building blocks of the adventure, such as a haunted cave, a

magical tree, a village or lost city, are all specific locations at specific sites. Wandering through empty wilderness simply encountering random beasts and overcoming random hazards does not an adventure make. As with the creation of *any* adventure, the referee is best advised to skilfully blend several exciting story elements, interesting NPCs and interesting wilderness locations. Travel through and across the wilderness to reach these locations and achieve the goals of the adventure brings an extra dimension, since most wilderness terrains will contain a host of challenging wildlife and natural hazards.

Now - while searching for the lost city amidst the sand dunes of the Desert of Lost Souls the characters can try to seek shelter from a terrible sand storm. The caves they then find might seem suitable until they discover the dark cave is infested with snakes. Perhaps there are tunnels in the caves leading down ... With some sort of story concept in mind (for example the search for a lost city), the referee then needs to plan his wilderness adventure using four basic steps:

- 1) Selecting a suitable region or land within which to set the story. We have already selected Desert of Lost Souls.
- 2) Select a number of adventure locations within which the story takes place. We have the lost city, the snake-filled caves with the tunnels that might lead to the now buried city, an oasis and the desert village from where the expedition began.
- 3) Map and flesh-out with descriptions these adventure locations and any NPCs or groups that may be encountered as part of the story.

4) Consider the terrain in that region of the world and decide what types of hazard the characters are likely to face as they travel from one location to another. In the deep desert we have plenty of hazards, from sand-storms to thirst, heat-stroke to scorpions. The referee can usually select hazards as he sees fit (as already mentioned), or he can roll randomly for them each day of travel in the more traditional manner.

1 - CHOOSE A REGION

Often a referee will not need to select a region, as the characters will already be there and just happen to stumble onto the new story-line. At other times the referee may be able to plan ahead and select a new and interesting location for an adventure. There are vast, dark forests in the north beyond the mountains where clearings are sometimes a day's walk apart. In the north-east beyond Cimmeria the land is flat and endless, a steppe-land of grass and rolling hills inhabited by fierce tribes of Goths and Sarmatians. The Taurus mountains are almost impassable, lofty, snow-covered peaks clad in pine forest and treacherous slopes of boulders, scree and ancient volcanic rubble. There are many areas to choose from.

2 - CHOOSE SOME EXCITING LOCATIONS

There are an almost limitless number of possible adventure locations that could be used in a wilderness setting. The list that follows is not, therefore exhaustive. Use your imagination! Some of these locations are natural features, some are human settlements, others are types of labyrinths suitable for wilderness adventures. Labyrinths used as a wilderness location combine two adventure settings in one.

3 - MAP & DESCRIBE

This part of the process is just like detailing a labyrinth as described above. Note that some form of local or regional map will also be required to show the immediate environment around the locations. The referee may indeed make two maps, one for his own use with secret areas and surprises marked on, the other relatively innocuous for the players' consumption. Maps can reflect the primitive state of cartography of the day and never be anything more than simple sketch-maps. Refrain from using sophisticated art software, graph paper or other modern map-making tools. Keep things simple and atmospheric.

Fort	Watchtower
Military Camp	Caves
Village or Farmstead	Ruined Settlement
Temple	Underground Tunnels/Mines
Villa Estate	Inn
Shrine	Ancient Relic (Standing stone obelisk etc)
Narrow Gorge or Mountain pass	Lighthouse
Tomb or Cemetery	Bridge
Trading Camp	Nomadic Camp
Hollow Tree	Oracle or Hermit
Oasis	Waterfall
Ferry	Secret Grove
Island	Bandit's Lair
Tanglewood/Natural Maze	Swamp
Valley	

4 - CONSIDER TERRAIN & ITS HAZARDS

Select a terrain that best fits the story. In **ZENOBIA** we classify the world of the Desert Kingdoms into seven broad terrain categories.

- **Cultivated Land** - Farmland and pasture intermittently cut by lanes, walls and ditches.
- **Marsh** - Lakes and flooded plains full of reed beds and scattered islands of firm ground.
- **Mountain** - High mountain slopes, peaks and valleys as well as hills and vales.
- **River** - Any channel of water that cannot be safely waded, includes lakes.
- **Sand Sea** - Dune-fields that stretch out to the horizon like a sea of sand.
- **Steppe** - Dry grassland, scrubland and rolling steppe with few trees.
- **Stony Desert** - Gravel strewn desert with cliffs, wadis and rocky outcrops.

One terrain usually blurs imperceptibly with another (such as steppe-land becoming stony desert). In some instances, such as the Nile valley, there

is a distinct change from one terrain type to another (in the case of the Nile from cultivated land to stony desert). More common is a region that displays two types of terrain together - mountains in the desert, for example, or a patch of marsh in a grassland. In such cases the referee uses the slowest travel rates of the two, but is free to pick wild animals and hazards from either terrain description (within reason). The river terrain is an exception to both of these rules, see the River section that follows. Travel rates are included in the section called Travel in the chapter called Resolving Actions.

Details of how to carry out random rolls for the selection of suitable hazards are included with each terrain type, but the referee is encouraged to select a few himself rather than rely on the whim of the dice. This means that he can weave the encounters into the fabric of the game's plot if needed. In each case, roll 1 d6 and compare the result to the range of numbers given for each terrain type, to see if an encounter takes place. If this first roll is within this range, then roll 2 d6 on the chart provided to see what the encounter is.



Cultivated Land

Around the cities and towns is the cultivated land, the farmland, orchards, vineyards, olive groves and pasturage that forms the life blood of any settlement. Dotted throughout the land are villages and farmsteads, and separating the farmland are low hills, scattered woods, and barren rough land, etc. Cultivated Land is where the majority of the people of the **ZENOBIA** live. The hazards to be encountered in such a terrain will be almost wholly human, with a small chance of creatures.

Roll 4-6 on 1d twice each day

2	Rainstorm		
3	Bandits (2-12)		
4-5	Residents at work		
6	Legionnaires on patrol (4-24)		
7	Merchant caravan (5-35)		
8	Religious procession		
9	Adventurers/Mercenaries (2-7)		
10	Local noble with entourage hunting or travelling		
11	Villagers seeking help		
12	Monster. Roll 1d:	1	Jackal
		2	Snake or Scorpion
		3	Lion
		4	Boar
		5	Wolf
		6	Centaur

Marsh

Most marshes are formed by great rivers that flow so sluggishly they create reed-choked wetlands, swamps and marshland which are often inter-cut by waterways and streams, lakes and muddy flats. The greatest marshes include the Nile delta, where the Nile river branches into many tributaries and streams before it reaches the Middle Sea, and the Sealand, that morass of waterways which marks the boundary between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers and the sea. Marshes are home to abundant wildlife and to many different kinds of people, some legitimate, but others may be exiles and rebels hiding amongst the waterways and reed islands.

Roll 5-6 on 1d twice each day

2	Rainstorm and local flooding		
3	Ship or river barge passing through		
4-5	Bandits (2-12)		
6	Rebels, refugees or escaped prisoners/slaves (3-18)		
7	Residents at work fishing or reed cutting		
8	Tall grass - reduces visibility, and speed by half		
9	Adventurers/Mercenaries (2-7)		
10	Local noble with entourage hunting wildfowl or other game		
11	Quicksand - Characters sinking fast! MIGHT points of 2d will pull them out.		
12	Monster. Roll 1d:	1	Giant Snake
		2	Snake (or Crocodile if in the Nile)
		3	Hydra
		4	Antelope
		5	Stymphalian Birds (1-6)
		6	Weret-hekau

Mountain

Mountain terrain is an amalgam of very rough rocky terrain as well as high plateau and traditional forest-clad mountains. There are many mountain ranges in **ZENOBIA**, from the Zagros to the Sinai, the Lebanese to the Taurus. Travel through these rocky ranges is often by narrow and winding donkey paths. Few people live at these altitudes, there is little land to farm and almost no grazing land for sheep.

Roll 5-6 on 1d twice each day.

2	Hermit/Magician
3	Caves
4	Rockfall
5	Bandits (2-12)
6	Crevasse or sharp cliff - impassable, requiring long detour
7	Waterfall
8	Rainstorm (may be blizzard in winter)
9	Mountain Shepherds (2-7)
10-12	Monster. Roll 2d:
	2-4 Griffin
	5 Manticore
	6 Wind Child
	7 Harpy
	8 Goats (2-12)
	9 Wolves (2-7)
	10 Lion
	11 Cyclopes
	12 Zu Bird

River

The great civilisations of the Desert Kingdoms were formed around great rivers, such as the Nile, Indus, Tigris and Euphrates. They still provide a method of transportation and a living for the lightermen who handle the barges and riverboats. This terrain feature assumes that a river or lake is too deep to be waded or easily swum. In other words it is a fairly substantial body of water. Travel through this terrain assumes use of a boat or barge.

Roll 4-6 on 1d twice each day.

2	Sandbar or ford
3	Rainstorm and local flooding
4	Tall grass - reduces visibility to the bank
5	Bandits (2-12)
6	Residents at work fishing, trapping, washing, hauling water etc.
7	Local boats, fishing or carrying goods to market (1-3)
8	Ship or river barge passing through
9	Current - Unexpected current pulls vessel into bank
10-12	Monster. Roll 1d:
	1-2 Giant Snake
	3 Snake
	4 Crocodile (if in the Nile)
	5-6 Merman

Sand Sea

The featureless terrain of the sand sea has few hazards other than those posed by temperature and lack of water and shade. But there are some. The main areas of Sand Sea are the vast dune 'oceans' of the Desert of Lost Souls and the ghostly Whispering Desert.

Roll 6 on 1d once each day.

2	Mirage - See water shimmering on the horizon- is it real or not?
3	Singing Sand - 'hollow' sand sings and thumps when trodden on out to 1-6 km.
4	Quicksand - Characters sinking fast! MIGHT points of 2d will pull them out.
5	Very Soft sand - slow progress by one half.
6	Saracen nomad clan (6-36) on camels
8	Sandstorm - All travel and work is halted for one day.
9	Previous campsite
10	Semi-buried structure of ancient origin
11-12	Monster. Roll 2d:
	2-4 Giant Scarab
	5 Jackals (1-6)
	6 Snake or Scorpion (especially at night!)
	7 Scorpion Men (1-6)
	8-9 Goatmen
	10 Ghuls
	11-12 Manticore

Steppe

Steppeland is flat and semi-arid, covered with dry grasses, scrub and undulating hills and slopes. It borders hot desert, and rocky terrain can still be found in the steppe. Likewise it also borders cultivated land and the steppe may in places support woods and dry meadows. Water is difficult to find in the hot summer months.

Roll 6 on 1d twice each day.

2	Soldiers on patrol or on the march (6-36)
3	Grass fire
4	Nomad graves and holy site
5	Saracen raiders (4-24)
6	Merchant caravan (5-35)
7	Tall grass - reduces visibility, and speed by half
8	Saracen clan (20-120)
9	Previous campsite
10	Hermit or outcast
11-12	Monster. Roll 1d:
	1 Jackals (1-6)
	2 Centaur (1-3)
	3 Lion
	4 Antelope (1-6)
	5 Manticore
	6 Lion Men (2-7)

Stony Desert

This desert terrain encompasses flat featureless wastes, dry gullies and hills, stony flatlands and rock outcrops. Most desert areas are like this, but most especially the black volcanic rock deserts near Damascus. These deserts occasionally see rainfall in sudden winter downpours, which gradually erode the rock into channels and canyons and often gravel washes out onto outwash plains many kilometres distant, sometimes to later evaporate and form salt flats. Because water often lies deep below the surface, humans can travel here. There are a few hazards posed by the stony desert.

Roll 6 on 1d twice each day.

2	Flashflood - Rain many km distant causes local flooding in canyons and wadi!
3	Salt lake or salt flat (latter can cause blindness in strong wind)
4	Soldiers on patrol (5-30)
5	Merchant caravan (5-30)
6	Saracen raiders or clan (5-30)
8	Conspicuous rock feature
9	Waterhole and abandoned campsite
10	Boulder field - slow progress by one half.
11-12	Monster. Roll 2d:
	2-3 Giant Scarab
	4 Snake Men (1-6)
	5 Jackals (1-6)
	6 Lion
	7 Scorpion Men (1-6)
	8 Snake or Scorpion
	9 Manticore
	10 Antelope
	11-12 Goatmen

The Desert

Desert features prominently in the life of the Desert Kingdoms, as one would imagine. In recognition, the desert terrain receives a little more attention, mainly due to this environment's inhospitable nature.

DESERT TRAVEL

There are five different travel rates for desert terrain, one for each dominant desert terrain type. The terrain types rarely start and stop on definable lines, but more often merge together very gradually. Sand seas are found only in the Desert of Lost Souls or the Whispering Desert and almost no-where else. Any one desert is made up of a

combination of all of these terrain types. Dunes are found where least rain falls and so are located well away from mountain ranges and also from rocky valleys and wadis (which are created by run-off rainwater during flash floods).

- **Sand Sea:** 15 km/day on foot, 30 km/day on camel. Vast, sandy wastes - covered in dunes marching out to the horizon.
- **Stony Desert:** 20 km/day on foot, 30 km/day on camel. Rocky desert, composed of gravel and pebbles, interspersed with sand and water-cut cliffs and wadis. Hills, mountains and broken lava beds make travel

difficult. Treat travel down wadis as travel in Stony Desert.

- **Wadi:** Dry streambeds worn into the desert floor. Frequently open into broad alluvial plains or salt lakes. Travel across a wadi is treated as crossing rugged terrain, but travel down a wadi is treated as travel in Stony Desert.
- **Salt Flats:** 30 km/day on foot, 60 km/day on camel. Encrusted salt flat, water is very scarce, can cause blindness in windstorms, and effects of light and heat are intensified by reflection from the bright white desert floor.

Calculating Desert Travel Rates

To calculate how far a character or group have travelled through desert terrain in a day, the travel rates in the terrain section (above) are used. A time period of around eight hours is generally assumed for travelling. The referee should not try to be precise when two terrain types merge in one day's travel, just average the two speeds and assume the terrain change occurred around mid-day.

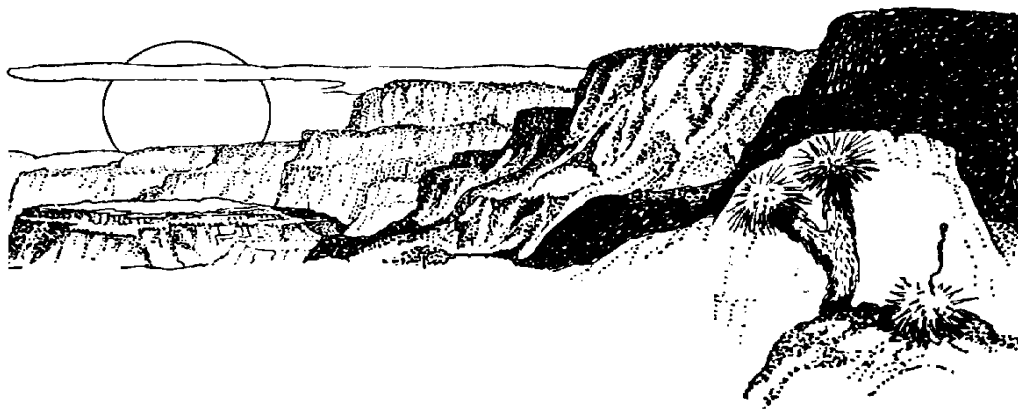
The Effects of Desert Fatigue

Anyone who has suffered any HIT point loss through desert fatigue (see below) will suffer a corresponding loss in speed. Subtract the total amount of Hits lost through desert fatigue from the daily movement rate (in km/day) if on foot. This can bring travel down to a crawl. So be it. At 3 or less the character collapses Badly Wounded so the very slowest a character could make in a day would be 4 km in a day (less than 3 miles).

Riding Horse & Camels

Obviously a character riding on a camel or horse does not suffer the crippling penalty that desert fatigue imposes. Riding either mount is almost essential in a desert environment. He will also go further and make better time if riding a camel.

Camels: These beasts are strong and tough, able to negotiate desert terrain with little need for regular water stops. After a camel has eaten and drunk its fill it can traverse the hottest deserts without suffering any desert fatigue for up to **6 days**. After that time it will take 2 points of damage per day if given a little water and food or 4 points of damage if given no water or food. Since



a typical camel has 12 HITS it will not survive for very long without a top-up of food and water. Check the camel travel rates above. These assume a walk-trot-walk pace.

Horses: Horses normally walk at human rates in desert terrains. Each day they take 1 point of damage if given plenty of water, 2 points of damage per day if given a little water, or 4 points of damage if given no water at all. Since a typical horse has 8 HITS, it will not survive for very long in any kind of desert situation - it needs to rest and drink daily at a source of water. A horse can be pushed to trot or gallop for short periods during a march but this takes its toll on the beast; when damage is being applied in the afternoon add an additional 1-3 points of damage.

Travelling By Night

In the real world, survival manuals exhort pupils to rest up during the day and travel by night, minimising the wasteful expenditure of moisture on such a difficult task. **ZENOBIA**, while utilising real world effects to colour and add drama to the game, does not condone characters travelling through the desert at night! Primarily it goes against that vital imagery we have grown up with of perilous expeditions crossing sand seas and brave mercenaries crossing rocky wildernesses to reach a lone citadel by nightfall. Here, travelling across the desert is more dangerous. Travel rates are reduced to half and all physical actions, such as climbing and jumping, are at -2. In addition someone with Desert Travel must be nominated to lead a party across the desert at night and make a successful FATE roll. Otherwise one of the group will suffer a 3 point leg wound. Referees note that

illumination is absolutely essential during night travel, since the desert's spiders, snakes and scorpions come out in force under cover of darkness!



One activity that really does benefit from taking place at night is the digging up of a water source (see below).

SURVIVING THE DESERT

Many words can be used to describe the desert environment: mighty, magnificent, majestic - but a desert is also murderous. It kills those who do not respect it, and it kills them slowly and painfully. The two prongs of the desert threat are temperature and water loss. In **ZENOBIA** we are not concerned with the cruel niceties of heat exhaustion, sunstroke, heat cramps and heat stroke. All we really want to know is: what effect have the desert temperatures had on the player characters? The amount of water available for drinking will affect the crippling damage suffered by such desert-bound characters.

We call the kind of damage sustained by the ferocious and unrelenting heat 'desert fatigue', and it combines all of the deadly symptoms listed above.

Suffering Damage

Desert Fatigue damage is applied each afternoon. The following damage values should be used:

Desert Fatigue Table

Situation	HIT Loss
Character has Desert Survival	1 pt (ignore temperature penalties)
Daytime temperatures in the shade	2 pts
Daytime temperatures in the open	4 pts
Plenty of water drunk that day	half damage (round down)
Water available, rationed	normal damage
No water available at all	+4 HITS

Plenty of water means a waterhole or oasis or other ready supply. See also the section entitled Finding Water (below).

To avoid serious desert fatigue, the characters either need to possess the Desert Travel skill or be led by someone who has it. A character with the skill only suffers 1 point of damage per day (in the sun or the shade). A character without it will suffer 2 points in the shade and 4 points per day out in the sun. The availability of water slightly alters these figures. The character with Desert Travel skill knows just how to minimise desert fatigue and is able to spot tell-tale symptoms and take appropriate action. But remember that the most skilled Saraceni tribesman will still die horribly of thirst without water.

Helping Fellow Travellers: Each day the player character with Desert Travel can roll 1d and allocate one point to someone in his care. Each person he nominates will suffer the basic level of 1 point of desert fatigue damage just like himself - for that day only.

Recovering From Desert Fatigue

Damage sustained from desert fatigue can easily become fatal. But it can also be restored a little easier than normal wounds inflicted by falls or the blades of swords. For each day spent in restful and cool shade (below 25 degrees) the character recovers 2 Hits. If he can drink as much water as he wants at the same time, he can restore another 2 Hits per day. These rules do not apply if the character is Badly Wounded. In that case he needs **both** of the above just to begin recovering Hit points at the normal rate!

FINDING WATER

A character with Desert Travel may opt to take some time each day seeking out potential water sources. He cannot spend time looking after people in his charge, however. The 1d roll he makes each day can instead be used to try to find water, and to then arrange to dig for it. A good desert nomad will know where waterholes, old wells and water deposits are - keeping him sustained on journeys across stony desert.

If his 1d roll is equal to 5 or more, then he has located a water source during that day's travel. Typically this is an old waterhole now blocked and choked with rocks or weeds, or fresh-water located just under the surface of a dry stream bed or wadi. It is impossible to find water in a sand sea. The referee may rule that in any adventuring group, only

one character can be nominated to 'find water' in this way. This prevents a tribe of 100 Saraceni stumbling across an endless number of water holes all day long.

Now the water has to be dug up ... This takes 2d+3 points of combined MIGHT to achieve easily (and a couple of hours), although anyone might have a go. Some kind of tool is needed, and any points not matched by character MIGHT is suffered in desert fatigue by every person digging. This damage is only accrued if the water is dug up during daytime temperatures (shaded or otherwise). Drinking this water counts as having lots of water that day!

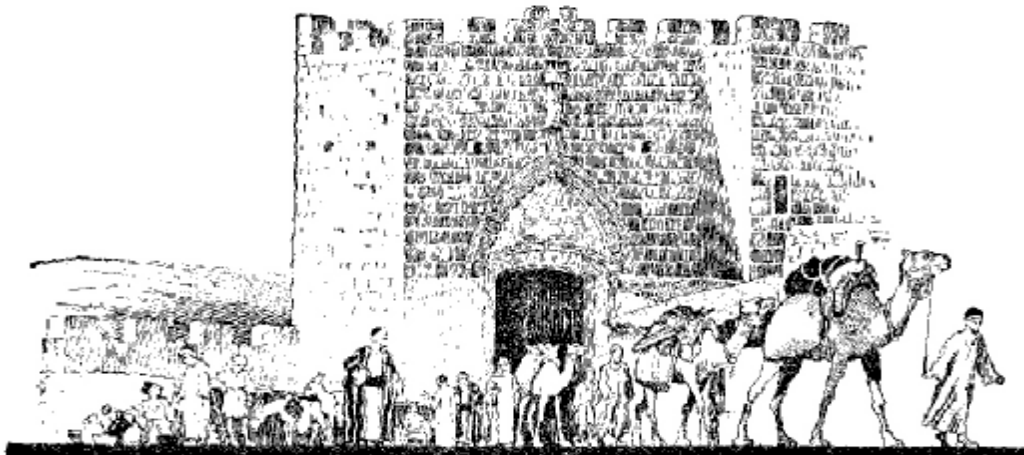
City Adventures

The cities of **ZENOBIA** feel the full force of the decay and degeneracy that is gripping the Empire and that has infected other civilised lands. Plague is creeping across the Desert Kingdoms and when it strikes, a city is devastated by the wicked death toll and the fear and panic that it creates. The thick city walls that have been built cannot stop *that* deadly plague. But they can try and hold back the bandits, barbarian raiders and interminable peasant revolts. The common folk suffer from political oppression, from crippling taxes and rampant inflation. Poverty is a step

away and to avoid slavery, many farmers are fleeing their lands to become bandits or mercenaries. Some flee to the fortified villas of rich landowners outside the city walls. Others flee as refugees into these overcrowded, smelly, disease-ridden sanctuaries. The arcades and other public spaces are filling with homeless squatters while the streets fill with rubbish and uncleared refuse. Sometimes public buildings (amphitheatres and theatres, for example) are falling out of use, in others (especially in the West) public buildings form part of a new series of hastily thrown up civic defences.

The wealthy are becoming less and less inclined to pay for civic works, fleeing to their villa-fortresses and taking their fortunes with them. Imperial society is teetering on the edge of collapse. But with inflation, barbarian attacks and plague looming, many city-dwellers try to lose themselves in strange new cults and philosophies, in drinking clubs and orgies, in the gladiatorial games or the chariot racing. Life goes on.

Cities provide unique and exciting adventure settings, but they also provide the players and the referee with a number of challenges. Unlike the wilderness, where characters can roam free, or labyrinths, where the characters



are given a limited number of choices, the city allows the character to roam at will - but severely limits the types of actions that they can take.

Cities and towns provide all kinds of adventure opportunities. But remember, the fact that the characters are surrounded by hundreds or thousands of residents and travellers means that the adventures themselves will often feature some sort of diplomacy. Social interaction is the central feature of any urban adventure; and a good city adventure will always involve dealing with NPC's of one sort or another, often along with an element of combat, espionage or criminal activity thrown in to keep things moving.

An urban adventure, by its very nature, will revolve around a single NPC, a group or organisation. When creating this kind of adventure the referee should consider which NPC or group will be involved - and how. The chapter called Campaigns features a complete section on coming up with city-based Very Important Personages (VIPs) and the technique is useful when building scenarios, too. These VIPS can be used to help create a story of conflict, intrigue, rivalry and skulduggery. How can the players join the story? Which side do they first encounter? Do they have a vested interest in one or the other side? Will they have an opportunity to see the other side's point of view?

Who Runs Things?

There are several categories of settlement as defined by Imperial law - but in **ZENOBIA** we talk only of cities and small towns. Cities are large settlements or towns with their own municipal government sanctioned by the provincial governor, with the full range of amenities and public buildings. Small towns have no official government and lack many if not all of

the main public buildings and amenities. Cities are usually responsible for much of their own government, being administered by a council of about one-hundred ex-magistrates and nominated magistrates. These positions are generally open only to wealthy entrepreneurs and landowners well-established in the area - are usually hereditary. Typical duties of the council include tax collection, the administration of water supply, public baths, food supply, games, and the construction of the public and religious buildings.

The East and West often have different titles for these institutions, but in the Empire a council is generally called an *ordo* and its members are known as *Decurions*. Magisterial offices always include two *Duoviri Juredicundo*, two *Aediles* (responsible for finance) and sometimes two *Quaestors* (responsible for public works). The *Duoviri* are responsible for city-wide jurisdiction and one of the two sits as the Chairman of the *Ordo*. These two important officials are also in charge of the Imperial cult as well as the militia and the junior offices of the city administration. Every fifth year, two especially distinguished men are appointed as *Duoviri*. This year sees vacancies in the *ordo* filled, public contracts renewed and new levels of taxation assessed. Upon election a fee is exacted from the new magistrates that goes directly into the municipal funds.

Small towns organise their own councils and magistrates on an informal basis. But the councillors are still men of good standing and independent means within their communities. These towns lack most of the amenities of the cities, and have often grown up *ad hoc* as settlements along a military road, at a ford or bridge, or most common of all, outside the walls of a legionary fort.

Here people gather, from blacksmiths and potion-makers to courtesans, shoe-makers and the owners of wine-shops, to sell to the legionnaires (who are wealthy in comparison with a typical farmer). Often legionnaires have wives and children or lovers in these towns.

In the Gallic Kingdom, cities and towns were unknown before the legions marched north to conquer the tribes there. Instead of founding cities the Emperor established civitates or tribal centres - small towns that acted as the seat of government for a barbarian tribe. Rather than concern itself only with the running of the town itself, the tribal assembly that replaces the ordo administers the business of the entire tribal territory and all of the clans within it. Civitates have been established in Gaul and Britannia as well as a number of more traditional cities and small towns.

Along the frontiers where settled life is too precarious, and where barbarian tribes constantly threaten to rebel, forts have been established and the commanders of these forts have a great deal of jurisdiction over the surrounding countryside and the small towns that may have been set up there. A town outside the walls of a fort will certainly feel the presence of the commander, who will have more weight and authority than any unofficial town council. Remember that the army is a tool of the provincial governor, and is an instrument of peace and good order as much as it is of warfare and battle.

The walled cites are usually garrisoned by a small legionary detachment of a century or two (80 or 160 men). These soldiers, the 'City Watch', man the gates, patrol the streets and guard public buildings such as the basilica, the council hall and any Imperial properties within the settlement. They are not

numerous, but they do not have to be, and the unit will frequently be rotated back to its parent legion. The senior centurion in charge will report to (but not take orders from) the duoviri juredicundo and the ordo.

Useful Locations

As a character approaches a city along the road, he will first notice its stone or earthen walls built for defence, with **turrets** and **gateways**. Above the settlement rises a pall of smoke from cooking fires, furnaces and workshops. Before he reaches one of the four gateways he passes the city's **cemetery**, laid outside the walls along the road. Passing through the fortified gate-house the character enters the city streets.

Towns and cities in the West are often well planned on a grid-iron layout, while the ancient cities of the East often defy order. These hill-top towns are a tangled mass of streets, alleys and wall-to-wall mud-brick houses, built up one on top of another. The best streets are well cobbled with pavements and stepping stones across them, but others are only cobbled or simply gravelled or left unsurfaced. The size of the buildings immediately strikes the stranger. Large private houses show only a bare wall to the street, but there are also temples, shops and wineshops trading from the front of apartment blocks. There are long colonnades to shelter town-dwellers from the elements, drinking fountains and wells, public baths, workshops of every conceivable type, warehouses, stables, inns, maybe a government postal station, a theatre - and beyond the walls, perhaps even an amphitheatre or circus.

And there are crowds of people everywhere and they seem to come from all across the Empire. There are plenty of natives, of course, some in native apparel, many more in Imperial

tunics or dresses - but the character can spot a Numidian here, an Ionian there, a Moesian, a German, a Syrian, perhaps even a Nubian from Meroe or Axum. These are cosmopolitan times.



The centre of every city is its **forum** - a market square and meeting place in the centre of the settlement. Lining the forum are long colonnaded porticoes housing shops and offices, but the city's public buildings are also situated here. The **council house** will be found here as will the **basilica**, the huge town hall and law court that dominates every city. A basilica is an impressive cathedral-like edifice. The major **temples** of the town are also situated along the edges of the forum. This public space might also have speaker's podiums, columns, inscriptions, monumental arches and statues of influential Imperials.

Away from the forum a large city might have a number of **public baths**, and large houses and inns might even have their own. The baths are entertainment complexes, set in gardens, with a swimming pool and exercise area, and inside under the vaulted concrete ceilings there exists a set arrangement

of pools to be enjoyed. From the changing room, one goes into the warm room, and from there into the hot room and its hot plunge bath. Next the bather steps into the steam room and from there into the cold room with its cold plunge bath. Gossiping, business-dealing and gambling are all popular in the baths. Women are given their own day for bathing. Slaves working at the baths use the tunnels beneath the baths so as not to disturb the customers.

Water is used in huge quantities by the baths - and water forms the life-blood of any settlement. A city will often have **public lavatories** (although these are simply benches with holes opening into a sewer), wells, stone cisterns for capturing rainwater, aqueducts (usually at ground level or below ground), and **public fountains**. The **sewers**, like the aqueducts, are big enough for a man to crouch inside them - enabling municipal slaves to enter via a manhole, and clean and repair them on a regular basis.

Other forms of entertainment within the city include **theatres**, which are usually free-standing semi-circular buildings, not built into a hillside, Greek-style. Travelling bands of actors put on comedies or tragedies. More popular are the beast hunts and gladiatorial contests of the **amphitheatres**. These huge oval structures can accommodate thousands of spectators at a time and separate them from the deadly arena games with a high wall. Service corridors and chambers below the seating (and sometimes below the arena itself with trapdoors and lifts up) house the wild animals and waiting fighters. Wealthy spectators pay for front row seats while important officials may have their own box. Chariot racing will feature at a **circus**, a vast structure which resembles a U-shaped amphitheatre, with up to 12 chariots starting from gates at the open end of

the U. Down the centre of the circus floor runs a spina or barrier. Athletic events are also sometimes held at the circus.

Inns and **brothels** are common in many towns, their layout resembling that of a large courtyarded town-house. Some of the inns allow access into the courtyard from the street for the stabling of mounts. Between these inns and brothels, wineshops, snack-bars, and public baths, the player characters have plenty of places to find employment, pick up rumours and generally chill out.

Shops are found in every size of town and city. Many are simply **workshops** with a serving hatch or counter facing the street, others sell items that have been imported from elsewhere. At night such a shop is locked with wooden shutters. All manner of shops exist, and they are often sited under colonnades in the forum, running along the front of apartment blocks, or simply sited at the front of a town house. Some large cities have market-places (macella) built especially to incorporate one type of shop and stall (such as fish or meat). Shopkeepers usually live above their shop. Shops of a similar type often cluster together within a city to form distinct streets or even districts (such as the Street of the Potters, the Street of the Seven Jewellers, or the Weaver's District or Blacksmith's District, etc).



Examples of the most common types of shop include:

- ***Baker*** - Bakers are popular, and produce a whole variety of savoury pies and breads as well as sweet pastries.
- ***Blacksmith*** - Making iron tools and shoe-horses. Weapons and armour are made only by armourers working in gladiatorial schools or legionary camps, or semi-retired armourers.
- ***Bone-carver*** - Bone can be used for jewellery, dice, gaming counters, spindle whorls, for carving a stylus or a spoon. It can also be used to craft knife handles and decorative inlays for furniture.
- ***Bronzesmith*** - Bronze is an alloy of tin and copper and is used for many items, including tableware, jewellery, figurines, horses' bridle fittings.
- ***Butcher*** - A butcher prepares cuts of meat for his customers.
- ***Carpenter*** - A carpenter can fashion furniture and tools out of wood and sell them from his shop.
- ***Cobbler*** - Cobblers make shoes and boots, usually made to measure.
- ***Fast-Food Bars*** - You thought that fast-food was a 20th century invention - you were wrong! Owners of these street-side bars have food cooking on the counter constantly and serve customers in bowls which they ate from as they stood at the bar or sat on stools. All food was eaten on the street.
- ***Fish Sauce Maker*** - Garum, or Imperial fish sauce, is very popular with almost all foods. It is very strong and ... umm ... aromatic.

- *Glass-blower* - Glass vessels are expensive but sought after items, especially for perfumes and potions.
- *Goldsmith* - Goldsmiths manufacture items of jewellery and fine gold wire.
- *Herbalist* - A herbalist prepares healing ointments and potions for sale.
- *Leather-worker* - Leather is a very important material, being used for saddles, waterskins, shoes, tents, bags, buckets, shields, belts and some clothing.
- *Oil Seller* - Everyone needs olive oil to cook with, burn in lamps and clean with.
- *Potter* - A potter produces tableware for domestic use as well as amphorae for transport of liquid goods.
- *Silversmith* - Silver is also used for jewellery (such as rings and bracelets) but also for vessels, strainers, expensive plate and spoons. Silversmiths in Alexandria, Syria and Italy are quite renowned.
- *Stonemason* - A stonemason who had a shop might sell sculptures, gravestones, and table tops and legs.
- *Tailor* - Cloth can be made into many types of garment and the tailor usually makes items to measure.
- *Wine-Shop* - With stools in the street for people to stop and drink and have a gossip. Large wine jars are set into the counter. Many are set up by retired gladiators and so pull in a disreputable clientele.

Urban Encounters

The teeming eastern towns and cities of **ZENOBIA** are centred around the fortress and temple. In the baking sun locals go about their business within the walls while foreigners try to pick their way through crowded, noisy, colourful and smelly back-streets. Not much town-planning here!

Automatic 1-3 encounters twice per day. The referee selects one of six tables to roll on each time, or rolls 1d to decide.

Table 1. Gateway Districts

1	Nomad traders or shepherds
2	Weary travellers
3	Sailors/Caravan drivers
4	Local Guide/Interpreter
5	Merchant with attendants
6	Slaves advertising master's business

Table 2. Forum & Craft Streets

1	Beggars
2	Thieves or con-men
3	Craftsman selling wares
4	City Official with attendants
5	Scribe/Letter-writer
6	Magician/Fortune Teller

Table 3. Fortress

1	Freight wagon
2	Soldiers off-duty
3	Soldiers on patrol
4	Mercenaries
5	Courtesans
6	Prisoners in chains

Table 4. Wealthy District

1	Slaves on master's business
2	Rich man's litter and entourage
3	Legionnaires guarding
4	Watchmen on patrol
5	Doctor/Astrologer/Artist
6	Wealthy citizens discussing business

Table 5. Temple District

1	Foreign or city dignitaries
2	Builders at work
3	Worshippers waiting to sacrifice
4	Watchmen on patrol
5	Religious procession in progress
6	Priest and attendants

Table 6. Residential Districts

1	Builders at work
2	Local street dispute
3	Thieves or courtesans
4	Watchmen on patrol
5	Slaves on master's business
6	Locals gossiping at fountain



Non-Player Characters (NPCs)

The player character Adventurers are not the only inhabitants of the Desert Kingdoms. There are two fundamental types of non-player character (NPC): the Named and the Unnamed.

NAMED CHARACTERS

As if it were an epic movie, the **Named NPCs** are primary characters, either allies or foes of the heroes, and equal in stature and detail to them, too. The referee should try to use the player character creation rules as far as possible. Plan to create the character either randomly or using creation points. Settle on the non-player character's Previous Experience. Then decide how experienced the NPC is going to be. Select from Experienced, Professional, Veteran, or Master. The character creation process as it stands actually creates Experienced adventurers. The choice determines how many Experience Points you get to

spend improving an NPC, how much spare money he gets and the number of magic items he has picked up. A Veteran will have gained powerful allies and friends in many places. A Master may be at the head of an organisation or have very influential friends and associates, along with a group of followers.

UNNAMED CHARACTERS

The **Unnamed NPCs** are all those extras, spear-carriers, faceless hordes, and shop-keepers. They have no great impact on the course of events and are well below the Adventurers in terms of scores and general ability. They form an entire population of other folk, craftsmen and government officials, caravan leaders, thieves, beggars, scribes, merchants, sailors and others. These people cannot easily compete with the player characters in terms of attributes and abilities. They are, quite bluntly, not as important. Without significant combat or magical ability, these non-player characters are lesser

individuals, back-ground, extras. The referee can utilise them as he wishes within the adventures, and can make good use of these characters to create a feeling of continuity within a

<i>NPC Level</i>	<i>Experience Points</i>	<i>Denarii</i>	<i>Magic Items</i>
<i>Experienced</i>	0	1dx50	0
<i>Professional</i>	10	1dx100	1d-2
<i>Veteran</i>	20	1dx500	1d-1
<i>Master</i>	30	1dx1000	1d

campaign. Because of their lower status, these NPCs have much lower scores.

There are two main subdivisions within the category of Unnamed NPC: Commoners and Professionals.

Commoners are farmers, craftsmen, townsmen and labourers, nomad herdsmen, fishermen and anybody else without significant education and living in relative poverty, who uses his hands and his body to earn his living. To create a Commoner, follow these guidelines:

MIGHT	1
FATE	Roll 1d and re-roll any score of '1'.
HITS	Roll 1d and add 6
CRAFT	Roll 1d and re-roll any score of '1'.
LEARNING	1

Professionals are members of the educated elite, members of the aristocracy trained by rhetoricians and philosophers, as well as less wealthy townsmen able to enjoy an education and enter a professional career such as doctor, scribe, government clerk, architect, teacher etc. To create a Professional, follow these guidelines:

MIGHT	1
FATE	Roll 1d and re-roll any score of '1'.
HITS	Roll 1d and add 6
CRAFT	1
LEARNING	Roll 1d and re-roll any score of '1'.

Referees can now simply roll up a suitable NPC as the need arises within an adventure. Need to know the attributes of that wagon-drover? He's a Commoner, so roll his FATE, HITS and CRAFT. Don't bother with a name, these NPCs are typically 'nameless'.

Alternatively, the referee can utilise an even faster method of NPC creation.

Fast Creation

To really cut-down set-up or in-play time to a minimum where NPCs are concerned, the referee can simply decide whether the character is a Commoner or a Professional and roll 1 die. He re-rolls a result of '1'. This single result equates to the NPC's FATE, HITS and either CRAFT or LEARNING score. This creation method is entirely optional. Note that HITS must be doubled before play is joined. A fast creation NPC might simply be abbreviated in the referee's notes to:

Wagon-Drover

Commoner Rating 4/8

The number 4 represents his FATE and CRAFT, 8 is double that and represents his HITS. His MIGHT and LEARNING are automatically 1 and so need not be included in the notes. Alternatively:

Tax Collector

Professional Rating 6/12

The number 6 represents his FATE and LEARNING, 12 is double that and represents his HITS. His MIGHT and CRAFT are automatically 1 and so need not be included in the notes.



Adventure Seeds

These are ideas, concepts, cameos, fragments and pieces of lore that can germinate and become a great adventure. They may sprout in any one of many different directions and can branch out to create a wholly unexpected ending. Use or abuse these adventure seeds as required!

The Advisor

Cassius Longinus is an eminent Ionian speaker and philosopher - he is also the advisor to Queen Zenobia. He has tutored her son and as she seeks advice on Imperial matters, Longinus has always been there to advise her and given her access to his repertoire of powers. He also lusts after his mistress. He hates the desert, camels, flies and nomads of every kind, but his passion for this 'Cleopatra of the Desert' is unwavering.

Are You Not Entertained?

Touring the provinces and cities are acting companies, led by a manager (of varying abilities) and staffed either by trained slaves or freedmen, both men and women. Their most popular shows at the theatres of the towns and cities are pantomimes, where the actors mime

to singing, dancing and lots of music and extravagant special effects. Sometimes the actors might have speaking roles. Masks are always worn and often depict stock characters (the wily slave, the old man, the boastful warrior etc). The public often demand more and more lurid and vulgar shows.

Intrigue always follows the touring company. They are treated poorly, much like the gladiators owned and rented out by their manager - the lanista. The touring company may provide great cover for a group of Adventurers - especially since the actors wear elaborate costume and masks when on stage.

Theatres are always open-air and between the stage and the seating is a circular area (the orchestra) for the chorus to dance and sing. At the back of a stage is a well-built building frontage which is used in all of the performances as scenery. Actors retire to rooms separate from and behind this stage backdrop. The 'Deus ex Machina' is any elaborate contraption designed to create the special effect of divine intervention, the machines might cause actors to fly or disappear through the stage or vanish in a puff of smoke.

Cassius Longinus

MIGHT 2

FATE 4

HITS 22

CRAFT 4

LEARNING 6

ARMOUR No Armour

COMBAT - 2

Previous XP: Philosopher

Special Skills: Powers, Organize

Turn A Profit

Money: 1000 denarii

Culture: Imperial (Ionian)

Languages: Fluent Ionian

Fluent Imperial

Basic Aramaic

Basic Ancient

POWERS

Measurement

Compel Truth

Potion of Aqua Vitae

Detect Lie

See Secrets

Potion of Aqua Somnus

Potion of Telepathy

Potion of Pure Natron

EQUIPMENT:

Small Library of Scrolls

Alchemy Equipment

4 Potions of any of those can brew

Bag of Stormsand

Scroll of Irem

Golden Fly Necklace

Magnifying Lens

Atlantis - the Sunken City

Fabled Atlantis was a rich trading island in the Aegean Sea. The Atlantean civilisation was fabulously wealthy, cultured and sophisticated, with sprawling palaces and mountain-top temples. But the gods destroyed Atlantis, forcing it below the waves. Only the tiny island of Thera remains to indicate where Atlantis has sunk. That, and the occasional trinket hauled up in the nets of a lucky Ionian fisherman. According to the accounts of some heroes, a secret tunnel leads down into the heart of the Thera volcano which connects with the sunken kingdom. There beneath the seabed, the survivors of the catastrophe fight for survival against the Tritons, a cruel race of fish-men (think of the 'Creature From The Black Lagoon'). Most of the city is under the seabed, and accessible by caverns and tunnels but in places the sea has flooded entire areas.

Babylon - Mother of Harlots

It was the ancient Seleucid king Antiochus I who gave the order to evacuate the great city of Babylon five centuries ago. A great famine and a terrible plague had ravaged the city's population, and in uprooting the surviving Babylonians and settling them in nearby Seleucia-on-the-Tigris, the king hoped to save the remainder, as well as increase the power and prestige of his new capital Seleucia. Babylon had been a fantastic city, a wonder and a marvel of the ages. Vast in size and area the city was unique. A four horse chariot could turn on the top of its immense circuit walls. Rivers became moats on two sides. There were vast temples, palaces, fortresses and a towering ziggurat to Bel-Marduk the powerful patron god of Babylon. King Nebuchadnezzar had done much to turn the city into the grandiose metropolis that it is remembered for. He also constructed its famous Hanging

Gardens for his homesick Persian wife. But conquered by Persia, Babylon lost its shine and the Persians used their own cities for administration. Alexander the Great came to Babylon, but his successors, the Seleucids wanted to make a fresh start. A new rival, Seleucia-on-the-Tigris sprang up. Babylon was doomed.

For five hundred years the ruins of the city have attracted unofficial settlers; monsters of every kind, cultists who

have been expelled from their own cities, bandits, treasure seekers, the scum of the earth. It is said that the great treasures of Nebuchadnezzar are hidden in secret chambers within the immense walls of the ruined palace - guarded by the ghost of Nebuchadnezzar himself!

The Blessed Baboon

In a Decapolitan or Phoenician town, a priest of Thoth hires the Adventurers to steal a baboon from a merchant who is planning to sell the creature to the amphitheatre at Antioch. Although he won't say why he wants it, it is because he believes the baboon to be very, very intelligent and blessed by Thoth (who can appear as a baboon). But what if the baboon doesn't want to be captured? What if its owner is a gangster and the baboon controls the gang? And what is the true connection with Thoth?

Bad Beer

A farmer approaches the characters asking for help; the beer he brews is constantly bad, and he suspects it is being spoiled by magic. He believes that a recent (two months ago) inhabitant of the village is responsible. He is a foreigner. The referee should make this newcomer out to be strange and mysterious. He is not the magician the farmer thinks, however, and is

trying to scare the farmer because the farmer accidentally killed his oldest son five years ago. More beer turns bad, little witch-craft statuettes are left at the farmer's door, his cattle die in agony in the fields. Sorcery? The stranger's other sons are actually carrying out a psychological campaign against the farmer. The 'wizard's' sons will defend their father if need be. The characters will soon realise that the stranger has no powers and put a stop to the harmless (if terrifying) fear campaign. The stranger and his sons will be detained by the local noble for judgement. But the 'hauntings' continue... The farmer becomes distraught. The characters should discover the truth about the stranger's dead son only too late - on the anniversary of his death. The ghost has returned and really is haunting the farmer. Both the farmer and his own son are in mortal danger at the farm.

The Black Ziggurat

In the hill-land south of the old Persian capital Susa stands an impressive stepped pyramid-temple (ziggurat) constructed by an ancient king called Untash-Napirisha. Surrounded by other, more conventional temples and a massive stone wall, the ziggurat was to be a symbol of the king's new rule. But something happened - evil took hold of the ziggurat's priests and the place was shunned. When the king died, the dark and mysterious priesthood (worshipping the malign demon Nergal) took full control and began ruling the ziggurat, its temples and workshops. There are three sets of fortification walls surrounding the ziggurat and built by later kings - to keep the evil in!

Burial Club

In Ægypt an Imperial veteran (now farmer) asks for the help of the Adventurers. He is convinced that at centurion at Fort Babylon (the legionary fort at Memphis) is keeping dead men

on the payroll and burial club. He is pocketing the moneys owed to these supposedly still living legionnaires (and cutting it with his deputy the signifer who is the century's paymaster). For the sake of his friend's widow he wants it sorted out and the dishonour brought to his comrades removed.

The Buried Tower

A rumour can be picked up from the Saraceni tribes and from merchant caravans about a tower standing out of a dune field in the Nafud Desert, and of a light that shines at its top at mid-day. The tower is half buried, with only upper balconies poking out above the dunes. Is it part of Irem, City of Brass lost millennia ago? Is it a wizard's tower? Or the home of some lost god? Or a tomb to some cursed outlaw or exile? How deep does the tower descend into the sand? And what is that light? Maybe a reflection ...?

Caverns of Endor

The small hill-top village of Endor in Solyma is the home of the "Demon-Witch". Her slight stone-tower does not seem threatening, but has tunnels that lead down into a maze of underground passages and caverns that eventually connect to the Underworld.! All manner of terrifying monsters and demons inhabit these caverns along with shades of the dead waiting for the subconscious call of the Demon-Witch. Some do not know not that they are even dead. All the tunnel's inhabitants are at the beck and call of the Demon-Witch.

Cedar Mountains

The woods high in the Amanus Mountains are haunted by savage demons and monsters, but the timber is very valuable and highly prized. Gilgamesh came here with Enkidu to slay the mountain demon Humbaba. But the god lives still and is a terrifying embodiment of the violence of nature.

The Cedar Mountains are a forest-clad death-trap for the foolhardy. But its precious, aromatic wood fetches a high price for use in palaces and temples. Can the Adventurers accompany a party of carpenters into the forest to fell some timber, make rafts of it, then float it down the river to safety, all the while fighting off attacks from malign supernatural entities?

Charon - The Reaper

Charon is the bald-headed and battle-scarred leader of the gladiators-turned-mercenaries called the Myrmidons. He is grim and fatalistic warrior, intensely proud of his rough men.

A Close Shave!

A hairdresser needs the Adventurers' help. He recently attended to the wife of a local city magistrate. He was fitting her with a new wig in the current fashion made from the blonde hair of Gothic prisoners of war. He happened to overhear her husband chatting to a friend about a plot to poison one of the city's senators. That night an assassin came into his barber shop and tried to silence him! He needs protection, and a way to get proof of the plot he overheard. The city senate must hear about this.

Elephant Island

The most southerly point of the Imperial province of Ægypt is Elephant Island, which sits in the middle of the River Nile opposite the frontier town of Syene. The island is one of several rocky granite islands standing in the

Nile. It marks a frontier region of granite outcrops and rocks sculptured by the swirl of the rapids into fanciful shapes. There are many quarries in the area also. The province depends on Elephant Island for trade, since it is home to a merchant colony trading in ivory and other goods from Golden Meroe and from Axum beyond. But beneath the island is a vast network of caves from which the Nile wells up each year to produce the inundation, the fertile flooding of the valley. These mystical caverns were created by the local god Khnum and are home to a whole variety of supernatural creatures, clustering around the magical waters.

Festival of Luna

On the 24th of Augustus a festival of Luna is observed. Most shrines and temples to Luna in the big cities also house a mundus or ritual pit that actually leads to the Underworld. On this day the cover is removed to allow the spirits of the dead to roam free. The day is holy and public business is forbidden. Perhaps the Adventurers might meet long dead friends and foes walking the streets. Very disconcerting! The mundus is also opened up on the 5th of October and the 8th of November.

Fistfuls of Silver

A small walled village or town on the fringes of civilisation is currently home to two bandit gangs in hiding. Both are at war and the citizens of the village are suffering. When the Adventurers enter

Charon			
MIGHT	5	COMBAT +3	GEAR
FATE	5	Previous XP: Gladiator	Shortsword +2
HITS	19	Special Skill: Killing Blow	Spear +3
CRAFT	1	Money: 45 denarii	Manicae -1
LEARNING	2	Culture: Imperial	Helm -1
		Languages: Fluent Imperial	
ARMOUR	Light		

seeking supplies or help, they are drawn irrevocably into the feud. As they enter the village one gang has just kidnapped the daughter of the village chief. The villagers want the Adventurers' help but can offer no reward. Soon after the kidnapping bandits try to hire the Adventurers to kill the rival bandit chief. Before they can do anything, this other bandit gang threatens to kill all the Adventurers and six innocent villagers unless the Adventurers murder the boss of their mortal enemies ...

Flocks By Night

A local farmer has had his sheep eaten or stolen (they have vanished). Who or what has been stealing them? The farmer hires the PCs to investigate. They go with the shepherd boy to watch over the flock at night. There is little pay, perhaps a free meal and a sheep to take away for food or sacrifice. In actual fact the shepherd boy is the culprit - he is a werewolf but doesn't know it. The changes are not timed with the full moon as in Western mythology. A sound should distract the characters, the sheep become restless and the shepherd begins to round stragglers up. When they all return to the shepherd boy, all that is left is a patch of blood. Is he dead? Eaten? The group is then attacked by the werewolf springing from a nearby outcrop. When killed, the beast turns back into the boy, complete with wounds. The farmer, when told, tells the PCs with a heavy heart, that he took the boy in last year - he found him wandering, lost and hungry. For complications the shocked farmer accuses them of murder and sends a slave to the village to inform the elders. The PCs can either stay for a trial (presided over by a judge from the nearby city) or run!

Fortress of Lost Souls

Dura Europus was an Imperial desert outpost, a magnificent walled city and garrison on the fertile banks of the Euphrates. A powerful fortress city, it was besieged and destroyed by the Persian king Shapur several years ago. Now it lies in ruins. But Dura is not lifeless. Imperial survivors, reluctant to leave, pick out a precarious living, Persian commoners have moved in to herd their cattle in the uncultivated fields as well as search for valuables. Treasure hunters gather looking for lost Imperial gold. Dura is a refugee centre, a ruin inhabited by gold-diggers, army deserters, exiles, survivors and sundry opportunists. Will the city rise again? Which faction will come to the fore? Or is the skeleton being picked clean?

The Great Labyrinth

South of the pyramid of Pharaoh Amenemhat III in the royal necropolis of Hawara near the Fayum, stands a sprawling maze-like complex of fifteen hundred chambers underground and another fifteen hundred above ground connected by winding passages. Cutting through the structure are a dozen roofed courts. The sands of the desert have half filled this enigmatic structure. What is this building? Why was it built? One philosopher contends that it is the remains of a mortuary temple to some ancient Egyptian king, another that the Great Labyrinth was built by the Vizier Joseph to see Egypt through a long famine. Perhaps it was constructed as a treasure house by the architect Imhotep, builder of the first pyramids. Whatever its original use, the Great Labyrinth (called this by Ionic and Imperial philosophers) was repeatedly raided and attacked by invaders over the years. The Great Labyrinth lies in ruins partially buried by creeping dunes. The floor-

plan was lost long ago and parties sent in to recover treasures and other items never return ...

The Hunted

A young clerk from an Egyptian Temple of Maat (Truth) needs help - he has just taken the death-bed confession of a dangerous killer who says he was an assassin in the pay of the High Priest of Maat - Egypt's greatest judge and an Imperial official from the governor's office. So he cannot turn to his superiors, and the killer's evil and bloodthirsty gang, the Amemets (Devourers) are on his trail. He needs protection, for the Amemets are sure to track him down. What is the solution? Should he flee Egypt with the Adventurers - or face his foes?

Irem - City of Pillars

A lost city of wealth and decadence deep in the Desert of Lost Souls, close to the Sabaeen frontier. Through this city was said to flow all of the perfumes, exotic spices and rare materials so sought after by the empires of the day. But the impious King Ad brought disaster onto his people, his dynasty and his tribe, and the sands swallowed up Irem and obliterated the camel trails that led to it. It is said that some wise old Saracens keep the secret of Irem's whereabouts, but refuse to reveal that secret for fear they unleash the terrible destructive Angel of Death that destroyed the city and the people. It is said the Angel waits there still, trapped within the confines of that dead city waiting for the time it is needed once more. He who can bind and

control the Angel will surely be able to vanquish the massed armies of the world. Let us pray that no lowly nomad with ideas suggests such an enterprise!

The Iron Gates

The Cilician Gates is a high mountain pass through the Taurus Mountains that allows access from the plains of Cilicia into the high plateau beyond. It was known in ancient times as the Iron Gates, and the valley carrying the pass is still riddled with old mine workings, tunnels, caves and old mining works. Regular troop patrols keep the pass open, but the old tunnels and caves are never investigated. What ancient horror still lurks there from the dark days before the Empire? If it awoke, and the pass were closed, Adventurers would need to be called upon to find out what it was!

Jadhimah - The Jackal

King Jadhimah al Abrash is the leader of the huge Saraceni tribe, the Azad. He is a leper who worships two ancient carved stone idols, representations of the desert god Dushara. He leads a standing army of nomad mercenaries that strike fear into the hearts of caravan leaders, pilgrims and other desert travellers. Jadhimah is the sworn enemy of the infamous Warrior Princess Zabbai, ruler of the desert fortress of Baydah.

The Labyrinth of Minos

The wife of the ancient Cretan king Minos, Pasiphae had an illicit liaison with a sacred bull and the product of this union was the half-bull half-man

Jadhimah the Jackal			
MIGHT	4	COMBAT +2	GEAR
FATE	2	Previous XP: Desert Warrior	Shortsword +2
HITS	22	Special Skill: Desert Travel	Bow +2
CRAFT	1	Money: 145 denarii	10 Arrows
LEARNING	1	Culture: Aramaean	
		Languages: Basic Aramaic	
ARMOUR	No Armour		

Minotaur, a beast so savage only human blood could satisfy it. To imprison the beast, Minos had his architect Daedalus construct the Labyrinth below his palace at Knossos. To feed its appetite Minos demanded youths from a vassal city called Athens. The prince of Athens, Theseus, was one of those youths and he is supposed to have slain the Minotaur and found his way out with a trail of twine he had left behind. Today the Labyrinth is a vast underground complex harbouring deadly traps, fantastic treasures and many terrible monsters - the most famous of which are the off-spring of the original Minotaur who rules the complex like a god. He is not dead, but lives on. The palace above the Labyrinth is deserted and haunted by ghosts of the lost civilisation of Minos that fell soon after the Trojan War.

Latrines

Public lavatories exist in the big cities and are much like those in legionary forts - a wooden bench over a running sewer. Men (and perhaps women too) just sit next to each other to conduct their business. What stories, rumours or whispered secrets might you hear? Is it a place for secret meetings? It is pretty clear that lots of wheeling and dealing did go on in the latrines (in the forts, the baths and the public ones too).

The Legion of Doom

In 701 AUC the Imperial general Crassus led a vast force against the Parthian king, but his army suffered the terrible wrath of the burning desert and the Parthians picked off soldiers on the march. Crassus tried to face the Parthians, but their horse archers continually avoided close combat while inflicting massive damage which lowered Imperial morale. Now desperate, the legions made a forced

march to Carrhae, but many small units became lost in the desert and fought for their lives. The Imperials that won through to Carrhae found it without supplies and the Parthians were on their heels. The end came quickly. Crassus was killed and the main body destroyed or captured. Out of an Imperial force of 36,000 men only 10,000 survived.

There are rumours that many of those Imperial legionnaires cut off and lost in the Syrian Desert wander there still. The undead soldiers of this Legion of Doom fiercely strike at Saraceni nomads, local people and (of course) Persians. Who knows how they would act in the presence of Imperials? The legionnaires are skeletal, wind-dried, figures clad in tarnished Mail Cuirasses. Haunting and terrifying figures, silent and eye-less - the vultures having done their work efficiently. The Legion may be leaderless, or rally behind a headless undead Crassus or perhaps some wild-eyed Ionian philosopher called Melanthis (the Black One).

Legionary of Doom

MIGHT 2	HITS 6 1 Attack
Intelligent	Light Armour

Legionnaires generally wield short swords, shields and a pilum.

Little Donkey

A local farmer or petty landowner has heard that there is a herd of wild donkeys in the area, and needs the characters to help him capture some for breaking. The attempt requires that the party walk out into the dry steppeland to ambush the herd and drive it toward the farmers and herdsman with rope lassos. This is a difficult task, especially since there is a hungry and desperate lion in the area, attracted by the donkey foals. The lion might spring out when they least expect it, or maybe start stalking the group.

Long Live The King!

Alexander the Great died five and a half centuries ago and was reputedly mummified and buried in a secret catacomb in Ægypt by his general (and then governor of Ægypt) Ptolemy. Where is his body now? Julius Caesar wept over the sarcophagus two centuries ago. Where is Alexander's tomb? Under Alexandria, at the fabled Siwa Oasis - or somewhere else entirely? Could he be resurrected? Why would anyone unleash such heroic ferocity on the world again!?



No Bar Room Brawls!

A popular occupation for retired gladiators is that of barman (i.e. owner) of a wine-shop. Wineshops are like other 'bars' on the streets of a city - a counter right on the pavement with stools, where passers-by can stop and ask for wine (of various local or imported vintages) to be served up from huge amphorae set into the stone counter. Fast-food bars are also common. The bar may be under a colonnade or have a canopy to keep customers cool. You don't want to start a fight at a bar like this! Gladiators, off-duty soldiers and other hard-as-hobnail-men may drink there. Great for rumours, information and a place to hire muscle. In some typical city Decius One-Hand runs his bar. The city politics are close to boiling point and all gladiators are under constant lock and key by law (since they are hired for use in uprisings). Decius has been approached to get a small gladiator-force together discretely, so he has been smuggling in wagon-loads of gladiators

into the city in large amphorae. They are waiting for a big upcoming festival to earn their pay and kick some ass - tipping the balance of power in one magistrate's favour ...

Pirates

Pirates have raided a coastal village and carried away into slavery several young men and women. The Gothic barbarians are Vikings of the Middle Sea, ferocious blonde-haired warriors spreading terror and chaos. They will try to sell their captives at Antioch's vast slave market. The village offers a meagre reward for their recapture (or lie about the reward on offer).

The Pyramids

These vast stone tombs of the Ægyptian pharaohs were also shrines to the sun-gods. The pharaohs long-ago abandoned this form of burial, but the majestic pyramids remain - beckoning the Adventurer and tomb robber alike. There are fabulous treasures in each untouched pyramid, but deadly traps and puzzles to guard them. Undead servants of the entombed pharaoh or noblemen may also have to be overcome. And finally - the mummy of the pharaoh or noble may come alive to defend his treasures! In the strange kingdom of Golden Meroe, the priest-kings and aristocrats still erect pyramids for their journey to the afterlife. These are on a smaller scale than the Ægyptian monsters, however.

Silver Mountain

A mountain steeped in sorcery and mystery high in the Taurus Mountains north of Adana. Said to be honey-combed with tunnels and passages, Silver Mountain is reputed to contain fabulous deposits of pure silver (not galena ore)- a gift from the gods. But the gods have placed inside the mountain an army of supernatural creatures to protect this silver.

Sodom & Gomorrah

The Dead Sea is a unique inland sea in the deserts of Solyma and fumes come off of it which can turn poisonous without warning. No fish swim within it, no birds across it, and the water is very unhealthy if swallowed. The sea is full of salt, the shoreline decorated here and there with enigmatic pillars of salt, victims of the awful curse of the sea. Sodom and Gomorrah are two cities at the southern end of the sea - both now empty, terrifying and in ruins. The twin cities of the plain of Zoar were places of great evil, perversion and debauchery, but they were cursed thousands of years ago and consumed by volcanic ash, boiling clouds of sulphur and waves of scalding bitumen. The now shattered ruins hold many treasures and secrets, and are inhabited by evil creatures attracted by the sinful aura of the place. Descendants of survivors from the cataclysm still meet secretly at the ruins, their awful cult of perversion and terror is known simply as the Men of Zoar.

Swordfight at the Last Oasis

The Farafra Oasis in Ægypt lies 300km to the west of Asyut and is the smallest of the oases in the Whispering Desert. It seems the Imperial eagle is taking a nose-dive, and in the utterly subjugated population of the Ægyptian province, local sentiment is on the up. There is a resurgence of popular feeling and dreams that the Empire is doomed. At Farafra Oasis deep in the Whispering Desert a number of factions fight for the right to kick out the Empire for good. The factions include:

Pademe - An Ægyptian scribe who grew up in Nubia at the ancient fort from which he takes his name. He claims to be descended from the last Pharaoh Nectanebo II (five centuries previously).

Cleopatra VIII - This Ionic lady is the favourite candidate of the large Ionic population in Ægypt who want to see a powerful Ionic-led nation, just as it was under *the* Cleopatra (VII).

Imhotep - A high priest of Amun-Ra exiled from the Siwa Oasis (a centre of Amun-Ra worship and the site of a famous oracle). He is a religious leader who arranged for the oracle to predict himself the leader of a renewed Ægyptian Kingdom and the conqueror of the Imperial garrison forces.

The Tower of Babel

In the mists of time, when all people spoke one language, a vast tower reaching into the sky was built of baked brick as a sign of mankind's unity and sense of purpose, a testament to human spirit and ingenuity. Standing in what is now Chaldea, the Tower of Babel was left unfinished when the gods caused mankind to speak many tongues and divide his purpose, intent and loyalty. The dreams of man were frozen in time and abandoned. Today the Tower of Babel is home to monsters, outcasts and rogues. But the treasures of that ancient Golden Age civilisation are said to be found deep within it.

Troy

The fabled city of Troy was the scene of the world's first clash of nations - the bronze age Ionian kingdoms fought the Asiatic tribes led by the dynasty of Troy. Troy was besieged for ten years and the Ionians only won through at the end by trickery - the gods gave the Ionian warrior Ulysses the secret of the Trojan Horse, a ruse which worked. The Trojan hero Aeneas and other refugees fled from Troy to become the ancestors of the first inhabitants of the Eternal City. Many famous heroes fought at Troy, some died there. Gods too, fought on the Trojan Plain, for one side or another. Alexander the Great is reputed

to have visited the grave of Achilles at Troy and took Achilles' great shield with him on his expedition to conquer the world. What other treasures lie in tombs scattered across the Trojan Plain and along the banks of the River Scamander? How many tombs are lost? And the ruins of Troy? The tiny frontier town of New Ilium stands atop the hill-like mound of ancient Troy, some say that tunnels and subterranean chambers lead down into the ancient city. What secrets remain?

The Tunnels

Under the public baths, or the heated rooms of a palace or villa, are the convoluted service tunnels allowing hot air to circulate as well as slaves to clean and maintain the system. What if one of the furnace staff were using the tunnels for some other purpose? Does he have secret access into a room? Does he steal? Murder? Why? Perhaps the Adventurers could use the tunnels to gain access to the centre of a palace or villa without being noticed.

The Turquoise Cavern

There is a rock-cut temple that extends deep into the Sinai Mountains. This has a traditional stone facade, complete with court and portico. It marks the site of Ægypt's first and most productive turquoise mine and was built to appease the local desert spirits. When mining expeditions return to Sinai to extract turquoise, they pay homage to the goddess Hathor at this shrine before moving on to the more productive cliff faces and valleys. The Cave of Hathor has many undesirable inhabitants, from ancient spirits to ghosts, desert monsters to magicians and adventurers (turquoise is a magical stone that attracts magical inhabitants).

The Vale of Eden

High up in the Taurus Mountains, somewhere in the darkest depths of the Armenian wilderness between Lake Ararat and Lake Mannai is the secret Vale of Eden, a lost paradise - the home to all humanity. The inhabitants of Eden are otherworldly survivors from the Golden Age before the Flood, knowing no violence, no sex, no jealousy, rage or greed. The Great Tree grows in Eden and is protected by the Black Serpent that some call Ahriman, the Demon-King. Heroes may want to find Eden for many reasons - it is said that all illnesses and wounds vanish, that no-one of evil intent can enter, and that anyone living in Eden will live forever. All or none of these stories may be true. Perhaps the powers of Ahriman are growing and he is able to subvert the Edenites around him? Perhaps the inhabitants need outside help?

Valley of the Kings

A secret royal cemetery in the rocky desert on the west bank of the River Nile opposite Thebes, the Valley of the Kings was once patrolled by elite Nubian warriors. Many say that it is the spirits of long dead pharaohs that now haunt the twisting valley. There are vast riches still to be found in the deadly and fiendishly trapped rock-cut tomb complexes of these ancient Ægyptian kings - but the valley's terrible magic may get the heroes first! Note that a short distance away over a ridge is the Valley of the Queens. The size and sophistication of a tomb is usually dictated by the status and power of its owner. The tombs of pharaohs Ramses II, Ramses III, Set I and Thutmoses III, for example, are grand, treasure-filled death-traps. And then there are the curses ...

The Wizard - Iamblichus ('eye-am-bli-kus') was born at Chalcis in Ionia and is a Neo-Platonist philosopher obsessed with magic and rituals. His Ionic writings include: "Exhortation to Philosophy" (a defence of magic and especially Pythagorean magic) and "On Mysteries" an analysis of superstitions. He studied under the wise philosopher Porphyry in the Eternal City. He has his present home in Antioch, but travels extensively on his quests for magical lore and information.

at every turn. In one incident during their feud, Jadhimah's men got inside the fort of Baydah by hiding in sacks carried by a camel caravan. A guard on the gate stuck his ox-goad into a sack and the warrior inside broke wind. "There is mischief in those sacks" said the guard, but he still let the caravan pass inside the walls. Jadhimah's men soon took control of Baydah until Princess Zabbai returned with reinforcements and retook her desert citadel.

Zabbai - Warrior Princess

Warrior princess Zabbai is a Saracen chieftainess, tough and uncompromising, a bandit queen of the desert. She rules the remote desert fortress of Baydah and plagues both the rich caravans travelling between Persia and the Decapolis, as well as the tribesmen of the Azad. She is the mortal enemy of Jadhimah, leader of the Azad tribe, since Jadhimah cruelly murdered her husband-to-be on her wedding night and tried to force himself upon her - since she is the sole child, daughter and rightful heir of the last king of the Azad. He forced a marriage through, but Zabbai escaped into the desert to attack the treacherous Azad, as well as Jadhimah and his vicious mercenaries



Iamblichus

MIGHT	1	COMBAT - 0	POWERS
FATE	5	Previous XP: Philosopher	Detect Substance
HITS	18	Special Skill: Powers	Potion of Aqua Noxious
CRAFT	2	Money: 320 denarii	Potion of Aqua Vitae
LEARNING	6	Culture: Imperial (Ionian)	Potion of Natron
		Languages: Fluent Ionian	Potion of Telepathy
ARMOUR	No Armour	Fluent Imperial	See Secrets
		Basic Aramaic	
		Basic Ancient	

Zabbai

MIGHT	2	COMBAT +2	GEAR
FATE	6	Previous XP: Desert Warrior	Shortsword +2 (right hand)
HITS	19	Special Skill: Desert Travel	Dagger +1 (left hand)
CRAFT	1	Money: 49 denarii	3x Hidden Daggers (+1)
LEARNING	1	Culture: Aramaean	
		Languages: Basic Aramaic	
ARMOUR	No Armour		

Queen Zenobia (*Master Desert Warrior, Priestess of Allat & Queen*)

Zenobia is exquisitely gorgeous, with large dark eyes that see into mens' souls and perfumed hair falling in elaborate ringlets onto her purple silks. She is a leader of men and women, she dominates those in her presence with a burning fury. The Queen is protected by

a body of 12 hand-picked warriors, fanatical desert Saraceni heavily armed and armoured. These men are utterly loyal, whether by magic or the sexual favours of Zenobia, the gossip-mongers cannot agree. Her vizier is old and without family, and he has the respect of the royal guard, a unit of cataphracts, 200 strong.

Zenobia		
MIGHT	5	COMBAT - 6
FATE	6	Previous XP: Desert Warrior
HITS	20	Special Skills: Desert Travel, Seek Audience, Organize, Mounted Combat, Read Tracks, Silent Movement
CRAFT	1	Money: Whatever is needed
LEARNING	5	Culture: Saraceni
		Family Origins: Noble
		Languages: Fluent Saraceni
ARMOUR	No Armour	Fluent Aramaic
		Basic Ionian

XIII CAMPAIGNS

A Campaign Premise

Several campaign possibilities exist in **ZENOBIA** and the following premises may give a referee an idea of where to begin his campaign.

1 - Arena Adventures

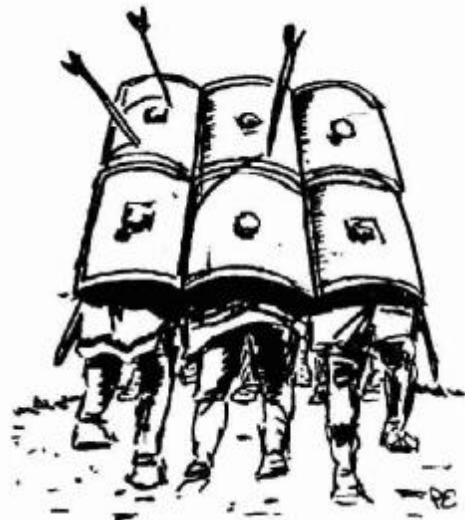
The characters are all gladiators living and fighting for a single *ludi* (school). Besides fighting arena duels, the characters will have varied and interesting lives. They work as bodyguards for important Imperials, engage in dangerous love affairs, train rich youngsters or legions, and carry out covert activities on behalf of desperate but powerful senators and equestrians. Slaves, criminals and prisoners of war could become gladiators, but so could freemen eager for the money, or noblemen eager for the glory! There were several types of gladiator, with different equipment. **Mirmillo** (longsword, shield, chest plate, Fish helmet, *galerus* - heavily armoured) and **Samnite** (short or long sword, shield, helmet, *galerus*, greaves - heavily armoured), **Retarius** (trident and net - no armour) and **Thracian** (scimitar, round shield, helmet - lightly armoured).

Refer to The Gladiatorial Games, later in this chapter for more information.

2 - Military Adventures

A small unit of Imperial or Palmyrene soldiers will face the enemies of the Eternal City on the battlefield as well as all the problems of provincial and Imperial life; mysteries, intrigues and murder, harsh environments, secret missions and seemingly routine patrolling or protection duties. There are several types of Imperial military unit to choose from:

Legionaries: Legionary characters will all be commoners, as will the members of the so-called auxiliary units. The latter used to recruit from the provinces, but now the auxiliary units simply form separate frontier troops while the legions are the core garrison troops. Equipment will generally be shortsword, javelin, helmet and heavy armour, dagger and shield. They operate in small squads, and carry out all kinds of military activities, including patrolling, guarding, battles, reprisals and construction and garrison work.



Numeri: During this period in Imperial history, foreign tribesmen were recruited into mercenary units led by their own chieftains. They were often from the most savage and warlike areas. Equipment varies from tribe to tribe, from Goths to Libyans to Saracens.

Cavalrymen: Try a cavalry unit. Formed of scouts and recon troops, commanded by a *duplicarius*, small units of 5-10 cavalrymen were employed as part of a *turma* (squadron). They conducted battlefield operations,

often trying to outflank enemy units, they pursued defeated enemy, conducted scouting and foraging, messenger duties, escorting valuable people or cargoes, and carried out police duties in provincial cities. Equipment includes a horse and riding gear, heavy armour, longsword and a short spear. Warlike barbarian cavalry units were formed, led by their own chieftains. These were *cunei*, the cavalry equivalents of *numeri* and have differing equipment.

3 - Espionage Adventures

In a less military-focused campaign, the player-characters are the aides of a Imperial senator or equestrian. Senators moved from important public offices in the Eternal City, to governorships in the provinces and into military commands in the field. They always took their own staff, who are the heroes. Constant intrigue tinges military adventures, court dramas, and espionage missions.

Heroes are bodyguards, personal agents, spies, professional administrators or advisors, foreign allies, a trusted philosopher or sorcerer etc. This campaign can move heroes around the empire and from one type of game to another as the senator's career changes. Characters could be patrician noblemen, ex-gladiator bodyguards (see above), legionary body guards, 'special assistants' (thieves or assassins), perhaps a sage, physician or even an astrologer (Magician). Equipment will be basic, maximum of light armour and no weapons larger than shortwords. Official bodyguards may be heavily armoured with shields.

4 - Provincial Adventures

Life was fraught with danger for even the most backwoods town. The Time of Chaos saw rebellions spring up in Gaul, Britain, and Syria and invasions by Persians and Goths. Legions struggling

in the civil wars despoiled the countryside, taking whatever they needed. It could be a dangerous time. The characters are retired legionnaires (having spent 25 years in the army), local provincials or barbarians, or any of the other occupations in a peaceful capacity. What happens to the local town or village, and how the characters react to it will form the focus of events. Alternatively have the characters as a group of barbarians on the fringe of the Empire dragged into the course of events, taken as slaves, hired as guards or becoming freedom fighters. Equipment must be tailored to the characters and the situation, but they will all be 'non-adventurers'.

5 - Sea-Going Adventures

The characters could be the crew of a small trading ship, sailing around the Middle Sea trying to earn a living and have adventures on the way. This could be a real Sinbad experience if all those magical islands and exotic mythical lands still exist! Ship crews were quite small, and the merchant ships often took a small number of passengers. All but the captain slept on deck. The owner will probably not be a crew-member. Piracy was becoming a serious problem in the Time of Chaos; Goths and Germans were using the seas to raid merchant ships. Characters will be sailors, ex-gladiator sailors, a philosopher as a professional traveller, perhaps a thief as a courier (if the vessel is owned by an important equestrian-level nobleman). No character will be heavily armoured, most will have daggers, the warriors may carry shortwords.

6 - Tourist Adventures

The Empire allowed tourism on a scale never before seen. The characters can be the entourage of a wealthy Imperial who has to travel across the Empire. Perhaps he or she is on a personal quest,

a mission of mercy or conducting an investigation. Heroes can be bodyguards, personal agents or advisors, foreign guides, perhaps a philosopher or official companion etc. This campaign can move characters around the empire and from one type of game to another as the adventurers travel from province to province. Characters could be nobles, ex-gladiator bodyguards, a thief, musician, philosopher or physician. Equipment must be tailored to the characters and the situation.

7 - Mercenary Adventures

The Desert Kingdoms are currently awash with mercenaries - deserters from the legions, Saracen or Nubian nomads, gladiators, refugees looking for revenge. The new kingdoms will hire anyone who seems reliable, cities hire guards, noblemen hire their own private armies to protect their estates from Goths, Saracens and bandits. Finally, merchants hire mercenaries to guard their caravans. Characters will be legionnaires, caravan guards and other ex-military types, as well as gladiators and even nomads (for caravan duty).

8 - Fortune-Seeking Adventures

The diverse characters have been thrown together by greed to search for lost treasures, to plunder the hoards of chiefs and kings, to fight monsters, explore labyrinths and wield their shortswords and spears in defence of whomever may pay their wages. Sound familiar? It isn't a terribly original premise for a FRPG, but for many it is a comfortable one. Just remember that in the eyes of the Empire, Persia and the organised governments of the other Desert Kingdoms, these Adventurers are thieves, bandits and thugs - armed and dangerous!



Creative Campaigns

People role-play for many different reasons, but most of us get deeply involved in the hobby for perhaps the most powerful reason of all. We get involved in role-playing games because of the *freedom* they can give us. Chess, Risk, Monopoly - they all constrain our decisions in ways we find unacceptable and frustrating. Role-playing games - as any back-cover blurb will tell you - allow the players to take the initiative, to decide for themselves the fate of their characters, to provide total freedom.

Freedom or Chaos?

But as any experienced referee can attest - a game rarely quite works out like that. Role-playing games promise freedom of choice, and the chance for players to make their own decisions, but these are balanced against a need to tell a story, and to use ideas and material that the referee has previously prepared. Realistically, few games allow "ultimate freedom of action".

Generally, when a referee promises total freedom for the players the same pattern of behaviour occurs. Each player, focusing on the needs or desires of his character pursues his own agenda. A mixed bag of fantasy characters, if let

off the leash and if sufficiently motivated, will quickly go on their own way. The thief discovers a plot to kill the town mayor, the magic-user coaxes a local mage into teaching him various powers, the fighter starts recruiting a few local hot-heads for a raid on a local bandit lair. Very soon the referee is snowed-under with diverging (and sometimes conflicting) plot-lines. He cannot have prepared enough adequate material to cover all of the potential activities - and is resorting to improvisation. A good referee can pull this off for a time, but cannot possibly match the depth of detail that a properly prepared scenario can give. Especially when his improvisational skills are divided simultaneously between four or more players. And anyway - the very point of playing together is in role-playing *together*, with characters acting in concert toward a common goal.

When a referee plays out the offer of employment for the characters to go and wipe out the local bandit gang all he can do is pray that his players will co-operate and go with the flow. The needs of a well-designed story and the need for some kind of character freedom clash. The players *must* agree, otherwise there is no game. If they start to do their own thing, then they ruin the prepared adventure for everyone else. This balance is a fine one. Usually, most players understand that if the game is to succeed then their characters must follow up rumours given to them, accept the mission, or react to any major activity as the game begins. Otherwise there is *no* game. Almost every referee (worthy of that title, at least) has mastered the art of 'forcing' or 'convincing' the players to become involved in his freshly written or recently purchased adventures.

Easy As A-B-C

A referee can offer huge amounts of money or other reward, to get players involved in a scenario, or he can force the players with violence, blackmail, or some other form of underhanded threat. Usually, though, such blatant use of force is rarely needed. Referees can play on the personal histories of characters, on their desires and loyalties, their contacts or occupations. When characters are welded together into a professional group that is paid to follow orders, then players have *no* excuse for avoiding an adventure. But player freedom suffers accordingly ...

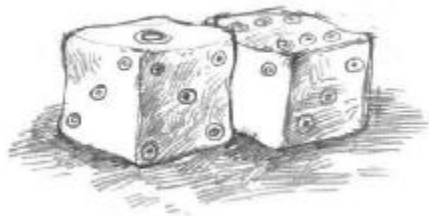
How do professionally written scenarios handle the player-freedom versus prepared story-line question? With only a few notable exceptions game publishers follow the tried and tested A-B-C method of scenario design. This has been described as the 'onion-layer effect'. The scenario plot begins with one scene - and moves on to a second. This in turn leads to a third. Eventually, the penultimate episode leads to a final climax - and the end of the adventure. To push and prod players from one scene to the next game designers often provide various tips and ruses, such as redirecting characters' activities, providing obvious or not-so-obvious clues, even giving player characters a seriously hard time if they don't stick with the program.

It must be said that the majority of home-written scenarios are probably also written this way. And why not? Every eventuality cannot be catered for, so the prudent referee prepares for the expected activities of his or her players - and wings the rest. Such an investment in preparation saves on time and concentrates the game activity on one subject. No referee can exclaim 'do

what you like !' and have prepared for **every** eventuality in any detail. But a good referee mixes material that he has prepared with material that he is creating on-the-fly so well, that many players won't even notice. Real freedom is only an illusion.

Often, though, this doesn't matter. When the game is all about a haunted farmhouse, what kind of player will want to march into the city of Thebes to find a plot-line there instead? This is one good way to eliminate the desires of players to 'do their own thing'. Let them do their own thing **within the confines of the scenario**. Total freedom of action in the haunted farmhouse, on the pirate-infested island, or whatever. It is a limited freedom that depends on the players accepting the scenario in the first place. Most referees running scenarios for their mixed group of characters will find it easy to empathise with this kind of approach. You have a climax to get to - and somehow the players **must** get there !

But there is an alternative ... the plot-path.



The Plot-Path

Plot-paths weave together several story ideas and allow the players to choose the story or 'thread' that interests them. Of course we are talking about far more than just a choice of corridor or forest trail here. Paths could diverge at all kinds of interesting places: perhaps the characters discover that a friendly NPC is a wanted criminal. Do they a) help

him, b) turn him over to the authorities, or c) stay out of it?

The idea of the plot-path is to anticipate these three eventualities and have a good grasp of what happens next. This doesn't mean the referee writes out three separate scenarios in fine detail with charts, statistics and descriptions; it simply means he should have an idea for a good adventure at the end of each path. In the case above, he might decide that the result of a) will mean the characters discover the criminal is a freedom fighter and must smuggle him out of the city. Meanwhile b) indicates the characters are commissioned to track down and kill his 'accomplices', while c) indicates that the authorities believe the PCs are the criminal's accomplices and are framed and then arrested for murder.

Previously prepared plot-paths combine the benefits of prepared scenarios with a much greater variety of player choice. When a referee is writing his own games, it also means he can 'fore-shadow' events and characters that may re-appear at a later stage in the plot-path structure. The downside of such a system is that it requires the referee to devise a whole bunch of scenario concepts that he may not use. The way to combat this is to keep the scenario ideas **only** as well thought-out ideas. Games written for redundant plot-paths can quite easily be saved and written into later campaigns or paths. What the players don't meet they won't recognise! Plot-paths are easy to prepare and use. Consider the characters above all. What can they do? What do they **want** to do? By analysing their motives the referee can plan his scenarios much more effectively. Secondly, the referee must plan his plot-paths, the details of which will vary with the setting and theme of the game being played. Don't worry if players go

off-track and create their own 'path-way'! The plot-path idea is just a campaign aid, a bit of fore-sight to make the referee's job easier. Improvising for unexpected actions is what roleplaying is all about and is what this system is designed to promote, after-all! Go with the flow, and after the session is over, simply add the new plot-path and work out a couple of fresh outcomes. Perhaps these can lead back to your other scenario ideas later ...

Freedom Through Flowcharts

Of course there is still no *real* freedom in the plot-path system, but there is far more freedom than in the limited A-B-C system of writing scenarios. Players feel an immense power and freedom in being able to determine where they go, which offers they accept or turn down, or whether or not they run or fight. With the prospect of two or more different climaxes waiting for them at the end of the campaign the players retain that excitement and uncertainty that comes with a game not fully planned-out. The plot-path system works wonderfully when the referee has a dozen or more scenarios at hand and is able to string them together into multiple plot-paths.

If you are thinking of refereeing a long-running campaign, then think about which method you want to use, A-B-C or plot-path? Of course the choice will depend on several things; whether the characters are freelance or working for someone, whether you (as referee) have a range of scenario ideas to choose from, or whether you are suitably familiar with the world of **ZENOBIA** or not. Essentially, you need to organise your available game ideas into a single master flowchart. This will provide an easy method of tracking the

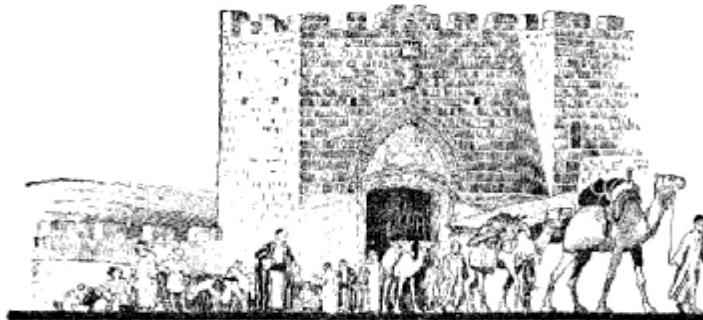
course of future events, whichever plot-path the players decide to take. These flowcharts allow you to see where things are headed and to 'plug-in' new ideas and scenario options. It provides a blueprint of potential games.

By giving your players the freedom to select the scenarios that they want to play, then you are really providing them with as much freedom as you possibly can. The focus is on you as a referee to create believable and realistic plot-paths that mirror life in the ancient world. They should also mirror the goals and motivations of the player-characters involved in the campaign.

Campaign Cities

When the party of player characters trudges into a city, all they usually need to know are the basics. Where's the inn? Is there a town guard? Can we carry our weapons around? The city becomes a very basic place to eat and sleep between *real* adventures out in the wilderness. Life is just so much more exciting out there! But cities can be great settings for adventures in their own right.

Some character types are tailor-made for the unique opportunities of the city. Thieves, con-men, assassins, nobles, priests (or anyone who deals with people) are all in their element when the scenario shifts into this setting. But practically *every* character must interact with the city and its inhabitants to some



degree. Where do merc-enaries live between commissions? Where do bandits sell their stolen goods? Where do warriors get their training and equipment? Realistically, the player characters will be spending a good deal of their time in this setting and would probably be residents of one city or another.

The city supplements produced by the game companies do look incredibly daunting, but it is a relatively simple procedure to create your own version, but don't let the apparent complexity put you off. Flesh out a city in the world of **ZENOBIA**, fill it with life and give your players the opportunity to become entangled in its stories. Used as the basis for a campaign, the city will be able to provide an endless array of scenario ideas, back stories and sub-plots to turn a run-of-the-mill game into a richer and more satisfying experience. To paraphrase a famous Sixties drama series: "There are a million people in the concrete jungle and every one of them has a story to tell".

Choose Your City

Whether you want to add a bit of realistic detail to a group of cities your players will be passing through, or whether you are planning to create one city to act as a focus for a campaign - you will probably already have a particular settlement in mind. It will probably be just a black dot on a map with a name, but any other information you have on the place should be noted as well. Firstly, look at the location of the city. Perhaps it is on the coast, near a forest or desert, or astride a major highway or river. The location is a big indicator of the settlement's primary economic base. **Every** city requires some sort of activity to sustain it. The five chief economic activities and the local geographic factors that suggest

them are listed below. Sometimes a city will share two or more of these functions - but referees may find it easier just to select a single category for the settlement. The economic activity chosen will thoroughly dominate all aspects of life in the city.

- *Agriculture*
Large areas of adjacent flat agri-cultural land.
- *Mining and metalwork*
Mountainous or hilly area.
- *Trade*
Located on a main road or river, a mountain pass, a caravan route, or on the coast.
- *Religious Tourism*
Site of pilgrimage, a holy shrine, temple or oracle. The centre of a great religion.
- *Administration*
Largest and most important city of a kingdom, empire or province. Also situated on the coast, a river or main highway.

As an example, we can follow the creation of Byblos as a campaign city. On the coast, backed by mountains and desert, Byblos stands on a busy north-south caravan route. We designate Byblos as a trade city. What kind of people live and (more importantly) work here? There will be merchants, of course, but also accountants, caravan guards, animal handlers and breeders, guildsmen, money lenders and local traders. Always think of the people **behind** the local economy. A farming city (perhaps the most common of all), won't be full of typical fantasy folk, but local farmers selling goods, agents buying goods for resale, landowners and their staff, guildsmen, livestock traders, butchers, leather-workers and all those involved in transporting the grain and meat. In an administrative city, there should be a whole community of people just manufacturing or importing papyrus and inks! You may find almost any sort

of craft being carried out in a city, but those that predominate will be associated with its primary industry.

Next, add any other information that you have available into the melting pot. Does some particularly important person live here? Is the city well known for an industry or a building? Byblos, we note, is renowned for its trade in papyrus scrolls. Our city, then, will have a substantial 'scribes' quarter where papyrus is imported and stored, and where books, letters and official documents are written.

A list of the city's districts and important features will help you to visualise the city as a unique and distinct place. If possible, draw a simple sketch map to illustrate where the various districts are in relation to each other. Byblos has a sailors' section, a potters', smiths' and weavers' section, a large scribes' and merchants' section, and an area near the main gate for a detachment of soldiers. In addition there are three temples close to the nobles' section. All of these different areas are encompassed by a city wall. We now know what the city does, what kind of people live there, and something about its layout. But does this help us actually improve our games? The most important part of the city campaign has yet to be addressed - the individual story-lines of the most influential of the city's residents.

Who Are The V.I.P.S?

As our city stands it is still a predominantly physical environment with little to entice the adventurous player into its complex plots. The city comes alive only when its most powerful residents are added to the picture and given life. These important non-player characters can influence the campaign, provide motivation for scenarios, and help or hinder the player

characters. Every VIP added to the city gives the place a new dimension, and helps to extend the possibilities of further games and plots. An average city, used as wallpaper for PCs just travelling through, might have three or four VIPs in residence. For a campaign city, requiring plots and counter-plots to keep a group of players busy for months, perhaps a dozen or more VIPs are required.



These VIPs aren't just the richest residents, just the most influential. Look at each industry within the city and figure out who might be likely to have some say in local affairs. Look at religion, at security, perhaps at any minorities within the city (local barbarians, cultists, foreigners, etc.). These VIPs will be your scenario catalysts, your bad guys, your patrons, your sources of information and help. Even though they may not get involved personally, their assistants, workers and slaves might. As an example, the central NPCs for the Byblos campaign are:

Leading nobleman - Leads the senate of Byblos. Wants to bring an end to the rule of Palmyra

Minor nobleman - Although an ally of leading nobleman, thinks his son would do a better job

Rich Merchant - The most powerful importer/exporter in Byblos

Poor Merchant - The Rich Merchant's greatest rival, involved in plots and espionage

Nobleman's Son - Hates Palmyra, is being approached by a representative of the Empire

Caravan Owner - Sheikh's daughter who runs a camel business, stubborn and proud

Prince of Thieves - Exiled young nobleman from nearby city, living as a flamboyant thief

Pirate Captain - Brave adventurer based in Byblos, makes money, works for whoever pays

High Priestess - Daughter of Minor Noble. Devoted to the people, in love with Pirate Captain

1st Centurion - Head of the legionary cohort, trying to undermine the Nobleman's Son

2nd Centurion - Assists first centurion. Suspects Prince of Thieves of being rebel leader

Chief of Scribe's Guild - Troubled by rumours of rebellion, panders to the Centurion

By creating an important resident for each aspect of the city's affairs the player characters can easily get 'hooked' into any of its businesses or plots. Remember too, that each VIP will have followers, customers, allies and enemies. Any occurrence worth mentioning in Byblos will probably involve one or more of our VIPs. Players adventuring in such a city will find the same names cropping up again and again. The worst thing a referee could do is make up NPCs when needed, none of whom know of, or have even heard of, each other. Imagine the fantasy city as a community of bickering factions and individuals, between whom all the residents of the city are split. Use the list of VIPs you have created as a starting point.

Of course you could continue to endlessly detail further VIPs and their associates. You could draw street maps and building plans, think-up timelines of events and create adventure seeds. But all that is icing on the cake - aspects of the city that you could easily develop stage by stage when you design your later scenarios. The two essential steps to remember are:

- 1) Decide on how the city makes a living, and
- 2) List the city's dozen or so most influential VIPs

This basic information should be all you need to make your campaign city unique!

The Gladiatorial Games

Having a group of gladiators who travel from amphitheatre to amphitheatre attempting to earn a reputation, a wage and maybe a fortune in man-to-man fights will make a spectacular campaign! Historically many gladiators were slaves, owned by their lanista who hired them out for fights hosted by rich sponsors, in the same way that flute-girls were hired out for parties by their master. But a good deal of gladiators were freemen who had sold themselves into temporary bondage to have a stab at fame and fortune. For a single successful fight a gladiator might earn the equivalent of a year's wage for a legionary soldier - that's some incentive to fight well!

Although we would be twisting history a little in the process, we can assume that in the 3rd century, freemen are still able to participate in arena fights, but do so privately on a fight by fight basis, and not through the go-between of a lanista or gladiator school. Perhaps these freelancers are desperate men hungry for a living and with no skills but courage to offer, perhaps they are ex-soldiers, either retired, or more likely demobilised by a general too poor to pay for their settlement, or they could be freed gladiators with no other skill on hand but human butchery. Whatever their origins and motivations, these freelance fighters travel around a

province, perhaps the entire Empire, moving from one bloody arena to another.

Hierarchy of The Games

Start from small and move toward big. A starting gladiator begins his career as a Sixth Rank fighter in the sticks, at an amphitheatre out in one of the frontiers. It could be Nemausus in Narbonensis, Carnuntum in Pannonia, yes, even Zucchabar in Mauretania Caesariensis. Nearly every city has an amphitheatre, and even those that don't, still stage fights in the forum or theatre instead. Before he can graduate to more important amphitheatres, with bigger audiences, more important dignitaries and greater prizes, the gladiator must rise through the ranks to First Rank and 'Champion' of these Local Games. If this can be achieved, the fighters can go on to the Provincial Games held at the provincial capital. They begin again at Sixth Rank and once they rise to the First Rank of the Provincial Games, the gladiators can move on to another province. Each fighter is trying to amass 100 points of Reputation, at which point he will be recognised by an Imperial agent and introduced to the highly competitive Italian Games. All the best gladiators are fighting in the Italian cities, places like Tarentum, Capua, Brundisium, Paestum, Ariminum, Ostia and so on. Again, the gladiator begins down at the bottom at the Sixth Rank of the Italian Games (but even at this level he must be a formidable fighter!), and must reach the First Rank. Now he has gained the chance to enter the Colosseum Games in the Eternal City.



The Colosseum is the grandest, most spectacular amphitheatre in the world. The fighter begins at the customary Sixth Rank of the Colosseum Games and to become the Imperial champion must rise to First Rank. At this point every one in Rome will know his name, the emperor or one of his family will be sponsoring the fighter and inviting him to parties, he will move from palace to villa to palace when outside of the area. A First Rank Colosseum gladiator can retire to a grand country villa if he so chooses and will have many friends in government!

A Provincial Champion must amass a total of **9 more*** victories in any of the other remaining Provincial Games of the Empire before he is able to go to the Italian Games. He might gain all of the victories in a single province (and reach First Grade there), or move from one to the next at a lesser grade each time.

The Games

Local Games

Provincial Games

Italian Games

Colosseum Games

Location

Held at a Provincial town or city

Held at a Provincial capital

Held in the Italian cities

Held at the Colosseum in the Eternal City

Of course a freelance gladiator can quit any time he likes, but there are rewards for continuing to fight. A victory is awarded with a palm leaf as a winner's banner to be paraded around the arena, although in the eastern provinces a wreath is also awarded. These crowns or leafs are often depicted on the gravestones of fallen gladiators. The great prize, however, is a cash prize, paid out in front of the public after the fights have finished. These cash values will be decided before hand by the patron of the Games, and the gladiator

Grade	Total Victories Required
First Grade ('Champion')	9
Second Grade	6
Third Grade	3
Fourth Grade	2
Fifth Grade	1
Sixth Grade	-

can decide for himself he thinks it will be worth the risk to compete.

Each successful fight earns the victorious gladiator the following number of denarii:

Type of Games	Single Victory Prize
Local Games	2D6 x 50
Provincial Games	3D6 x 50
Italian Games	4D6 x 100
Colosseum Games	5D6 x 500

The gladiators can amass quite a fortune!

* Vary this figure if desired, depending on exactly how long you want your gladiator PCs to tramp around the different provinces fighting in the arena and getting into scrapes across the Empire. Every gladiator worth his thong looks toward the Colosseum, to vast crowds and towering architecture, a sandy arena that is as large as a

battlefield, and the passionate screams of the Empire's richest young women!

Getting Started

How do you become a gladiator? Usually a player character has had some military or other combat training, and he may even have paid for gladiatorial tuition at a gladiator's school. With weapons, armour and training he waits until a wealthy patron sponsors Games at the local amphitheatre and then queues up to enter the competition. He has until the day before to enter, because on that day a public banquet is given for all of the competitors. Don't expect much in the way of fancy food in the Local Games, however! The gladiator might have joined a small 'armatura' (gladiator troop) with friends, and these fighting brothers help one another with money, personal problems, and all kinds of support. Often an armatura could be hired as a single unit and be pitted against another in a military re-enactment (for real). If the unit is victorious then every member of the group is awarded a victory, whether or not they bested an individual foe. The armatura have names and reputations, and often seek wealthy patrons to finance them (the fighters gain everyday expenses, the patron gains glory from lots of victories, but may drop the armatura quickly following a run of defeats or several deaths).

Lots of Local Games also feature Amateur Fights. A desperate individual, free but penniless and destitute, hears of Games being staged at a local provincial amphitheatre, and instead of buying a ticket to watch, signs up to join the Amateur Fight in the morning. Amateur Fights are staged to amuse the audience with incompetent civilians wielding substandard weapons (borrowed from the arena) and wearing no armour, before the main combats. Of course it

gives those with talent a way to get noticed. Every defeated fighter in the Amateur Fight is killed, leaving alive only those who are victorious. These survivors receive 100 denarii and the chance to hand that 100 denarii over to the local gladiator school straightaway for six months training and hard service. The Amateur Fight is the only way a freeman can gain admittance into a gladiator school - money alone is not enough; one must have already fought, killed and survived.

Costs of Fighting

Death is the ultimate cost, but there are plenty of others. Firstly, weapons and armour cost money. Only in Amateur Fights do arenas provide free equipment. The freelance gladiator must provide his own. Wounds that are treated after a fight by the amphitheatre's surgeon must be paid for, whether or not the gladiator won. For a slight injury (3 or less HITS) the cost is 10 denarii, for a Crippling Blow the charge is 50 denarii, and for a Maim the charge is 100 denarii. For a decent burial, with a tombstone that declares the gladiator's name and his victories, he must have left at least 500 denarii behind for the purpose. If he has any family then he might want to leave them money too. Other costs include food, lodging and transport from one arena to the next.

Members of an armatura share these costs. They may share weapons and armour, share travel and lodging expenses and even chip in at the death of a comrade to pay for the burial and give the gladiator's widow or family a sum of money roughly equal to that of the burial.

Heavy versus Light

This is a debate that wracked the Empire for centuries! Who has the advantage? The heavier armoured

gladiator, or the less well armoured, but more nimble fighter? Everyone had an opinion, every theory had its supporters and detractors, well-worn arguments and bitter attacks. The Emperor himself often supported one theory or the other. Of course betting was a lucrative side industry of the arena culture, and heavy versus light could decide the betting of hundreds of denarii.

So which is best? Enslaved gladiators wear what they're given. Often it's good gear, at the Local level it may be shoddy kit. At the highest level it may (like the weapons of the emperor's own armatura which are studded with gems and gilded with gold or silver). The host of the games wants a certain type of gladiator to battle with another specific type - that's what he gets; he is, after all, paying for it. Freelancers of the armatura can offer a range of fighting styles, and the host can select from that range. This means a PC can specialize if he so wishes. He can buy his gear and use it often, rather switch from spear to dagger to scimitar to sword on the whim of the senator paying the wages.

Only the following fighting styles are allowed in the arena, and the PC gladiator must select one to follow through his career (although even he may have to be flexible and take other fighting jobs):

- **Hoplomachai** - A Hoplomachai is a spear-carrying derivative of the Samnite. He carries a rounded bronze Shield, Greaves, a vizored Helmet with crests, wide peak and plumes, as well as a Manicae. He fights with a Spear. Total AV = 3, COMBAT Bonus +4.
- **Thracian or Myrmillon** - The Thracian fighter wears a Phrygian-style Helmet (with a

rounded peak that seems to fall forward), Greaves, Leather Armour and carries a small round Shield. He fights with a Scimitar. The Myrmillon resembles the Thracian closely, but his helmet features a fish motif. Total AV = 3, COMBAT Bonus +3

- **Samnite** - The first Samnite gladiators wore the armour of the conquered Samnite tribesmen. They were the very first gladiators. A Samnite carries a legionary's Shield, Greaves, a vizored Helmet with crests, wide peak and plumes, as well as a Manicae. He fights with a Shortsword. Total AV = 3, COMBAT Bonus +3.
- **Gaul** - The Gaul was originally lightly-armed and armoured originally like the Gallic warriors, but over time the type has become heavier. His sword evolved from a cutting and thrusting blade to slashing Longsword, and he also received a plumed Helmet. It also had no visor. His Shield was long and hexagonal in shape. He wears a short Mail Cuirass and Greaves. Total AV = 4, COMBAT Bonus +3.
- **Provocator** - 'Challenger'. Like most heavily-armed gladiators, the provocator carries a legionary Shield and Shortsword. He wears an uncrested Helmet, along with a rectangular breastplate (Plate Cuirass) that protects his upper body, unlike most other gladiators. He also wears Greaves. Total AV = 5, COMBAT Bonus +3.

- **Retarius** - This warrior is decked out in the style of a fisherman, with weighted Fighting Net, Dagger, Trident and a heavy shoulder guard (treat as Manicae), he often wore patterned Greaves, too. He usually fights bareheaded or with a headband. Total AV = 2, COMBAT Bonus +3
- **Secutor** - Armed with a Shortsword, and a smooth fully-enclosing Helmet that included a visor with eye-holes, a Manicae, a small round Shield and Greaves. Total AV = 3, COMBAT Bonus + 3.
- **Dimachaeri** - The two-blade fighter wore a simple Helm, a Leather Cuirass and Greaves and carried two Shortswords. Total AV = 3, COMBAT Bonus + 3 (requires new Skill: *Two-Handed Fighting*)

Rules of the Arena

Strap on your armour, carry the biggest weapon you can, and get out into the arena to slaughter your foe, right! Wrong. There are rules, procedures and gladiatorial etiquette which all go toward keeping gladiators alive. Most trained fighters had a 90% chance of surviving each combat - that's pretty good odds, and these odds were stacked due to the custom of having three different outcomes to every fight:

Once a gladiator has beaten his foe to the ground there is a halt to the fight and the sponsor decides whether or not to allow the loser to leave the arena a missus or a perit. But, since he has hired these fighter for the entertainment of his guests (remember the flute girl analogy) any deaths must be recompensed. The lanista who owns the

enslaved-gladiators must be recompensed. It is generally the custom, then, to let a fallen fighter live. If the crowd are baying for blood, of course, then those lost denarii in compensation may well be worth a quick death! A wealthy host willing to give the crowd the bloodbath they crave might actually declare 'no missus!' at the start of a contest. Freelance gladiators have the option, then, of not signing up for the fights. If a fighter is called upon to fight more than once (which he might do if he achieves only a missus) then he must get a vicit or suffer a periit and be killed in the arena. Gladiators like the PCs who are freelancers, will usually arrange a blood-price with the host of the fight (or at least his servant), a price which will be paid to his armatura or his family, in the event of his death. This will typically be equivalent to the price of a slave - but increase this if the fighter has been promoted to the higher Games.

Every gladiator keeps a careful tally of his (and other gladiators') fighting record as a way to gauge each other's abilities.

A typical day of Games is staged as follows:

1. Bouts of gladiatorial fighting are staged in the afternoon. The morning show usually consists of less challenging 'entertainment' - beast on beast, beast on unarmed criminal, executions, criminals fighting each other, women or cripples fighting on another ... and so on.
2. When the gladiators do emerge, they do so triumphantly. At the Colosseum they ride in on chariots, and all cloaked in purple. A march around the arena is very common, to give the spectators a chance to look them over, perhaps spot a celebrity fighter or make a bet. When the fighters reach the host's seat, or box, they salute that dignitary with the usual "*Ave, morituri te salutant!*" - 'Those who are about to die, salute you!').
3. Often warm-up fights are staged, with wooden swords, poles, whips and the like.
4. The testing ceremony. Out come the sharp weapons and the giver of the Games, the patron, had to perform a ceremony to verify this (cutting a ribbon, etc.). One arena shortsword, the Drusus, was common and named after the Emperor Drusus because he demanded razor-sharpness!
5. The fighting begins, and (depending on the arena) it is accompanied by war trumpets, horns, pipes, flutes and even (in Italy) a hydraulic pipe organ.
6. Several pairs of gladiators may fight simultaneously, depending on the size of the arena and lethality of the fights. As expected, multiple fights that are not very dangerous may occur initially, with any missus going on to fight again later (and maybe dying). Later fights are therefore more lethal and have the audiences sole attention.

Vicit (V)	Victorious! You beat your foe into submission or killed him!
Missus (M)	You lost, but survived, you were forced to submit.
Periit (M)	Perished. You not only lost, you were mortally wounded and died.

7. Some of the poor slave gladiators are whipped, beaten and goaded (sometimes with red-hot irons) by their trainers, who stood close by the fighters just as trainers do today's outside of the boxing ring. Even the crowds joined in, shouting training manual orders, and goading on the trainers to flog and beat the fighters till they got stuck in.
8. 'Got him! He's had it!' (*habet, hoc habet!*) shout the crowd when a fighter goes down. Now it's the turn of the host to decide matters. When fighters don't perform well, show cowardice instead of courage, or caution

instead of recklessness, the crowd will boo them. Many times disgraced fighters are hauled back out and flogged for the entertainment of the audience! They are lucky, many thousands die on a whim.

9. The richer amphitheatres dress up their arena slaves as mythic figures, while African boys rake the sand over the split blood, slaves dressed as Mercury (who takes the dead to Hades) pull out any dead gladiators. An arena official who dispatches wounded gladiators at the host's orders is sometimes dressed as Charon, ferryman of the dead.

REFERENCES

There were many inspirational sources used during the writing of **ZENOBIA**, some not apparent at the time. Of course many historical works were also referred to and feature heavily here. The following list gives a nod of acknowledgement and also a source of ideas and further information to referees writing adventures or crafting campaigns.

Books

There is an ocean of literature out there covering the Roman Empire, and plenty of it is relevant to a **ZENOBIA** campaign. That was one of the reasons for choosing this period! Academic books can give you in-depth background if you feel you need it, but more useful might be heavily illustrated books (illustrations are a great aid for players' imaginations ...), school books covering the Roman period and archaeology books that look at individual sites in detail. Many books provide building floor-plans easily lifted for a roleplaying session, illustrations give a great idea of

costumes, city streets, building frontages, gods and furniture. Remember to look at the Greek myths to dig out examples of ancient treasures, and to create historical/mythical premises for your labyrinths or quests.

In the end take inspiration from wherever you find it - Sinbad movies, desert movies, tourist books of Syria or Turkey, books on religion or on classical civilisation. If you can get it to fit - use it!

For those GMs who want to follow-up on the real-world equivalents of my fantastical cultures and kingdoms, there follows a handy list of **ZENOBIA** cultures and their historical counterparts. Assume that details are the same, but change anything that you need to create a good scenario. Adapt the historical realities for your own entertainment. Don't slavishly adhere to customs, rituals or situations just because that's the way it 'really' happened.

Ægypt - Egypt

Ancient (language) - Akkadian, a cuneiform text

Anointed One, the - Jesus Christ

Aramaeans - Game label to describe a typical Desert Kingdom inhabitant

Asia Minor - Roman-era Turkey

Axum - Ethiopia

Cathay - China

Chaldea - Mesopotamia

Decapolis - Syria

Desert Kingdoms - the Middle East in Roman times

Desert of Lost Souls - Syrian and Arabian Deserts

Empire, The - The Roman Empire c. 260AD

Erythrean Sea - Red Sea

Eternal City - Rome

Gallic Kingdom - the short-lived Gallic Empire

Golden Meroe - Nubia and the Napata culture

Hierosolyma - Jerusalem

Imperial - Roman or Graeco-Roman
Imperium - The Roman Empire c. 260AD
Ionia - Greece
Libyan Desert - Sahara Desert
Meluhha - India
Middle Sea - Mediterranean Sea
Mountains of the Moon - Rwenzori range
Nameless One, the - Jehovah, god of the Jews
Osrhoene - ZENOBIA's version of an older, now vanished kingdom
Pontus Euxinus - Black Sea
Sabaea - South Arabian culture
Saraceni - Arab Bedouin
Solyma - Palestine/Judaea

Movies

Barrabus
Ben Hur
Clash of the Titans
Cleopatra
The Colossus of Rhodes
Conan The Barbarian
Conan The Destroyer
The Fall of the Roman Empire
Gladiator
Masada
Jason and the Argonauts
The Last Days of Pompeii
The Robe
The Scorpion King
Spartacus
Troy
Quo Vadis

POSTSCRIPT: USEFUL ADVICE

Most role-playing games go into considerable detail concerning how to referee, how to play, how to run non-player characters or create a realistic campaign. But practical advice can be just as useful. For what it's worth, this is my practical advice for running **ZENOBIA**.

BASICS

Firstly, check out you players or potential players. Are they into the genre, have they read any useful books, seen the epic movies, do they know anything about ancient Rome or the ancient world in general? If yes, your job is simplified. Explain to them that **ZENOBIA** is just like being inside that story, that world, and that it can be just as exciting. For players who have not read or seen that much, no problem. Everyone has seen the Hollywood epics *Ben Hur*, *Spartacus* and *Gladiator* - even *Conan*!. Tell your potential players that **ZENOBIA** is a game that lets you do all those cool and amazing things. But it is set in the Near East at the Roman Empire's most darkest time.

COMFORT

I find that three or four players are my realistic limit. Any more and the game resembles a war movie with a huge squad of armed guys strutting their stuff around the Desert Kingdoms. Plus the logistical headache of trying to keep five, six or more people active and interested diminishes the more people you have playing. Stick to small numbers if you can. If you have plenty of potential players, why not split them into two groups, working as rivals on either side of a conflict or feud? Each adventure could be run in reaction to what the previous team did last week.

This makes for a very 'interactive' campaign.

ADMINISTRATION

From long experience, I have learnt that a photocopied stack of character sheets is invaluable. Someone (especially in **ZENOBIA**) always dies early on and the player will want to create a new character. Have at least a pencil for each player (rubber-tipped if possible), a rubber, spare sheets of note-paper and (if possible) a clipboard each. These are invaluable items. Of course you will need at least two six sided dice, but two per player is preferred.

Keep a diary of your game's events. You might think you can remember it all, but if you are still playing three years later, you will find those early notes not only useful but damn entertaining to read. Ahh ... the nostalgia!

Keep notes of anyone or anything (an official, a powerful family or village) you make up during the game, and transfer these notes to some central notebook if you can. Players love to see people or things they've encountered crop up again at a later date. Plus your world is growing and expanding. Never forget these people and organisations, try and re-use what has already been encountered rather than constantly pouring a deluge of new and confusing organisations and personalities onto your players. Less is more. Keep it simple and centred. Some sort of central notebook (or loose-leaf file) is a useful asset. Within it you can keep character sheets when not in use, old character sheets, upcoming adventures, details of future campaigns, ideas, and details of locations and personalities (try either

subject or A-Z dividers for this). Resist the temptation to create new weapons, potions and equipment. Let the players learn the limitations of what's available, let them struggle to use what they have in new and interesting ways. If at all possible concentrate that creative urge into developing new games, non player personalities, situations, locations for scenes and ways to 'bring back-in' old characters and locations. *Always strive to build on what has gone before.* If a character was arrested by legionnaires, then have the next mission break him out. Keep things connected.

For seating, I prefer the lounge to the kitchen table. Tables are useful, but lack that essential atmosphere. It really is up to the referee involved. At any rate, I hope that you enjoy reading, refereeing and playing **ZENOBIA** as much as I have.

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ZENOBIA

Fantasy Roleplaying in the Desert Kingdoms

Name:
Origins & Previous Experience:

MIGHT

FATE

CRAFT

LEARNING

Equipment

Exp: ()



Languages

Magic Items

Silver Denarii

Skills/Magic Powers

HITS

Armour Ratings

CHARTS & TABLES

Price Lists

Travel

<i>Item</i>	<i>Price (denarii)</i>
Camel	1000
Chariot	1200
Donkey	500
Horse	1000
Merchant Ship	8000
Rowboat	250
Trireme	25000
Wagon (2-wheel)	350
Wagon (4-wheel)	500

Other Items

<i>Item</i>	<i>Price (denarii)</i>
Blanket	15
Chain (10m.)	120
Clay Lamp	20
Cooking Equipment	135
Food, Good Meal	1
Food, Trail Ration (one week)	5
Healing Herbs (5 uses)	75
Horse Grain (one week)	10
Horsewhip	25
Ink, Quills and Papyrus	90
Knife	20
Lamp (clay)	10
Lamp Oil	4
Lyre	100
Pack	10
Panniers (for donkey)	25
Pickaxe	35
Pouch	3
Rope (10m.)	40
Saddle & Bridle	300
Saddlebags	180
Soldier's Mess Tin	30
Tent (3 man)	180
Tool	40
Torch	1
Waterskin	5
Wax Tablet	140

Fashion

<i>Item</i>	<i>Price (denarii)</i>
Bath & massage	15
Cloak	60
Cloak Brooch	20-120
Dress	45
Hairbrush	20
Haircut (barbershop)	10
Hairpin	25
Hat	25
Headband	10
Military Boots	120
Mirror	140
Perfumed Oils	50
Sandals	50
Tunic	40

Weaponry

<i>Item</i>	<i>Combat Bonus</i>	<i>Price (in denarii)</i>
Battleaxe	+2	100
Bow (2H)	+2	150
Boxing Cestus (only if unarmed)	+2	10
Burning Torch	+2	1
Club	+1	5
Dagger	+1	35
Dart	+2	5
Fighting Net	-	120
Handaxe	+1	25
Javelin	+3	60
Longsword	+2	150
Pilum	+3	125
Scimitar	+2	120
Shield	+1 (defence only)	100
Shortsword	+2	100
Sling	+1	10
Spear	+3	20
Staff	+1	5
Trident	+3	35
Whip (2m. long, used by wagondrivers)	+2 (only stun)	25
12 Arrows	-	24
10 Slingshot	-	5
Quiver (holds 12 arrows)	-	15

Armour

<i>Item</i>	<i>Armour Rating</i>	<i>Price (denarii)</i>
Greaves (legs)	1	2500
Helm	1	100
Leather Cuirass	1	300
Mail Cuirass (scale-mail or chain-mail)	2	800
Manicae (one arm)	1	400
Plate Cuirass	3	1200
Shield (for defence only, +1 Combat Bonus)	-	100
Cataphract Armour	6	4200

Weapon Table

<i>Weapon Type</i>	<i>COMBAT Bonus</i>	<i>Cost</i>
Battle-axe	+2	100
Bow (2 handed)	+2	150
Boxing Cestus (Unarmed only)	+2	10
Burning Torch	+2	1
Club	+1	5
Dagger	+1	35
Dart	+2	5
Handaxe	+1	25
Javelin	+3	60
Longsword	+2	150
Pilum	+3	125
Scimitar	+2	120
Shield (cannot attack)	+1	100
Sling	+1	10
Spear	+3	20
Shortsword	+2	100
Staff	+1	5
Trident	+3	35

Missile Weapons

<i>Missile Weapon</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>COMBAT Bonus</i>
Bow	50m	+2
Dagger, Thrown	8m	+1
Dart	10m	+2
Javelin	10m	+3
Pilum	15m	+3
Sling	50m	+1
Spear, Thrown	5m	+3
Stone, Thrown	10m	0

Crippling Blows

HITS	Location	WOUND Description/Effects
4	CHEST	<i>Chest slashed open and ribs cracked</i> Stunned next round
4	LEG	<i>Leg cut badly, slashed to the bone</i> No running
5	ARM	<i>Arm bloodied and muscle torn</i> Use arm at 1d effectiveness. Drop item held.
6	HEAD	<i>Head knocked badly, dizziness and lots of blood</i> Stunned 1 round. Roll FATE or knocked-out for 2d rounds.
7	BELLY	<i>Guts cut open, weak at the knees</i> Stunned 2 rounds
8	GROIN	<i>A stab to the vitals - extreme agony!</i> Stunned 3 rounds
9	HAND	<i>Fingers cut badly, weapon dropped</i> Drop item, disarmed. Only 1 HIT inflicted.
9	FACE	<i>Slashed across the face - blood, gore and pain blinds the victim</i> Blinded till treated. Stunned 2 rounds
10	THROAT	<i>Throat slashed and larynx damaged, no talking till healed</i> Incapacitated for 2 rounds

HITS	Location	MAIM Description/Effects
8	CHEST	<i>Ribs broken and lungs punctured, coughing blood</i> Incapacitated 1 round
8	LEG	<i>Leg broken and gouged to the bone</i> Cannot stand, no running
10	ARM	<i>Arm broken and smashed, hanging useless</i> Drop item being held, arm cannot be used till healed
12	HEAD	<i>Skull smashed - disorientation, blood and gore</i> Incapacitated 3 rounds. Roll FATE or knocked-out for 1-6 hours
14	BELLY	<i>Agonising slash to the gut leaves entrails hanging out</i> Incapacitated for 4 rounds
16	GROIN	<i>Vitals severed or maimed, agony and traumatic blood-loss!</i> Incapacitated for 5 rounds
18	HAND	<i>Hand severed. Tourniquet NOW!</i> Hand severed. Fight at 1d from now on (not 2d) till healed.
18	FACE	<i>Face smashed into a pulp, eye lost and face bloodied</i> Lose an eye. Fight at 1d from now on (not 2d) till healed.
20	THROAT	<i>Victim decapitated, OR throat opened up spilling a sea of blood</i>

Aiming Factors

Target over range	-2
Target over double range	-4
Target in partial cover	-2
Target moving	-1

Unarmed Moves

Basic Unarmed Moves

HITS	Basic Unarmed Move	Effects
4	Bloody Face	Stunned for 1 round
4	Throw To Ground	Suffer 2 HITS and 2 Stuns; now lying on the floor
5	Kick In Gut	Stunned for 2 rounds
6	Disarm	Drop item. Disarmed.
7	Arm/Leg Lock	Victim struggling, all actions use 1d roll, not 2d roll. That limb is immobile (to continue the lock win MIGHT versus MIGHT roll each round)
8	Head Lock	Victim immobile and in pain (to continue the lock win MIGHT versus MIGHT roll each round)

Advanced Unarmed Moves

HITS	Advanced Unarmed Move	Effects
8	Smash Face	Stunned for 3 rounds
8	Throw Against Wall	Suffer 5 HITS and 3 Stuns; now lying on the floor
10	Knock Out Combination	Groin strike followed by massive head blow; Knocked Out for 2d minutes
12	Use Enemy's Weapon	Winner can fight foe's friends by manipulating foe's weapon arm against his will!
14	Break Limb!	7 HITS worth of damage inflicted; leg or arm broken
16	Strangle	Inflict a number of HITS equal to MIGHT every round that strangling continues (to continue win MIGHT versus MIGHT roll each round)

Whip Moves

HITS	Whip Move	Effects
4	Bloody Face	Stunned for 1 round
5	Pull To Ground	Suffer 2 HITS and 2 Stuns; now lying on the floor
6	Disarm	Drop item. Disarmed.
8	Blind	Victim makes a FATE roll, and if failed is blinded for 1-6 minutes. If successful he is Stunned for 2 rounds.

Sanity Table

No. Failed By	Insane Behaviour
1 or 2	Frozen by fear - In shock and paralysed for 1-3 combat rounds.
3 or 4	Out of Action - Character faints, has a hysterical screaming fit, vomits uncontrollably, drools with mouth agape, curls into a ball or whatever... This reaction lasts for 1d minutes.
5 or 6	Driven temporarily insane - Terror shuts the character's reasoning mind and he is overcome with a mental affliction for 1-days. The affliction might be amnesia, catatonia, stupefaction, quixotism, paranoia, obsession, severe phobia.
7 or 8	Driven indefinitely insane - Terror shuts the character's reasoning mind indefinitely and he is overcome with a mental affliction until cured. The affliction might be amnesia, catatonia, stupefaction, quixotism, paranoia, obsession, severe phobia. Note that recovery is highly unlikely and that the character is best removed from play by the referee.

Random Treasure Roll

1d	Item
1-2	20 -120 Silver Denarii
3	100 - 600 Silver Denarii
4	300 - 1800 Silver Denarii*
5	Special Item
6	Special Item <i>and</i> 300-1800 Silver Denarii*

Urban Encounters

Table 1. Gateway Districts

1	Nomad traders or shepherds
2	Weary travellers
3	Sailors/Caravan drivers
4	Local Guide/Interpreter
5	Merchant with attendants
6	Slaves advertising master's business

Table 2. Forum & Craft Streets

1	Beggars
2	Thieves or con-men
3	Craftsman selling wares
4	City Official with attendants
5	Scribe/Letter-writer
6	Magician/Fortune Teller

Table 3. Fortress

1	Freight wagon
2	Soldiers off-duty
3	Soldiers on patrol
4	Mercenaries
5	Courtesans
6	Prisoners in chains

Table 4. Wealthy District

1	Slaves on master's business
2	Rich man's litter and entourage
3	Legionnaires guarding
4	Watchmen on patrol
5	Doctor/Astrologer/Artist
6	Wealthy citizens discussing business

Table 5. Temple District

1	Foreign or city dignitaries
2	Builders at work
3	Worshippers waiting to sacrifice
4	Watchmen on patrol
5	Religious procession in progress
6	Priest and attendants

Table 6. Residential Districts

1	Builders at work
2	Local street dispute
3	Thieves or courtesans
4	Watchmen on patrol
5	Slaves on master's business
6	Locals gossiping at fountain

<i>NPC Level</i>	<i>Experience Points</i>	<i>Denarii</i>	<i>Magic Items</i>
<i>Experienced</i>	0	1dx50	0
<i>Professional</i>	10	1dx100	1d-2
<i>Veteran</i>	20	1dx500	1d-1
<i>Master</i>	30	1dx1000	1d

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