

Five Ancient Kingdoms

**Rules for Fantastic Adventures
Of Imagination, Danger, and Romance**

BECKER



MEN & METTLE
Volume 1 of Three Booklets

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Five Ancient Kingdoms

Volume 1

Men & Mettle

By Jonathan Becker



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INTRODUCTION TO FIVE ANCIENT KINGDOMS

It is an Age of Wonders! **BARICA** is the greatest land in all the world and **BAGDABHA** its greatest city! Here, the common people mingle with wealthy merchants and sultans in disguise, while heroes and saints rub shoulders with magicians and thieves! All praise to almighty **HALAH**, God most high!

FIVE ANCIENT KINGDOMS is a set of rules for a fantasy adventure game. It is divided into three volumes: **Men & Mettle**, **Magic & Monsters**, and **Dragon Master Secrets**. You will need several six-sided dice and at least one other person to play. Unlike some games, there is no board or playing pieces; instead, game play takes place in the minds and imaginations of the participants as they describe their actions and determine the events of the imaginary game world.

Throughout the rules, the game referee is referred to as the **Dragon Master** (or **DM** for short) while other participants are referred to as players (and their characters as **Player Characters** or **PCs**). Any character controlled by the Dragon Master is a **Non-Player Character (NPC)**. An NPC can be an antagonist, like a monstrous beast, or an ally of the Player Characters. This volume (**Book 1**) provides the information needed to create PCs, as well as basic information players should know about game play.

Player characters and NPC adventurers all have a **level of experience** (or simply “**level**”) that measures their status and degree of success as well as their overall effectiveness in their profession. PCs generally start as **1st level** (beginning) adventurers; they may achieve a maximum of **15th level**. Most NPCs (especially monsters) are not adventurers and thus do not have “level,” instead possessing a number of **Hit Dice (HD)** that measure their fierceness, size, and power. Over time, adventurers can develop, earning levels based on their exploits; creatures with HD, on the other hand, do not usually change over time. Both levels and hit dice are explained in more depth in the pages that follow.

Dice Conventions and the Rule of Zero

Five Ancient Kingdoms uses only six-sided dice (abbreviated “D6”). Often, the rules call for a roll of xD6 where “x” is the number of dice to be rolled. For example, a call to roll “2D6” means roll two six-sided dice and add the results together. A D3 is a request to roll D6 and divide the result by two (round up).

No matter the number of dice rolled, **ANY ROLL OF “1” ON A DIE IS COUNTED AS ZERO**. This is a very important difference from other games you may have played. Any D6 that comes up as a “1” should simply be removed from the roll, as if the player had rolled 1 less die. In other words, the result of a D6 roll will always be a 0, 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6. When rolling a D3 the result will always be a 0, 1, 2, 3, or 3.

If all dice rolled come out as 1s (i.e. “zeroes”) ***then the entire roll is considered a ZERO regardless of any bonuses or adjustments that might have been made to the roll.*** This is called “**zeroing out.**” For example, when making an attack roll, a player adds her **attack adjustment** to her attack roll of 2D6 to see if she is successful in injuring her opponent. If the player rolls two 1s, the roll is considered a **0**; the player is not allowed to add her attack adjustment because she has “zeroed out” and thus failed in her attack.

Sometimes the rules call for a player to roll a “**D66.**” In this case, the player rolls two D6 dice to generate a two-digit number, with the first die counting as the 10s and the second die counting as the 1s. For example, a roll of 3 and a roll of 5 would be counted as a roll of “35.” When rolling D66, die rolls of 1 are still counted as 0, resulting in a range of numbers from 00 to 66.

Rule Zero is ALWAYS in effect. A roll of 1 never counts as “1.” If you’ve purchased a print version of this game, it should include dice with a “zero” side where the 1 would normally be found; this is to remind you of **Rule Zero.**

“Pushing”

Sometimes a character wants (or needs) to put more effort into an action, giving extra “oomph” for an especially tough action or trying for a spectacular success. A character that wants to “**push**” in this way rolls one extra D6 and can use the result as a replacement for one of her other dice. Or to put it another way, *you roll one extra D6 for your action and discard the lowest roll.*

Characters are only allowed to push themselves in certain types of action, shown below:

<u>Action</u>	<u>Normal Roll</u>	<u>“Pushing” Roll</u>
Attack Rolls	2D6	3D6
Magician Spells	2D6	3D6
Thief Skills	2D6	3D6
Undead Turning	2D6	3D6

Characters that push themselves in an action have a better chance at succeeding than they normally would, but risk catastrophe in the process. If the die roll for the action would still result in failure ***even with the extra die*** then the action attempted results in some disastrous incident due to the character’s over-reaching. The DM determines the specific nature of the catastrophe (guidelines for this are given in **Book 3**).

Only adventurers have the fire and ambition necessary to push their actions, and their pushing can take on added dimensions when made in conjunction with **motivation**; this is fully explained in the section **ALIGNMENT AND MOTIVATION** in this book.

PLAYER CHARACTER CREATION

As stated in the introduction, all participants other than the one acting as Dragon Master (DM) need to create a character for the game. The player character, or PC, is the avatar that allows a player to explore the imaginary game world. Character creation in **5AK** is designed to be quick and require minimal input from the player, but the first time creating a PC might be a little slow; it's okay to make several characters ahead of time to act as replacements for fallen adventurers.

Players should have a rough idea of the type of character they think would be fun to play. They may choose one of the following four classifications of adventurer:

HERO CLASS

Heroes are fighters trained in the weapons and ways of war.

Standard Abilities: The **prime requisite** of a hero is **strength (STR)**. Heroes can wear any armor and are trained in the use of shields. They are trained to use all weapons, including swords and bows.

Special Abilities: Each hero must choose a **fighting style**, the manner in which the character engages in **melee** (hand-to-hand) combat. There are two options: *Brute* and *Agile*. A character with a brute fighting style uses muscle and force to take advantage of an encounter and generally has what can be termed an *offensive* fighting style. An agile fighter tries to make use of natural speed and grace to evade an opponent in combat, and has a more *defensive* fighting style. Heroes receive bonuses in melee combat when mounted and do not receive a penalty for missile weapons. They also gain the ability to make additional attacks at high levels: beginning at 6th level a hero can make two melee attacks per round, and at 11th level a hero can make three melee attacks per round. These extra attacks can be directed at one opponent, or at multiple opponents within melee range. A hero of 9th level or greater with the means to build a castle will be granted the noble title of **Emir** (or **Emira** if female) and their land-holdings considered an **emirate**.

MAGICIAN CLASS

Magicians are academics and scholars of the occult arts, able to work wonders through the lore they've learned. Magicians tend to be secretive and aloof, jealously guarding their knowledge from others.

Standard Abilities: The **prime requisite** of a magician is **intelligence (INT)**. Magicians are untrained in the use of shields; neither are they trained to use swords or bows and they receive a -2 penalty to attack rolls with these weapons.

Special Abilities: All magicians detect enchantments and magical effects within 15', though they may not recognize the particulars of a specific enchantment. The magician's prowess lies in her ability to learn and cast spells (**MAGIC** is described in the first half of **Book 2**). Magicians are trained to read and understand the language of magic. Magicians of at least 3rd level can brew **magic potions**, and upon achieving 7th level can create more durable magic items (called **artifacts**). A magician of **magus status** (explained in **Book 2**) who acquires a stronghold attracts a number of apprentices equal to D6 and adjusted by the character's CHA modifier.

SAINT (SHAMAN) CLASS

Saints are devout followers of a particular deity; their power is gained through their worship and through study of holy books and scriptures. Saints are not sedentary clergy members, but rather itinerant holy men and women relying on their faith to help them in their adventures. At higher levels they may settle down and build temples and churches, attracting faithful followers to the banner of their religion.

"Saint" is the title given to individuals of the class devoted to a monotheistic cult like the **One True Faith and God** (called **HALAH** in the major religion of the game, though sometimes known by other names). A holy man or woman who pays homage to a pantheon of self-centered deities or demonic forces of the infernal realms is usually called a **"shaman."** Those who practice monotheism must be of **lawful alignment** (described in the following section of this book) and follow the doctrine of their church or else lose their supernatural abilities. Those who follow the older religions or infernal doctrines may be of any alignment (though demon worshippers are generally of **chaotic** temperament).

Standard Abilities: The **prime requisite** of a saint is **wisdom (WIS)**. They can wear any armor but are not trained in the use of shields. They do not receive training in the use of swords or bows and suffer a -2 attack penalty when using these weapons.

Special Abilities: Saintly magic comes in the form of **divine intervention**: miraculous spells based on the prayers of the saint. The use of this divine favor is explained in **Book 2**. Lawful saints may never use the **reverse spells** listed in the saint spell list (also in **Book 2**); such spells are against the teachings of Halah and will not be granted. On the other hand, only lawful saints have the ability to **Turn Undead** as described in **Book 2**. Both saints and shamans of 9th level who are in good standing with their divine patron(s) may construct a **temple stronghold** for one-half the standard cost, and upon completion attract fanatically loyal followers (5D6x10 soldiers with equipment determined by the DM).

THIEF CLASS

Thieves are individuals that make their living by acquiring wealth in ways other than good, honest work. They do not have the ability to cast spells, nor are they well-trained warriors, but they have other skills that make up for these deficiencies.

Standard Abilities: The **prime requisite** of a thief is **dexterity (DEX)**. Thieves receive no training in the use of shields, and many of their special skills are penalized when wearing armor and most choose to go without. **Unless otherwise stated, skill rolls suffer a penalty of -1 when wearing *light armor*, and a penalty of -3 when wearing *heavy armor*.** Thieves receive no training in the use of swords or bows and suffer a -2 attack penalty when using these weapons.

Special Abilities: When a thief manages to surprise an opponent, she may ***bushwhack*** her foe with a melee attack receiving a +2 bonus to her attack roll. Alternatively, a thief may use a blunt object to knockout an opponent (victim must succeed at a saving throw versus traps or be rendered unconscious for one turn plus a number of extra turns determined by a D6 roll). A thief may only ***bushwhack*** living, humanoid targets of roughly human size.

In addition, thieves have a total of nine special skills they hone with time and experience. Using any of these skills requires a 2D6 ***skill roll*** (described below), and suffers the armor penalties already described:

Climb Sheer Surfaces: the ability to climb smooth walls, cliff faces, etc. with little or no climbing equipment. Skill is checked for every 100' of climb. Weather conditions (snow, rain, high wind, etc.) may apply a skill roll penalty of -1 or -2 depending on severity. Penalties for wearing *light* or *heavy armor* are doubled when climbing.

Contortion: the ability to fit into or through small, tight openings and windows, and to escape from bonds (ropes and loose or unfitted manacles). Skill cannot be used while wearing armor.

Disguise: the ability to change one's appearance to look like another individual of roughly the same size and species. Requires the use of appropriate props/clothing. With DM approval, a thief can imitate a specific individual, though at a -2 penalty to the skill roll. Skill cannot be used while wearing armor unless imitating an armored individual.

Find & Disarm Traps: the ability to locate trip wires, snares, and other trap triggers, and the ability to circumvent their impact (as explained in **Book 3**). Although this is one skill, it must be checked separately for both finding traps and disarming them. Armor penalties do not apply to this skill, but armor removal may be necessary to avoid (disarm) a trap.

Forgery: the ability to forge handwriting or official looking documents. Armor penalties do not apply when using this skill, but the character must acquire proper

writing implements. Some documents cannot be forged without special seals or samples of the genuine article. This skill cannot be used if the thief is illiterate.

Hide in Shadows: the ability to become nearly invisible by staying perfectly still and using cover and shadows. A thief cannot attempt to hide if observed by his quarry. Once hidden, he remains so until he moves. A hidden thief can automatically achieve **surprise** on an opponent.

Move Stealthily: the ability to move and act without being noticed. Successful use of this skill allows a thief to **surprise** his opponent, though only when acting alone or with other stealthy individuals. Armor penalties are doubled.

Open Locks: the ability to open locks without a key (and without breaking the mechanism). Skill is not penalized by armor, but the thief must have a set of lock picks to use this skill.

Pick Pockets: the ability to cut a purse or slip an item off a belt or a ring off a finger without being noticed by one's target. If a mark is of greater level or hit dice than the thief's level, the thief's skill roll is penalized by the difference.

A 1st level thief has **eight points** to assign to skills; each point assigned gives the thief a +1 bonus when attempting the skill. To use a skill, 2D6 is rolled, bonuses (and penalties) added, and **if the result is more than 8 then the thief is successful**. Thieves with DEX of 15 or better add +1 to their skill roll. For each level earned (starting at 2nd level), a thief receives **two additional points** to assign (both points can be placed in one skill or assigned individually to two separate skills).

A thief that achieves 9th level and acquires a **stronghold hideout** attracts a gang of 2D6 1st level thieves seeking training from a master. Additional gang members may be recruited, if so desired, but apprentices killed, caught, or hanged are not automatically replaced.

SUBCLASSES

While most characters fall into one of the classes listed above, there are a number of subclasses available for players looking for something different. A subclass provides a character with benefits in exchange for the loss of some standard class features. Unless otherwise noted, all subclasses use the same experience tables, saving throws, etc. of their main class. Subclasses **NEVER** receive experience bonuses for a high Prime Requisite, **but they do receive experience penalties for a low Prime Requisite.**

Archer (hero subclass): character receives no bonus for a particular **fighting style** and never gains the ability to make multiple melee attacks. **Advantages:** character adds +1 to attacks with a bow or crossbow. Archers gain the ability to make multiple attacks with the bow (not the crossbow) at the same level they would have earned multiple melee attacks (+1 extra attack at 6th level and +2 attacks at 11th level).

Ascetic (saint subclass): character loses the ability to cast spells, takes a vow of poverty (may retain no treasure except what can be carried), and lose all unarmed combat abilities when wearing armor or using a shield. **Advantages:** character can roll or choose one additional trait (other than *Wealth*) from the **ADVANTAGES** table on page 15 (and may take an additional trait upon achieving 8th level). When fighting unarmed, the character receives multiple melee attacks like a hero (though at levels 5th, 9th, and 13th), and her unarmed blows count as daggers, not fists (or as clubs at 7th level and as maces at 12th). The ascetic always *moves stealthily* (as the **thief skill**, but no die roll needed) unless wearing armor. Once per day, an ascetic can enter a meditative trance to heal damage (a maximum of one HP per level; the trance lasts for 1 minute per HP healed) or to suspend the effects of poison (for a maximum of ten minutes multiplied by the character's level).

Assassin (thief subclass): character receives only half as many skill points (4 points to start, plus 1 point per level earned). **Advantages:** character can choose to automatically slay a target with a successful *bushwhack* attack (victim is allowed save versus death; the difference between assassin's level and target's HD is applied as a penalty to save if HD is less than assassin's level). Assassins add +2 to saves versus poison and gain the ability to manufacture poisons beginning at 5th level.

Mountebank (thief subclass): character receives only half as many skill points (4 points to start, plus 1 point per level earned) and mountebank HPs are penalized exactly as a magician of the same level. **Advantages:** as a failed apprentice, mountebanks start the game with a handful of spells and the ability to read magical writing (see the **MAGIC** section in **Book 2** for details). The character's ability to cast spells is always that of a 1st level magician, regardless of her actual level of experience.

Northern Barbarian (hero subclass): character refuses to wear *heavy armor* (*light armor* is acceptable); character speaks with a thick accent and will be marked as a foreigner. Barbarians may only choose the *brute* fighting style. **Advantages:** character receives a +1 bonus to attack rolls using any kind of axe. Barbarians always *move stealthily* (as the **thief skill**) when they wish to do so, and can communicate with other barbarians in their own language.

Sorcerer (magician subclass): character cannot brew potions nor create artifacts. Sorcerers cannot be *raised* from the dead if slain. **Advantages:** character continues to receive spells from her infernal mentor, regardless of level, though the magnitude of spells received cannot exceed the sorcerer's level of experience (see the **MAGIC** section in **Book 2** for more information).

Temple Knight (saint subclass): character's level is treated as one-half normal (round up) to determine spells available and has no undead turning ability. Temple knights are expected to donate one-half of all treasure to their temple or church. **Advantages:**

character receives training in swords and shields and uses the same melee attack bonus as a hero of the same level. Temple knights are immune to **fear** effects caused by supernatural creatures.

Witch (magician subclass): character is limited to spells of the 5th magnitude. Spell casting requires the use of material **spell components** (described in the **MAGIC** section of **Book 2**) and because of this, witch spells can never be “**fast-cast.**”

Advantages: character can cast spells from the saints spell list as if they were magician spells.



ALIGNMENT AND MOTIVATION

In addition to choosing a class, each player must choose an **alignment** and **motivation** for their character. Alignment determines the character's outlook and morality, and may be chosen from **Law**, **Neutrality**, or **Chaos**.

Law: these characters believe order and the good of the many outweigh selfish desire and the will of the one. In general, lawful characters are HEROIC in temperament, putting others before themselves.

Neutral: these characters are basically SELFISH in alignment, doing what is needed to further the aims of themselves and their loved ones. Group needs are important (especially for the long run), but so are the wants of the individual.

Chaos: these characters believe that the universe is at best random, the gods have their own agenda, and the best thing one can do is serve himself, even at the expense of others. The character is PSYCHOTIC, believing "might makes right" and one should do anything necessary to get an advantage.

Alignment has an effect on how the PC interacts with non-player characters and monsters. As with a character's class, players should choose an alignment that would seem fun to play and that fits with their character concept.

MOTIVATION further helps define the PC, explaining the thing that pushes a character out on dangerous adventures, rather than staying home and living a "normal" life. In conjunction with alignment, motive helps determine how a character behaves. A motivation is something that could be used to complete the following sentence:

"My character is willing to risk death for..."

The following options are provided as possible motivations: **excitement/curiosity, fortune, knowledge, family, glory, duty, love, vengeance, faith, power, revolution,** and **nothing** (the character is simply a "**fool of fate**"). More information on motives can be found in **Book 3**.

A player may call upon her character's motivation **once per game session** when attempting to "**push**" an action; the DM must determine whether the circumstances of the action would warrant the character's motivation coming into play. If judged appropriate to the action/situation, the result of the push die is added to the total roll instead of simply substituting for another die, making success even more likely (though characters might still fail due to **zero outs**). **Alternatively**, a player may cite motivation as a reason **to reroll a failed saving throw versus death** (and sometimes **versus magic** if a spell would thwart the character's motivation). Such a use of

motivation replaces the use of the PC's motivation "push" for the game session, and players must explain why the motivation is appropriate.

Motivation is something that can get the character in trouble at times; it is something that might cause a character to "sell out" his or her comrades. It also helps define one's self-identity, and PCs gain confidence (earn more XP) by paying attention to it. All player characters require a motivation.

ABILITY SCORES

Each character has six ability scores that describe the character's basic talents. These are: **strength (STR)**, **intelligence (INT)**, **wisdom (WIS)**, **dexterity (DEX)**, **constitution (CON)**, and **charisma (CHA)**. Players roll 4D6 six times, dropping the lowest die of each roll, to determine the character's ability scores. The numbers rolled may be placed in any order; any result of **zero** should be rerolled. Players should remember their character classes' **prime requisite** when placing their abilities, as it helps determine how swiftly the PC advances.

The following bonuses and penalties apply based on the abilities rolled:

Prime requisite 16-18	+10% to earned experience
Prime requisite 13-15	+5% to earned experience
Prime requisite 9-12	No adjustment
Prime requisite 6-8	-10% to earned experience
Prime requisite 2-5	-20% to earned experience

STR >14 Add +1 to force doors and locks

STR <7 All characters -1 to open doors, attack rolls in melee

INT >14 Add +1 to detection and languages known

INT <7 Characters is illiterate and speaks only her native language

WIS >14 Add +1 to saving throws versus traps and magic

WIS <7 Subtract 1 from saving throws versus traps and magic

DEX >14 Add +1 to missile attack rolls

DEX <7 Subtract 1 from missile attack rolls

CON >14 Add +1 HP to each hit die rolled

CON <7 Subtract 1 HP from each hit die rolled

CHA >14 Add +1 to **reaction rolls** with non-player characters

CHA <7 Subtract 1 from **reaction rolls** with non-player characters

CHA also determines the maximum number of henchmen that will follow a character, as will be explained in the **LANGUAGE, REACTION, AND RETAINERS** section at the end of this book.

A character's ability scores are primarily descriptive; in general, they do not change in the course of game play except as a result of age, injury, or magical effects. If all the ability scores of a new PC are less than 13, or if more than two abilities are less than seven, a player may declare the character **"hopeless"** and reroll all ability scores.

HERO POINTS (HPs) AND SOCIAL STATUS

Player characters and NPC adventurers are made of sterner stuff than your average men and women, possessing the willpower, ambition, and blessed fate that allows them to survive the pain and suffering that would incapacitate a normal person. To reflect this, each character has a number of **hero points** (or simply **HPs**). HPs are diminished when a character would normally suffer damage. A character whose HPs are reduced to 0 is grievously injured and may die (as will be explained in the **COMBAT** section).

The number of HPs a character has is determined at the beginning of each adventure (i.e. at the beginning of each game session). Player characters have **Hit Dice (HD)** like NPCs, but the number of HD possessed is tied to level, and **no PC has more than nine hit dice**. Roll D6 for each HD a character has (9D6 for characters of 9th level and greater): the result is the number of HPs the character has for the session, based on her overall health, fatigue, state of grace, etc. Each D6 is adjusted by any CON modifier the PC has; in addition, heroes adjust each D6 by +1 and magicians adjust each D6 by -1. As each D6 is adjusted separately, any result of zero indicates no adjustment for the roll (due to zeroing out).

For example: Crystal's hero is 7th level and has a CON of 13 (no adjustment). At the beginning of the game session she rolls 7D6 and obtains the following result: **0,0,2,3,5,6,6**. Crystal disregards the zeroes completely and adds +1 (her bonus as a hero) to each of the other dice results for a total of **27 HPs** ($3+4+6+7+7 = 26$). The maximum result she could have is 49 (if she had rolled all 6s).

No player character may begin an adventure with fewer HPs than their hit dice; this minimum value is **doubled** for heroes. Players may reroll their HP total for the session if the result would be less than this minimum.

Characters over 9th level of experience add a bonus to their HP total based on their class. For each level over 9th the character adds +2 HPs to their rolled total for the session; heroes gain an additional +1 HP per level over 9th (total of +3) and magicians subtract one HP per level (so only receive a +1 bonus). These bonus HPs are not affected in any way by the character's CON adjustment.

For example: Jason's 11th level thief rolls 9D6 for HPs and achieves a result of 30. Because he is 11th level he adds a bonus of +4 to the total (+2 HPs for each level over 9th) to obtain a total of 34 HPs.

Social Status

Newly created player characters have one additional score that needs to be determined: **social status (SOC)**. SOC determines the character's social rank *prior* to her adventuring career; it is determined by rolling 3D6 instead of 4D6 and a **zero** result is acceptable.

SOC >14 Character is of the nobility

SOC <7 Character is of the lower class

SOC =0 Character is an escaped slave/criminal

The character's SOC is multiplied by 10 and the result added to 20 to determine beginning wealth in **gold coins** (called **dinars**); this will be used to equip the character with adventuring equipment and represents the adventurer's entirety of possessions and inheritance.

Even after play begins, characters carry the "mark" of their SOC status with them, and it can influence non-player characters' perception of them and their interactions with those NPCs. This is described in the **LANGUAGE, REACTION, AND RETAINERS** section found later in this book.

ADVANTAGES

Each PC begins the game with a single significant trait, called an **advantage**. Advantages help distinguish characters from each other, especially those characters that share the same class. To determine a character's specific advantage the player rolls D66 and consults the following table; if the advantage rolled has a restriction that would preclude the character from having it, the player should reroll.

If the DM allows, a PC may acquire one additional advantage at 4th and 8th levels. Some traits cannot be taken after 1st level (including *Ogre-Kin*, *Right Stars*, *Small*, and *Wealth*). Others, like *Failed Apprentice*, might be reinterpreted at higher levels (such as the PC dabbling in magic in her spare time). Some advantages, like *Bedouin* and *Violent Temper* require justification for a PC to acquire it later in life (marrying into a Bedouin family or suffering a terrible tragedy, for example). Only a character that has suffered more than one **major wound** may acquire *Grizzled*.

The **ascetic subclass** begins the game with multiple advantages. These should be determined randomly at 1st level, and mutually exclusive advantages (like *Ogre-Kin* and *Small*), should be rerolled.

<u>Roll D66</u>	<u>Advantage</u>	<u>Limits</u>
00	Academic	INT >14
02	Artisan Craft	
03	Beast Ken	
04	Beauty	
05	Bedouin	
06	Brawler	
20	Dual Handed	
22	Failed Apprentice	No magicians
23	Falconer	
24	Fisherman	
25	Gambler	
26	Gossip	
30	Grizzled	WIS >14
32	Healing Lore	
33	Heirloom	
34	Horseman	
35	Jinn Relation	
36	Knife Fighter	

<u>Roll D66</u>	<u>Advantage</u>	<u>Limits</u>
40	Leader of Men	CHA >14
42	Linguist	
43	Loyal Servant	
44	Martial Skill	No heroes
45	Misspent Youth	No thieves
46	Ogre Kin	STR >14
50	Plague Survivor	CON >14
52	Poetic Gift	
53	Political Connection	
54	Right Stars	
55	Sailor	
56	Small	
60	Smart Pet	
62	Temple Boon	No saints /shamans
63	Tracker	
64	Tumbler	DEX >14
65	Violent Temper	
66	Wealth	

Academic (INT >14): Character is well-read and educated, and has a 2 in 6 chance (D6 roll of 5 or 6) of knowing useful lore related to history, geography, and culture.

Artisan Craft: Character is trained and has skill in one artisan craft (wood-working, stone-working, etc.).

Beast Ken: Character receives a +1 to **reaction rolls** involving beasts.

Beauty: Character receives a +1 to **reaction rolls** with members of the opposite sex, and is often singled out as an object of affection.

Bedouin: Character is of the desert and knows how to survive and live off its barren landscape; the character has connections with at least one nomadic tribe/family and speaks the Bedouin language.

Brawler: Character receives a +1 to attack rolls when unarmed or using improvised weapons, and can damage inhuman opponents of up to HD 3 (as explained in the **unarmed combat** section on page 32). **Ascetics** should reroll this trait.

Dual Handed: Character can use either hand equally well. If wielding two one-handed weapons in melee, she may choose to reroll the attack dice (though she must accept the result of the second roll, even if worse).

Failed Apprentice (non-magicians): Character knows D3 spells of 1st and 2nd magnitude; these are always cast as a 1st level magician, regardless of the character's actual level. **Mountebanks** should reroll this advantage.

Falconer: Character is trained in the use of hunting hawks.

Fisherman: Character is trained as a fisherman and can survive through fishing; has knowledge of nets and small watercraft.

Gambler: Character is skilled at games of chance and only loses to non-gamblers 1 time in 6 (roll of **zero** on a D6).

Gossip: Character is gregarious and has a 2 in 6 chance (D6 roll of 5 or 6) to pick up useful information or rumors in communal locations (taverns, marketplaces, temples, etc.).

Grizzled (WIS >14): Character rolls a bonus D6 at the beginning of each game session and adds it to her HP total; however, all **romance reactions** checks (see **Book 3**) receive a -1 penalty.

Healing Lore: Character can minister to an injured individual, allowing that adventurer to recover one hit (D6 HPs). If the healer applies her skill immediately (within 10 rounds) to an individual that failed a Poison or Death saving throw, the patient is allowed a second save attempt. A character cannot benefit more than once per game session from *healing lore*.

Heirloom: Character has inherited a magical artifact, determined randomly by the DM. If the DM feels the artifact is inappropriate or too potent for a beginning character, he may reroll the result (**Book 3** has information on magical artifacts).

Horseman: Character is a skilled horseman, never falling from the saddle, and capable of astounding feats of horsemanship. While mounted, the character receives the same bonuses as a hero.

Jinn Relation: One of the character's relatives married a Jinni and thus has a contact that might prove useful in the correct circumstances.

Knife Fighter: Character receives a +1 to melee attack rolls when wielding a dagger.

Leader of Men (CHA >14): Character's maximum number of retainers is unaffected by level and the character's CHA bonus is doubled on the battlefield.

Linguist: Character has a natural gift for languages and has a 2 in 6 chance (D6 roll of 5 or 6; INT adjustment applies to roll) of being able to communicate with most intelligent creatures. With a few weeks of exposure, the character becomes close to fluent in any foreign culture.

Loyal Servant: Character has a normal human (non-adventurer) servant of unshakeable loyalty who serves the character in all ways. The servant never needs to check **mettle**.

Martial Skill (non-heroes): Roll D6 to determine if the character is trained in the use of bows (2-3), swords (4-5), or both (6), as well as shields. Reroll any **zero out**.

Misspent Youth (non-thieves): Character has 4 points to spend in thief skills; these skills do not improve with experience.

Ogre Kin (STR >14): Character is large in size and doubles her randomly rolled HPs at the beginning of a session. In addition, she adds +1 to melee attack rolls. Armor costs twice the normal price.

Plague Survivor (CON >14): Character has a hardy immune system and never suffers ill effects from disease, supernatural or otherwise. **Magical curses** have their normal effect on the character.

Poetic Gift: Character has a gift with words, poetry, and prose, a talent highly respected in the human cultures of the **Five Ancient Kingdoms**. Character can receive a reroll to failed **reaction rolls** if allowed a chance to compose a song, sonnet, or phrase. If allowed to *write*, then the reroll receives a +1 bonus, assuming character is literate.

Political Connection: Character has an ally, patron, or relation of high status at court that can sometimes intervene or provide assistance.

Right Stars: Character was born under fortunate stars and receives a +1 bonus to all saving throws.

Sailor: Character is a trained seaman and knows how to pilot and work on a sailing vessel. Sailors with an INT >14 can navigate at sea and act as **shipmaster**.

Small: Character is small in size and opponents must subtract 1 from all attack rolls against her (creatures of 4 or more hit dice must subtract 2 when attempting to attack the character in melee). Small characters must subtract 1 from each D6 rolled for HPs.

Smart Pet: Character has a loyal animal companion (horse, bird, dog, monkey, etc.) that is a highly intelligent representative of its species and generally obeys the character's commands and wishes.

Temple Boon (non-saints): Character is owed a favor from a local temple, shrine, or house of worship, which can generally be "cashed in" as a free miracle to aid the character (see the entry for **priests** in **Book 2**, page 35).

Tracker: Character has a 2 in 6 chance (D6 roll of 5 or 6) to track prey, find paths, or determine direction (a trail cannot be lost once found). Add +1 for INT >14.

Tumbler (DEX >14): Character can perform an acrobatic stunt as an action – including disengaging from melee combat without suffering a follow-up attack – with a D6 roll of 5 or 6. Simple tumbling and flips to "show-off" do not require a roll.

Violent Temper: Character enters a berserk frenzy in melee combat, receiving a +1 to attack rolls and ignoring the first point of damage suffered from any successful attack against her. Character has a "short fuse" and must save against Traps to stay calm (i.e. non-combative) when insulted or injured.

Wealthy: Character multiplies starting wealth by three and never begins the game with less than 300 gold coins (if the random roll would indicate less, increase the amount to 300). Character owns a set of opulent clothing for use at court and one animal (with tack and saddle, if appropriate) from the basic equipment list.



MONEY AND EQUIPMENT

There are three types of currency used in **Five Ancient Kingdoms**: the gold dinar, the silver sequin, and the copper penny. One gold dinar = 10 silver sequins; one silver sequin = 20 copper pennies. One hundred dinars weigh one pound, but silver and copper coins weigh only half as much (about one pound for two hundred coins of either).

1 gd = 10 ss = 200 cp

All prices for items listed below are in **gold coins** (dinars).

WEAPONS	Cost
Axe, battle*	15
Axe, hand	9
Bow* (composite)	95
Club, wood	6
Crossbow* (fires bolts)	30
Dagger	3
Dagger, silver	30
Flail	20
Mace	12
Maul*	22
Pole arm*	17
Sling	2
Spear	8
Staff, wood*	5
Sword, short	16
Sword	25
Sword, two-handed*	37
War hammer	13
Quiver of 20 arrows	5
Case of 30 bolts	5
Silver-tipped arrow	3
<i>*requires two free hands to use</i>	

ARMOR	Cost
Lamellar (scale)	65
Half-chain (hauberk)	75
Full chainmail	100
Greaves & Plates	34
Helmet (separate)	30
Shield	18

EQUIPMENT	Cost
Backpack	12
Grappling hook	35
Hammer, small	5
Holy symbol, silver	50
Holy symbol, wood	5
Holy water (vial)	50
Iron spikes (12)	2
Lamp	25

Lock picks	60
Mirror, small	12
Oil, flask	3
Pole (wood, 10')	2
Rations, iron, 7 days	13
Rations, normal, 7 days	6
Rope, 50'	2
Sack, large	3
Sack, small	1
Skin for water/wine	1
Tinderbox, flint & steel	5
Torches, good (6)	1
Wine (quart, good)	3
Wine (small cask, cheap)	1
Writing Implements	25

ANIMALS	Cost
Camel	100
Donkey	20
Cow	15
Goat	3
Hawk, hunting	45
Horse, riding	150+
Horse, war trained	500
Mule	120
Ox	30
Sheep	4

TRANSPORT	Cost
Barge, river	375
Boat, small	250
Cart (2 wheels)	100
Galley, large	75,000
Galley, small	25,000
Merchant ship, small	12,500
Merchant ship, large	50,000
Raft (sturdy)	100
Saddle & tack	35
Saddle bags	10
Wagon (4 wheels)	300

FINISHING UP THE PLAYER CHARACTER

Once a character's starting equipment has been chosen, little remains to be done save to name the character and think of an appropriate background. It is not required that a player create an imaginary history for her character; a PC can have its past shrouded in mystery, only to be revealed in the course of play (i.e. as the player thinks about it). However, having some idea of a background can give the Dragon Master ideas for adventures with personal ties to the PCs.

Players should consider their characters' dress and appearance as well; it is assumed PCs begin the game with whatever clothing (adventuring and otherwise) is appropriate for their characters' SOC status, and at least some sort of temporary lodging or shelter. These things do not have to be "purchased" at the beginning of the game, and if necessary to purchase such during the course of an adventure, it is up to the DM to determine how much such things cost, depending on the (imaginary) local economy.

5AK assumes player characters begin the game in the default setting of Barica, and information on Barican customs and traditions can be found at the end of this book. Special attention should be paid to the section on religion, as whether or not a PC is a member of the One True Faith (**SALAMA**) has an impact on the character's interaction with NPCs in the setting. If the DM intends the game to begin in a different land or setting, this should be made clear to the players at the beginning of the game.

The final thing players need to decide before play is how the PCs know each other and/or why they have gathered together for an adventure. It is not unusual for characters in 5AK to be related to each other in some way through their families (either as blood relations or through in-laws), and familial relationships often cut across different alignments, motivations, and occupation (character class). On the other hand, it is possible PCs simply met at a local wine shop or inn, being new to town and looking to meet other individuals of an adventuring disposition. DMs can help with this discussion; as with PC backgrounds, it is not required for an "elaborate backstory" to be generated, but having a rough idea of the PCs' relationships to each other will help in their interaction during the course of play. Part of the fun of playing 5AK is imagining you are "someone else" and relationships with other PCs helps encourage this type of play.

What follows is an example of player character creation:

*Jonathan sits down to play a game of **Five Ancient Kingdoms** and looks over the different classifications of adventurer available. While it would be fun to play a dragon-slaying hero or a pious saint, he decides that the **magician** class is the one he's most interested in playing. If the character dies, he figures he can always create a different class next time. Looking over the **subclasses**, Jonathan decides to stick with*

the basic magician rather than choosing to be a **witch** or **sorcerer**...this way, if he has a high Intelligence (INT) score, he'll receive a bonus to earned experience points. The other subclasses provide interesting variation, but at this time he's still just learning the basics.

Jonathan doesn't want his magician to be old and doddering; his concept is of a young mage in the prime of youth, haughty in his abilities and heady in his magical power. **Neutral** seems to be the appropriate alignment for such an individual and **glory** to be an excellent motivation: someday he hopes to be the greatest magician ever known!

Next, he rolls his ability scores; rolling 4D6 six times he gets the following results:

5,4,3,0
2,6,4,2
0,0,3,3
0,5,6,4
2,5,6,0
4,4,0,0

Jonathan drops the lowest die from each roll to arrive at the following six scores: 12, 10, 6, 15, 13, and 8. Only 15 and 6 warrant any adjustments, and he immediately decides to assign the high score to INT and the low score to DEX (Jonathan decides his magician might be a little nearsighted). His final assignment of abilities looks like this: **STR 10, INT 15, WIS 8, DEX 6, CON 12, CHA 13.**

For beginning **HPs** Jonathan rolls D6 and subtracts 1 (for being a magician): his roll of three indicates he'll start his first adventure with 2 HPs (not many!) and will have to exercise some caution to stay alive. His **SOC** roll is 11 (6,5,0) and he has **130 gold dinars** to spend (110 plus 20). Not bad: he purchases a mace and silver dagger, a lamp and flask of oil, as well as six torches, a tinderbox, a quart of good wine (and a wine skin) plus a 50' length of rope. While he still has 36gd remaining, he decides to pocket it for other possible expenses (probably a donkey or porter to carry his gear). For advantages, Jonathan rolls a 53 (**political connection**), which could come in handy if he gets in trouble for practicing black magic!

Jonathan next reads the section on magic in **Book 2** and sees he begins the game knowing four spells, and can acquire a new one from his master every time he goes up in level...assuming he wants to remain an apprentice. After choosing the specific spells the character knows, Jonathan decides on a name for his character: **Hakim the Brave**. Jonathan doesn't know if the magician will live up to his name yet or not, but that's the concept he has for the character...he hopes fortune will favor the bold! Reading up on Barican lore, he figures his character is probably a heathen, and so will not openly carry his mace except when out on an adventure. He won't know his relation to the other player characters until his friends create their own adventuring PCs!

ENCUMBRANCE AND MOVEMENT

Movement rate for all characters is given in inches per move; this is called the character's **movement allowance**. One inch of movement equals 10 *feet* inside or in the Underworld, and 10 *yards* outside or in the Wilderness. All characters have a movement allowance of **12" per move**, modified depending on the armor and equipment carried, as follows:

Wearing scale armor: -1"

Wearing half-chain: -1"

Wearing chainmail: -2"

Wearing greaves: -1"

Carrying a shield: -1"

Carrying a dagger plus one weapon: -0"

Each additional weapon: -1"

Each two-handed melee weapon: -1"

Carrying a bow/crossbow AND quiver: -1"

Backback, full (40# weight): -1"

Small sack, full (20# weight): -1"

Large sack, full (60# weight): -2"

STR <7 ("low STR"): -1"

STR >14 ("high STR"): +1"

For example, a fighting man with strength 15 wearing a half-chain shirt and greaves, wielding a sword, war hammer, and dagger, and carrying a fully loaded backpack has a movement rate of (12" +1" -1" -1" -1" -1" =) **9"**. If he drops his war hammer, his speed will increase to 10" (because it costs no movement to carry one hand weapon – a sword in this case – and one dagger). If he were to exchange the war hammer for a pole arm, his speed would drop to 7" because carrying a two-handed melee weapon costs him an extra inch of movement.

HIT DICE (HD)

Except for NPC adventurers (who are created using the same rules as player characters), all non-player characters and monsters have a stat called **Hit Dice** or **HD**, describing how fight-worthy and tough the creature is. An NPC with HD 1 has at least some natural ability or training. A non-combatant, "average citizen" NPC (like a goodwife, child, or elderly merchant) has **zero hit dice**, or **HD 0**.

Some creatures add pips (plus or minus points) to their HD; this affects their ability in hand-to-hand combat, and is explained in the **ENCOUNTER** section of this book.

The number of HD an NPC has is the number of “hits” of damage the creature can take before being incapacitated. **One “hit” = one grievous wound suffered in mortal combat.** Most man-sized creatures (including HD 0 citizens) become incapacitated upon suffering a single hit, but large or tough monsters can sustain multiple grievous wounds and still function at full capacity.

As described above, player characters (and NPC adventurers) have HD based on their level but any damage they suffer is applied to their **Hero Points (HPs)**, which are determined at the beginning of each game session. Hits sustained by PCs must be converted to HPs of damage: **one “hit” = 1D6 HPs.** For every **hit** a PC suffers, subtract D6 HPs from those HPs remaining to the character. Some large monsters or especially dangerous attacks inflict more than one hit; for example, an ogre inflicts two hits with a single attack due to its size and strength. When an ogre successfully lands an attack, the adventurer must subtract 2D6 HPs (one D6 for each hit inflicted). There is no “minimum damage” that is inflicted; if the damage roll comes up zero, then the adventurer subtracts nothing from her HPs. Such is the luck of adventurers!

EXPERIENCE POINTS AND ADVANCEMENT

Characters earn **experience points (XP)** by adventuring. XP is awarded by the DM at the end of every game session, and is gained for finding treasure, defeating opponents, and sustaining damage (assuming the character survives). Bonuses are received for long journeys and visiting strange lands, for discovering and using enchanted artifacts, and for acting in accord with a character’s motivation and alignment. Adjustments for a character’s **prime requisite** is applied to all XP earned.

As characters earn XP, they increase in level and become more effective in their adventuring careers. The amount of XP needed to achieve a new level depends on the character’s class, and is shown on the tables found later in this book (**page 39**). Most player characters begin the game at 1st level with zero experience points; all classes can reach a maximum of 15th level.

During the course of their careers, characters have the opportunity to achieve **milestones**, certain one-time noteworthy events. When a character achieves a milestone, he or she immediately advances to the next level, no matter how many XP the character still required. A list of potential milestones is provided in **Book 3**.

NPC adventurers that accompany the players (usually **retainers** in the employ of PCs) also gain XP; however, NPCs advance at half the rate of player characters (receiving one XP for every two that would have otherwise been awarded). Loyal retainers later converted to PCs (usually due to the death of their employer!) receive full normal XP from adventures (though past XP awards are not “doubled”).

ENCOUNTERS

COMBAT TIME & MOVEMENT

In a combat encounter, game time speeds up from the normal game turn and time is instead tracked in **10 second combat rounds**. Movement rate per round is determined based on the character's normal move allowance:

<u>Normal Move Allowance</u>	<u>Movement per Combat Round</u>	<u>Penalty to ALL Attack Rolls</u>
1" to 3"	1" (10 feet)	-4
4" to 6"	2" (20 feet)	-2
7" to 9"	3" (30 feet)	
10" to 12"	4" (40 feet)	
13" to 15"	5" (50 feet)	
16" to 18"	6" (60 feet)	
For every additional 3"	+1" (+10 feet)	

Characters that choose to run (including **charges** or **retreats**; see below) should use their normal movement allowance as their movement per round. For example, a thief with a move of 10" can move 40' per combat round; however, if he chooses to run he can move 10" (100' feet) in one round. Outdoors a character can move twice that speed (the thief in our example would move 200' per round or about 67 yards).

ARMOR

Depending on their equipment, all characters are considered **heavily armored**, **lightly armored**, or **unarmored** for the purpose of combat. Characters wearing full chainmail, or half-chain and greaves are *heavily armored*. Characters wearing only half-chain, or wearing lamellar scale (with or without greaves) are *lightly armored*. Characters not wearing armor or only wearing greaves are considered *unarmored*. Wearing more armor makes a character slow, but also reduces her chance of taking serious injury in battle.

In addition, armor in good repair can somewhat mitigate damage from injuries the characters do sustain. Each type of armor can absorb a number of **"hits"** of damage sustained during a game session, though never more than one hit per successful attack (so, for example, only one hit would be absorbed from the attack of an ogre, which normally inflicts two hits due to its great strength). Once the maximum number of hits has been absorbed, the armor still provides its usual protection (as *light* or *heavy armor*) but all damage inflicted applies. Between adventures, damaged armor is presumed repaired and mended, ready to once again absorb damage.

No armor: No damage absorbed

Lamellar (scale) armor: Absorbs one hit of damage

Half-chain (hauberk): Absorbs one hit of damage

Full chainmail: Absorbs two hits of damage

Wearing greaves and plates: Absorbs one additional hit of damage

For example: *a PC wearing a chain hauberk with greaves and extra plates is considered to be wearing **heavy armor**. It absorbs one hit from each of the first three successful attacks against the PC during an adventure, but all subsequent hits are applied directly to HPs (1 hit = D6 HPs) until the armor is repaired (between sessions).*

All armor's listed (lamellar, half-chain, full mail) include an appropriate helmet in their cost and encumbrance. So long as a character is wearing a helm, ALL successful melee attacks against the character inflict one less HP of damage.

Two other types of armor may be encountered that are not normally available to PCs. Outlander barbarians often wear a combination of cured hides, leather, and iron rivets that count as *light armor* with no movement penalties and no damage reduction. Soldiers of the Old Empire wore segmented armor consisting of a coat of overlapping, riveted metal plates, covering the body from neck to waist. No longer manufactured, it can sometimes be found in good condition and counts as *heavy armor* with a movement penalty of -2" while conferring damage absorption of three points; however, it is difficult to maintain and repair. Both barbarian armor and antiquated imperial armor include helms.

ORDER OF COMBAT ROUND

Each combat round (10 seconds in length) is divided into five phases. Each player declares what action their character is taking during the round, which determines the phase in which the character acts. The DM determines the actions of all NCPs (though NCP retainers of the PCs usually follow the orders of their employers). The five phases are (in order):

1. **Melee Combat**
2. **Missile Combat**
3. **Movement (& Melee)**
4. **Magic Spells**
5. **All Other Actions**

In general, no player may take more than one action in a combat round (though high level heroes may make multiple melee attacks as part of their "one" action). All actions in a given phase are resolved before moving on to the next phase. With a few noted exceptions, all actions within a phase are considered simultaneous.

Melee Combat

Hand-to-hand combat (called **melee**) is resolved between all characters **actively engaged**. Two opponents are considered engaged if they are within 10 feet or so of each other and are actively threatening each other. Aside from breaking from combat (see **Movement** phase), a character can take no action other than melee combat when engaged.

A melee attack is not a single strike or swing of a blade; rather the die roll represents multiple attacks and feints, beating an opponent's weapon, and mixing in the odd fist or kick. Melees are fast, furious, chaotic affairs, and generally resolve quickly; the attack roll tells whether or not the combatant is successful at damaging an opponent.

To resolve a melee, all combatants roll 2D6 and add their **melee attack bonus** (see below). A character may **"push"** the attack if desired. All attack rolls are resolved in descending order (so the highest roll is resolved first); characters incapacitated before their roll in the order is reached do not get to resolve their attack. If two combatants have the same die result, their attacks are simultaneous.

For a combatant's attack to succeed, the attack roll **must equal or exceed six (6) plus the creature's Hit Dice (HD)** (remember: PCs and NPC adventurers have HD equal to their level, with a maximum of nine). This target number is modified by the amount of armor worn by an opponent: +1 if the target wears *light armor*; +2 if the target wears *heavy armor*. A character trained in the use of a shield increases the target number a further +1 when actively wielding one.

For example: a monster attacking a 1st level hero in *heavy armor* needs to roll a **nine** or better (6+1+2 for armor) to make a successful attack. If the hero is 12th level the number increases to 17 (6+9+2). A PC attacking a HD 4 monster needs to roll a total of **ten** or better (6+4 for HD).

Characters determine their **melee attack bonus** by adding the following:

Monsters and heroes (and their subclasses): add +1 per HD

Other adventurer classes: add +1 per two HD (round up)

STR <7: subtract 1

HD "pips": add or subtract as noted

Heavily encumbered: as per Combat Movement table (page 22)

Using a dagger/unarmed attack: subtract 1*

Using a sword untrained: subtract 2

**If both combatants are similarly armed, neither uses this adjustment.*

If a combatant's attack roll succeeds, it inflicts **one hit** of damage, unless otherwise specified. **If the roll to attack an NPC or monster exceeds the target number by four**

or more, the creature is automatically KILLED unless immune to the attack; this rule never applies to player characters. The following special rules apply to melee combat:

Fighting Style: Heroes with a *brute* fighting style add +1 to their melee attack bonus if their STR is 15 or better; heroes with an *agile* fighting style increase their target number for opponents by +1 if their DEX is 15 or better, but only when *unarmored* or wearing *light armor*. Northern barbarians also benefit from using a *brute* fighting style.

Large Monsters: Giants and other huge creatures inflict more grievous wounds on a successful attack. A monster with HD 4 or more inflicts two hits on a successful attack roll, a creature with HD 8 or more inflicts three hits, and one with HD 12 or more inflicts four hits. Large monsters also ignore shields (see below).

Multiple Opponents: When mobs of similar (NPC) creatures “gang up” on an opponent they should be treated as a *single opponent* (one attack roll for the mob). Use the usual attack bonus for the creatures’ HD, but roll one additional D6 for each creature after the first, with no adjustment for weapons used. Up to three creatures may attack a single opponent of similar size and up to four creatures if smaller in size (though this may be restricted based on terrain). Only two larger size creatures can “mob” an opponent, and only if they’re no more than double in height (for man-size opponents like PCs, this excludes most monsters larger than an ogre).

Shields: A character equipped with a shield and trained in its use adds +1 to the target number needed by an opponent. An untrained character equipped with a shield can use a shield in the same way, but may not take any other attack or action in the round (they are too busy defending themselves). Large monsters (HD 4 or greater) are too strong to be deterred by a shield; their opponents receive no benefit from using one.

Swords: A character must be trained to use a sword effectively in melee or else must subtract 2 from her attack bonus. A character using a **normal sword** with two hands adds a +1 bonus to her attack rolls, though doing so means she cannot carry a shield (or anything else) with her off-hand. When two combatants would otherwise have a simultaneous melee attack, a trained character wielding a sword strikes first.

Weapon Variation: Different weapons have special effects in melee. Axes add a +1 to attack rolls when used against creatures wearing *light armor*. Blunt weapons (unless wooden) add +1 to attack rolls when used against creatures wearing *heavy armor*. Flails, in addition to being blunt, can wrap around shields making them useless (the shield user is always treated as “untrained”). Characters wielding daggers suffer the listed penalty unless fighting an unarmed or dagger-wielding opponent. Characters with a STR of 13+ inflict **two** hits of damage instead of one with two-handed weapons (does not apply to **normal swords** used with two hands).

Missile Combat

Making a ranged attack is mostly the same as a melee attack: combatants roll 2D6 and add their missile attack bonus. The number needed for a successful missile attack is still determined by adding the defender’s HD to six; however, the number is further adjusted by the range: **+1 for an attack at medium range; +2 for an attack at long range**. As with melee, these target numbers are further adjusted upwards by 1 if an opponent is wearing light armor, and upwards by 2 if wearing heavy armor. Shields add an additional +1 to the target number if the defender is aware of the missile opponent.

Characters determine their **missile attack bonus** by adding the following adjustments:

- Heroes (and their subclasses): add +1 per HD**
- Monsters and other adventurer classes: add +1 per two HD (round up)**
- Archer subclass: add +1 only when using a bow or crossbow**
- DEX >14: add +1**
- DEX <7: subtract 1**
- HD pips: add or subtract from roll**
- Using a sling: subtract 1**
- Using a bow untrained: subtract 2**

Remember that a die roll is never adjusted when a character **zeroes out**.

A successful attack roll means the character’s missile inflicts one hit on an opponent. All missile fire is considered to be simultaneous. Missiles may not be fired or thrown into a melee, unless the DM decides the circumstances allow such an action.

Ranged Weapon	Short Range	Medium Range	Long Range
Bow, Composite	Up to 7”	Up to 14”	Up to 21”
Bow, Other*	Up to 5”	Up to 10”	Up to 15”
Crossbow	Up to 6”	Up to 12”	Up to 18”
Sling	Up to 4”	Up to 8”	Up to 12”
Thrown Axe	Up to 1”	Up to 2”	Up to 3”
Thrown Spear	Up to 2”	Up to 4”	Up to 6”
Thrown Other	N/A	Up to 1”	Up to 2”

**Bows used by barbarians and other primitive folks.*

Range is given in inches. One inch = **10 feet** when indoors, underground, or in cramped (urban) conditions. For non-thrown missiles (bows, crossbows, and slings) one inch = **10 yards**, but *only* in the outdoors.

Bows: Characters must be trained to use the bow effectively or else suffer a -2 penalty to attack rolls. A trained character of 4th level or greater may fire two arrows in a single round of combat instead of one.

Bulls-Eye: If the ranged attack roll is more than four higher than the number needed the target must **save versus death** or die; even if the save is successful the creature takes 2 hits instead of 1. Alternatively, a character can choose to inflict no damage, instead achieving some sort of spectacular shot (knocking a weapon out of an opponent's hand, severing a rope, etc.).

Crossbows: A character using a crossbow adds +1 to missile attack rolls against creatures wearing light or heavy armor. Crossbows are slow to reload and may only be fired every other round.

Shields: A shield provides the same protection from missile fire as in melee, and in the same fashion (i.e. untrained shield users cannot attack while using their shields for defense). Missiles from large monsters (like boulders thrown by giants) ignore shields completely.



Movement (& Melee)

A character that is not engaged in melee may choose to move up to her full combat movement as described in the **COMBAT TIME & MOVEMENT** section above. If the character chooses to run (including **charging** or **retreating**; see below) she may move up to her full movement allowance in a single round. Movement is resolved in descending order of speed (based on a character's **movement allowance**). If multiple individuals have the same movement allowance, their movement is simultaneous.

An unengaged character can move to attack in melee, either using normal movement or making a charge. The moving character makes a normal melee attack roll at the end of her movement. If the opponent she moved to engage has not already acted in an earlier phase of the combat round, it can change its action to a **reactive melee attack** against the mover. Melee combat during the movement phase is resolved like normal melee combat unless the attacking character **charged**.

If engaged characters wish to break from melee (i.e. get out of melee combat) it is done during this phase, either by executing a **fighting withdrawal** or **retreating**. Only heroes (and their subclasses) can perform a fighting withdrawal.

Charging: The attacker (i.e. moving combatant) can move up to its full **movement allowance** directly towards an opponent; if the attacker attempts to charge past another opponent to reach one that is farther away, the closer opponent may choose to intercept the charge (i.e. force the charger to attack the interceptor instead). A charging attacker receives a +1 bonus to its attack roll during the round in which it charges but may not use its shield in defense. This bonus is negated if charging an opponent in a **defensive position** (see below).

Defensive Position: If an opponent targeted by a moving attacker (whether normal movement or a **charge**) is in a good defensive position (an elevated ridge, behind an obstacle, protected by battlements, etc.) then the defender receives a +1 bonus to its reactive melee attack roll.

Fighting Withdrawal: Only heroes (and their subclasses) may perform a fighting withdrawal: the character disengages from melee, moving up to her normal combat movement, directly away from the opponent.

Pole Arms and Spears: A combatant wielding a spear or pole arm who is able to make a **reactive melee attack** may set its weapon against a charging opponent in hopes the charger will impale itself. The defender resolves its melee attack **first** (before the charger); if the attack succeeds, the charger takes an additional hit of damage.

Retreat: A creature engaged in melee may break and run from combat (up to its full **movement allowance**) directly away from the opponent; however, by doing so it

leaves itself open to attack. The runner's opponent is allowed an immediate melee attack (even if the opponent already acted in the round) and adds a +1 bonus to the die roll; the retreating creature is not allowed to use its shield in defense.

Magic Spells

All magic spells occur in this phase of a round; however, high magnitude spells take multiple rounds to cast unless "**fast-cast**" (see the **MAGIC** section in **Book 2**). All spell casting is simultaneous.

Counter-spells: When two magicians are on opposite sides, one may choose to **counter-spell** (that is, negate) her opponent's magic rather than perform her own spell. The magician attempting the counter-spell makes a normal spell-casting roll (as described in **Book 2**); however, the target number is determined by the magnitude of the opposing magician's spell (as if the counter-spelling magician was attempting to cast the same spell). If the counter-spell is successful, the opponent's spell does not take effect and any time spent casting it is wasted. The attempt to counter-spell is made before the opponent magician attempts her casting roll.

All Other Actions

All other actions that could occur in a 10 second combat round (searching a backpack for a potion, administering to a fallen comrade, prying a gemstone from a statue, etc.) occur at this time.

OTHER TYPES OF ATTACK

Fire: a flask of oil may be set alight or hurled at an opponent with a normal missile attack roll (a hurled flask cannot achieve a "**bulls-eye**" result). Success indicates the target takes one hit of damage, and an additional hit every round thereafter until the flames are extinguished. A flaming torch may be used as an improvised melee weapon (see **Brawling** below), but will not set a target aflame unless extremely flammable (for example, already covered in oil).

Holy Implements: a **holy symbol** maybe be used as a weapon in melee against undead creatures and demons; a successful attack forces a **mettle check** to see if the creature **breaks morale** (see **Mettle & Morale** in this book). A vial of **holy water** may be splashed or hurled at short range without an attack roll and inflicts one hit against both undead and demonic entities.

Mounted Combat: Heroes receive a bonus of +1 to melee attack rolls while mounted, and suffer no penalties for using missile weapons when mounted; this bonus may be combined with the bonus for a **charge** (see above) when using a long spear (lance) to attack. Other mounted characters receive no such bonuses, instead taking a -1

penalty to both melee and missile attacks. Unless using a warhorse, any character must make a successful **reaction roll** to urge their mount into combat (checked only at the beginning of an encounter). A character may not use two-handed melee weapons while mounted, but a successful lance charge inflicts **two hits**.

Poison: Whenever a character is poisoned, she generally receives a **saving throw versus poison**. The effects of a failed saving throw usually don't apply immediately: *virulent poisons* (monster venom or poisons injected into the bloodstream) take effect in D6 rounds; *slow poisons* (ingested or contact poisons) take effect in 2D6 minutes. Once a poison takes effect, the victim becomes incapacitated, unable to take any action, and dies within 10 rounds unless a cure or antidote is administered first.

Unarmed Fighting (Brawling): Brawling characters, whether using their fists or improvised weapons, are less effective than their weapon-wielding counterparts. All attack rolls are made at a -1 penalty except against similarly unarmed opponents. Unless using an improvised weapon (like a vase or chair), a combatant's brawling attacks have no effect on creatures more than one HD larger than herself; for this purpose, ALL human characters (including PCs) are considered to have **HD 1**, limiting their targets to HD 2 or less (or HD 3 if possessing the *Brawler* advantage). Characters of the **ascetic subclass** are an exception to this, their fists being treated the same as actual weapons. Opponents incapacitated by brawling damage are knocked unconscious for 3D6 minutes, recovering half the damage lost upon awakening (an ascetic may choose to do this type of non-lethal damage, if desired).

Unarmed combatants can attempt to **grapple** an opponent that does not exceed their own size, in an attempt to restrain the opponent without doing damage. A successful melee attack roll grabs the enemy, and a second successful attack roll pins the opponent helplessly (a "kill" result with the initial attack roll pins the opponent immediately). The victim of a grappling attack is allowed to make her own unarmed melee attack roll to resist, with any success indicating she's broken free from her opponent's clutches. If both combatants attempt to grapple each other (perhaps wrestling over an item or weapon), both make unarmed melee attack rolls; the opponent that rolls higher is in control of the engagement, while the lower roll is the "defender" who must attempt to break free.

DAMAGE

When a monster or NPC has sustained a number of hits equal to its hit dice, it is incapacitated and either dead or mortally wounded (in some circumstances DMs may allow PCs to knock-out a creature rather than fatally wound it).

As explained earlier, PCs and NPC adventurers have a number of **Hero Points (HPs)** that measure the damage they can sustain before being taken out of action. HPs

represent conditioning, fatigue, luck, and skill, all of which must be “whittled down” before an opponent can strike a telling blow.

When a character’s HPs are reduced to zero or less, she falls to the ground, unable to take any further part in a combat. If the number of negative HPs is no greater than the character’s level, a PC may take some minor action: crawling at a snail’s pace, sitting up against a wall, rummaging in a pouch for an item, etc. No character with less than one HP has the strength to attack, cast spells, or move normally.

At the end of the turn in which combat occurred any character still at zero (or fewer) HPs must make a **save versus death**. Failure indicates the character has expired, and may only be brought back to life with the most powerful of magic or divine intervention. If the save is successful, the character is alive but permanently loses 1 point of CON and suffers a **major wound**:

<u>Roll D66</u>	<u>Major Wound</u>
00-20	Nasty, permanent scar: reduce CHA by 1 point
22-23	Loss of eye: -2 penalty to all missile attacks ; two such losses result in total blindness (consider retirement)
24-25	Loss of ear/hearing: surprised on a 0-3 (instead of 0-2); automatically fails listening rolls
26-30	Broken jaw: unable to talk for D3 weeks (-1 penalty to all reaction rolls); magicians unable to cast spells
32-33	Concussion: save versus death to wake from coma (check daily); reduce INT by one point
34-42	Broken ribs/torn muscle: -1 penalty to attack rolls and spell-casting checks for D3 weeks
43-44	Broken/sprained back: reduce STR and DEX by two points each and movement by -2”; save vs. monster for effect to be temporary (heals in D6 weeks)
45-52	Internal organ damage: injury much worse than it appears; roll save vs. death (again) or die in about an hour; if successful, reduce CON by an additional D3 points permanently
53-60	Major wound to arm/hand: one arm is useless; roll save vs. traps for effect to be temporary (D6 weeks)
62-66	Major wound to leg/foot: one leg is maimed/useless and character’s movement is halved; save vs. traps for effect to be temporary (D6 weeks)

The save versus death and **major wounds** rules only apply to characters reduced to 0 HPs or less by combat damage. Poison, assassination, spells, and environmental hazards simply kill a character with no saving throw allowed, as will many traps (DMs

may allow a save against falling damage if the distance fallen is less than 50'). A character reduced to a CON of 0 (or less) is dead and cannot be brought back to life.

HEALING

Player characters roll their HPs anew at the beginning of each game session: this represents the character's over-all health, luck, state of Grace, or heroic resolve for the session. Damage sustained in the prior session does not "carry over" (though the effects of **major wounds** can, depending on the amount of game time that elapses between sessions).

During an adventure/game session, several avenues of healing are available to increase a character's HPs. Any character can benefit from the ministrations of a character with the **healing lore** advantage while some saintly miracles and witchcraft can also be of aid in magically restoring a character's HPs. Consuming an entire vial of **holy water** can add D6 HPs to a PC at the DM's discretion (though no more than once per game session). No character's HPs can be increased above the maximum possible for a character of her particular class, level, and CON score.

SAVING THROWS

Some attacks inflict unusual types of injury on characters, and the **saving throw** (rolled with a 2D6) is the character's chance to resist or mitigate the effect. The saving throw represents a combination of a character's luck, awareness, reflexes, and base fortitude. A character's chance to succeed at a saving throw (or simply called a "save") increases as the character increases in experience and level; regardless, a **zero out** always results in failure. There are five types of saving throw; players should always roll against the one that seems most appropriate, unless specifically instructed otherwise by the description of an effect.

Poison or Death: This is the save used for all types of venom, as well as to check if a character is killed in combat or simply suffers a **major wound** (see **DAMAGE** above).

Traps: A combination of wit, luck, and reflexes to avoid injury from a trap. Characters apply their WIS adjustment to this saving throw.

Monster: Certain monsters have special attacks that require a save, excluding poison, dragon fire, and magical spells and effects.

Dragon Fire: One of the most dangerous attacks in the game. Characters wielding a shield can add a +1 to this save.

Magic: Magic spells, including those of a magical artifact, and some divine miracles. Characters apply their WIS adjustment to this saving throw.

Characters that donate at least 10% of treasure acquired to worthy charitable causes can expect to receive a bonus of +1 to all saving throws during their next game session as a blessing and reward.

HERO

<u>Level</u>	<u>Poison & Death</u>	<u>Traps</u>	<u>Monster</u>	<u>Dragon Fire</u>	<u>Magic</u>
NH*	9	9	10	11	10
1 to 3	7	7	8	9	9
4 to 6	6	6	7	8	8
7 to 9	5	5	6	7	7
10 to 12	4	4	5	6	6
13 to 15	3	3	4	5	5

**Normal Human, see Book 2*

MAGICIAN

<u>Level</u>	<u>Poison & Death</u>	<u>Traps</u>	<u>Monster</u>	<u>Dragon Fire</u>	<u>Magic</u>
1 to 3	8	8	7	10	7
4 to 6	7	7	6	9	6
7 to 9	6	6	5	8	5
10 to 12	5	5	4	7	4
13 to 15	4	4	3	6	3

SAINT

<u>Level</u>	<u>Poison & Death</u>	<u>Traps</u>	<u>Monster</u>	<u>Dragon Fire</u>	<u>Magic</u>
1 to 3	6	7	9	10	8
4 to 6	5	6	8	9	7
7 to 9	4	5	7	8	6
10 to 12	3	4	6	7	5
13 to 15	2	3	5	6	4

THIEF

<u>Level</u>	<u>Poison & Death</u>	<u>Traps</u>	<u>Monster</u>	<u>Dragon Fire</u>	<u>Magic</u>
1 to 3	8	7	7	9	9
4 to 6	7	6	6	8	8
7 to 9	6	5	5	7	7
10 to 12	5	4	4	6	6
13 to 15	4	3	3	5	5

EXAMPLE OF AN ENCOUNTER

Three adventurers – Baqir Cut-Throat (3rd level assassin), Hakim the Bold (2nd level magician), and the hero Tariq (2nd level) – have been informed by the local villagers that a pair of trolls living under a nearby bridge have been extorting travelers for years. In the past this wasn't a terrible burden, but a recent decline in wanderers has led to frequent night raids and the villagers are willing to pay the PCs to rid them of the monstrous rogues. Knowing trolls are nocturnal, the PCs decide to scout the area in broad daylight. The bridge is ancient but appears stable, large enough for a small horse cart. The party scrambles down the rocky slope, and...

Dragon Master (describing the scene): You find yourself on the bank of a shabby excuse for a stream...more of a dirty pond that dribbles off into the barren rock in either direction, though the gorge probably fills up during the rainy season. Picked bones litter the ground. Directly under the bridge, about halfway up the slope, you can see the mouth of a large cave, partially hidden by scrub brush. What are you all doing?

Hakim (played by Jonathan): I'll light a torch and head into the cave. We know these guys can talk, having shaken down the locals for years; maybe we can negotiate.

Baqir (played by Steve): Meanwhile, I'll be sneaking along behind, just out of the firelight, so that I can make an assassination attempt if things go south.

Tariq (played by Alex): I'll wait by the entrance, sword drawn, ready to charge in if I hear trouble. I don't want to sour things by showing up armed and armored.

DM: Okay...the cave tunnel is rough but fairly spacious...wide enough for three of you to walk abreast and plenty of headspace (though you can reach up and touch the roof if you stretch). After about twenty paces the tunnel turns to the right and opens into a large cavern. Hakim, roll a D6, please. [Hakim rolls a 5 and the DM rolls a 3, indicating neither side is **surprised**] While shining your torch around the space, something like a mound of earth and rags shifts and stands blinking in the light. Looking down at you from its 7' height the hairy figure rumbles, 'Who are you and what do you want?'

Hakim: I straighten to my full height and state, 'I am Hakim the Brave, worker of wonders! The local villagers have asked that you cease your raiding...they are willing to trade with you, but your stealing threatens them with starvation!'

DM [rolls a **reaction** check and gets a 10]: 'Ha! Ha!' the troll laughs in a voice like rolling boulders. 'I like you mage...you have courage and you make me laugh. Because of this, I will let you live. Give me that bulging purse at your side and never show your face here again, and I will forgive your intrusion.' He grins at you...what do you do?

Hakim: Can I **charm** him with a spell?

DM: He's close enough to try, but he'll know you're casting a spell. Remember magic happens at the end of a round; he might attack and any damage would spoil the spell.

Hakim: Hmm...okay, then I set my purse down and start backing away from troll.

Baqir: While the troll is distracted I want to sneak up and murder it!

DM: Roll your ***move stealthy*** skill [Steve rolls 2D6 and succeeds]. You surprise the troll; roll your attack [Steve rolls a 9, adds +2 for his hit dice and +2 for **bushwhacking**, but subtracts 1 because he's using a dagger]. Your total of 12 is enough to wound the thing, but not enough to kill the troll outright; however, because you're an assassin, it needs to save versus death [rolls] and fails. Despite its size, the thing dies from having its throat sliced like anyone else.

Players: [general cheering] All right! Yeah!

DM: You hear a roar from behind you in the cave, as the troll's sibling comes charging out of the darkness. This is a new combat round, but unless someone wants to cast a spell or use a missile weapon, everything occurs simultaneously in the movement phase. [Tariq plunges into the cave tunnel to help, heading towards the light; Hakim starts chanting his ***gale*** spell; while Baqir reactively attacks against the troll's charge]. I roll a 4+3+1+1 (for charging); a total 9 for the troll's attack. Steve rolls a 10+2-1 to get an 11 for Baqir. Baqir strikes first and does one hit of damage; however, the troll can take three hits. Meanwhile the troll's attack does one hit, which translates to [rolls D6] six HPs of damage.

Baqir: I only had six!

DM: Well, you're out of the fight but you can still crawl away. Tariq shows up, sword in hand, but cannot attack this round. Hakim, your spell is of the 2nd magnitude and won't be cast till next turn since you didn't want to **fast-cast** it. That ends this round.

Tariq: Next round, I charge the troll; I'm using my sword with two hands and so get a +1 bonus to my roll.

DM: Okay, the troll reacts to your charge; go ahead and roll [Alex rolls a 9+2+1+1 for a 13 total; the DM rolls a 10+3+1 for a 14]. The troll manages to hit you (he needed a 10 because you have light armor and an ***agile*** fighting style) but his hit is absorbed by your scale armor. You, in turn, plunge your blade deep into the troll's chest. Since your roll was four more than the total needed (you needed a nine) you kill it regardless of the number of hits it had remaining. Hakim, you want to stop your spell? Baqir, roll a save versus death.

Hakim: Absolutely! I'll go check on Baqir.

Baqir [rolling]: Ugh! Missed it! Can I get a reroll for my **motivation**? My motivation is **fortune** and I know the trolls must have a huge treasure trove from all the folks they've robbed...I need to live to see it!

DM: Sounds good to me. [Baqir's reroll is successful] Okay, you're alive but suffered a **major wound**; a roll of 53 indicates you have a broken arm in addition to losing a point of CON. But you're alive. Your characters can now start searching the cave for goodies...



CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

At the end of every adventure (i.e. every game session), the DM awards **experience points (XP)** to the party. First the total amount of XP to be awarded is determined (based on treasure recovered and opponents defeated) and then it is divided evenly amongst all surviving party members. This share is then modified by any adjustment

for **prime requisite** (remember, **subclasses** never receive prime requisite bonuses, only penalties); surviving NPCs divide this share total in half. Finally, each character's adjusted share is added to her total XP earned in previous adventures to determine if the character has advanced in level:

	XP Needed to Advance		
LEVEL	Hero	Magician	Saint/Thief
1	0	0	0
2	2000	2500	1500
3	4000	5000	3000
4	8000	10,000	6000
5	16,000	20,000	12,000
6	32,000	40,000	24,000
7	64,000	80,000	48,000
8	120,000	150,000	90,000
9	240,000	300,000	180,000
10	360,000	450,000	270,000
11	480,000	600,000	360,000
12	600,000	750,000	450,000
13	720,000	900,000	540,000
14	840,000	1,050,000	630,000
15	960,000+	1,200,000+	720,000+

In addition to the XP share of an adventure, DMs may award bonus XPs to individual characters: these can include XP for damage sustained, clever (and effective) plans, heroic speeches, and amusing catastrophes. These individual bonuses are also adjusted by a character's prime requisite.

Characters may never earn so much XP in a single session that they would advance more than a single level. For example, if a 1st level hero's XP share (including bonuses) would bring her total earned to 4000 or more, she receives only enough XP to bring her total to 3999 (1 XP short of 3rd level). Usually such an event would only occur because a disaster wipes out most of the party (leaving only one or two survivors to divide XP), and while such a somber incident might indeed provide a pivotal learning experience, characters cannot benefit overmuch from such tragedy.

All benefits received from advancing in level go into effect immediately at the beginning of the character's next adventure (i.e. next game session).

LANGUAGE, REACTION, AND RETAINERS

All PCs speak **Barican**, the main language of the region of **BARICA**, the default setting of the game. Characters with a high (15+) INT can speak one additional language fluently, and all adventurers have a chance (due to their travels) of speaking at least a little in most other languages (roll of a 6 on a D6, add character's INT adjustment to roll; this check is made every time a character tries to "remember" a particular language). Available languages in the game of **Five Ancient Kingdoms** include:

Bedouin: the ancient tongue of the desert tribes of Barica.

Imperial: the old language of the Rhyma Empire, still the main language spoken in the northern kingdom of Corzyntium and found throughout the old Rhyma territories.

Kitax/Steppes: the language of the Kitax kingdom, far to the east. The nomads of the northern steppes speak a guttural version of the same tongue, but knowing one aids in speaking the other.

Northman: the language of the northern barbarians. "Northman" varies wildly due to dozens of vastly different tribal dialects; knowing this language allows a PC to know "the basics" of the language.

Sindaran: the ancient and lyrical tongue of the kingdom of Sindar, directly to the east of Barica.

Thebash: the language of ancient Thebasheeba, hidden in the dark jungles of the Savage West.

*It is said that both **JINN** and **ANGELS** (and **DEMONS**, for what are demons but fallen angels?) have their own languages, known to a learned few...but as they also speak all the tongues of men it little behooves even the greatest wizard to research their speech.*



In the course of the game, PCs will encounter and interact with a variety of non-player characters (NPCs), both intelligent and animal. Some NPCs are straightforward in their interaction: a tavern-keeper will greet potential customers warmly, while trained attack leopards will attempt to slay trespassers. Some NPCs might have multiple

“straightforward reactions;” for example, the palace guards might be fawning and helpful to PCs dressed in fine robes of state and bearing extravagant gifts for the sultan, but will immediately attack a heavily armed war party carrying drawn weapons.

When an NPC’s reaction is unknown or unclear, or whenever a PC attempts to negotiate, bargain with, or intimidate an NPC, the DM may call for a **Reaction check**. The player looking for a reaction rolls 2D6 and adds her character’s CHA adjustment to the roll (even if multiple PCs are in a group, players should designate one to be “the leader” in any communication attempt). Consult the following table to determine the reaction of the NPC(s):

Roll 2D6	REACTION
2 or less	Enraged, immediate attack*
3-5	Hostile, possible attack (especially if threatened)
6-8	Neutral: curious, uninterested, unsure, or confused
9-11	Friendly, courteous
12 or more	Enthusiastic friendship, submissive, subservient

**An NPC that is obviously out-classed will not commit suicide by attacking dangerous PCs; he will attempt to flee and/or alert authorities that CAN attack if necessary.*

Lawful PCs enjoy a +1 bonus to all reaction rolls. Characters of noble birth (SOC > 14) receive a +1 bonus with other members of nobility while PCs of low birth (SOC > 7, but not 0) receive a penalty of -1 with anyone *except* individuals of low birth. PCs with a SOC 0 receive a -2 penalty with ALL individuals unless disguised; foreigners may ignore SOC penalties but still suffer a -1 penalty for being outsiders. Except in times of war, wearing armor always carries a penalty to reaction checks (-1 for *light armor*, -2 for *heavy or barbarian armor*).

Certain **advantages** rolled during character creation provide additional bonuses to the reaction roll, as can circumstances pertaining to the specific situation (for example, offering a large bribe to a susceptible NPC or asking a favor of an NPC whose life was earlier saved by the PC). Other circumstances require a negative adjustment: presenting the head of a rival as a “gift” to someone the PC hopes to woo is more threatening than romantic and should incur a hefty penalty! A reaction roll is always worse if the PC is not fluent and not using a fluent translator for the interaction: **-2 for no knowledge of the audience’s language, -1 if only a smattering of the language is known**. Being able to converse in a creature’s native language (even when such is unnecessary due to a ready translator or the listener’s own knowledge) is worth a **+1 bonus** for the effort.

RETAINERS

At some point, PCs might find it advantageous to acquire an entourage of skilled persons to act as lieutenants and assistants, providing service in exchange for excitement and rich reward. More than just hired mercenaries, these fellow adventurers follow a PC out of love and loyalty.

The number of retainers a PC can accumulate is dependent on the character's CHA score and level as shown on the table below:

CHA	# Retainers*	Loyalty Adjustment
2-3	1	-2
4-5	2	-1
6-8	3	-
9-12	4	-
13-15	6	+1
16-17	8	+2
18	10	+4

Regardless of CHA a PC may never have more retainers than their **level of experience, minus one. No character will sign on to be a retainer for a 1st level adventurer.*

The CHA score represents (in part) a character's ability as a leader and ability to inspire loyalty in others. Each retainer has a randomly determined **loyalty** score, determined by a DM roll of 3D6 and adjusted for CHA as shown on the table above. The loyalty score of a retainer represents the NPC's willingness to stick with the PC "through thick and thin," the retainer's fortitude when faced with danger, and his (or her) basic **mettle** and staying power. Compare loyalty to the chart that follows:

Loyalty score is...	Base Mettle Check
3 or less	<i>Betrays PC at first opportunity</i>
4 to 6	8+
7 to 8	7+
9 to 12	6+
13 to 14	5+
15 to 18	4+
19+	<i>Absolutely loyal; never checks</i>

Mettle checks are explained in the section that follows.

Retainers are found by seeking out and posting notices advertising for likely candidates, and then interviewing said candidates and making an offer (usually involving an appropriate fee for service and a share of any treasure found during an adventure). PCs then make a **reaction roll** (adjusted based on the generosity of the

offer relative to the danger of the venture) to see if the potential hireling will accept. Any result of five or less indicates refusal, while a result of 6, 7, or 8 ("Neutral") means further negotiations (with additional incentive) are possible. Any result of nine or better indicates acceptance while a twelve or higher ("Enthusiastic") provides a +1 bonus to the retainer's loyalty score.



A retainer is an NPC adventurer, and is created by the DM using the same rules for making a PC (the DM is responsible for creating and instilling the NPC with a background and personality as well). Most NPC retainers begin at 1st level and earn an equal share of experience rewards for adventures, but remember NPCs cut the actual XP earned in half (NPCs gain 1 XP for every 2 XP earned). Regardless of loyalty, a retainer automatically leaves service if his level of experience ever equals or exceeds that of his employer. All retainers expect to be equipped and well maintained by their employer; failure to do so results in a penalty to loyalty.

METTLE AND MORALE

Not all individuals are made of the same stern stuff. Players decide how bold or craven they wish their characters to be, but non-player characters have an attribute called **mettle** that determines their general courage and fortitude. Like a saving throw, an NPC's mettle is the target number that must be rolled on 2D6 to prevent the creature **breaking morale** and attempting to flee (or attempting to surrender when flight is impossible). This is called making a **mettle check**.

While NPC retainers have mettle based on their loyalty score they never break morale in the midst of combat so long as their player character employers continue to fight and lead by example. In general, mettle checks are only made for NPCs against which the PCs find themselves opposed (i.e. enemies and monsters). The DM should make a mettle check for NPCs in any of the following instances; one check is made for the entire NPC side and compared against each NPC's individual mettle:

- NPCs find themselves outnumber or outclassed (DM judgment)
- NPCs sustain casualties of more than 50%
- NPC is "last man standing" (or outnumbered by four to one due to casualties)
- NPCs charged by mounted cavalry
- NPCs faced with giants, dragons, or other tremendous monsters
- NPCs find themselves on the receiving end of an ambush

The last two situations listed may be applied to **NPC retainers** as well: if the PCs are suddenly **surprised** (see **Book 3**) by hostile foes or set upon by monstrous foes against which they have no reasonable hope, NPC members of the group may well flee or surrender, if not already "in the thick of battle." The reaction of the PCs (or lack thereof) to the situation should guide the DM in whether or not to check mettle for retainers in their employ.

Flight or surrender occurs on the NPCs' next action. Some circumstances may prompt a penalty to the mettle check (though never more than -1 or -2) at the DM's discretion. An NPC or group of NPCs that succeeds at two mettle checks in a single encounter will fight to the death.

While retainers do not usually break morale like other NPCs, they still have a mettle check number based on their loyalty score. At the end of any adventure (i.e. game session) that fails to garner much profit, or that sees more than one adventurer die, or that results in a retainer receiving a **major wound**, the DM must check the mettle of each retainer that took part in the adventure. If a check fails, **the retainer leaves the service of the PC forever**. Like reaction, mettle checks may be influenced by extra rewards given to the retainer as incentive for staying on.

THE LAND OF BARICA

The following pages provide information on the region of **BARICA**, the default setting of the game. The adventures of the PCs will surely take them all over the game world, but it is important to understand the mindset of their homeland to better put themselves “in the shoes” of their character.

The land of **BARICA** is a million square mile peninsula that was once the southeastern corner of the **Rhyma Empire**; seas border it to the east and west and a great ocean to the south. Most of the peninsula, especially in the north and south, is arid and stony desert ill-suited to agriculture. There are few lakes or permanent rivers, and while the land contains wildlife suited to the desert, there is little forest at all. However, even in the desert there are oases (well known to the nomadic **BEDOUIN** tribes that wander it) and a large central plateau provides fertile valleys and pastures for the grazing of livestock. In the north, two great rivers run southeast down to the eastern sea, creating a green and fertile land of marked contrast to the rest of Barica; it is in this region, especially along the river banks, where one finds most of Barica’s civilized peoples. This includes its capital, **BAGDABHA**, with nearly one million inhabitants.

Barica is ruled by the **SALAMAIC CALIPHATE**, a nation founded nearly two centuries before in a sweep of religious fervor, shrewd political maneuvering, and bold acts of conquest. The **CALIPH** is its hereditary ruler, taking his authority from the tradition handed down by **THE PROPHET**, founder and revealer of the **SALAMA** religion.

Customs and Traditions

The following traditions existed long before the coming of the Prophet and continue to exist as major parts of Barican life:

Family: Family and the honor of one’s family are extremely important to the Baricans; it is not unknown for the desert Bedouins to defend their family honor unto death.

Familial (clan) ties, even of extended family, are the strongest bonds (+1 to **reaction checks** with family members). It is not unusual for PCs to be somehow related to each other. Marriage is the main way to tie families together.

Honor: Honor is gained mainly by acts of courage and by being forthright and honest; piety and shrewdness in business dealings are also sources of honor. Being made to look foolish is one means of losing honor; being deceitful or breaking your word is the worst dishonor possible. PCs known to have great honor receive a +1 bonus to **reaction checks**, while those known to be dishonorable suffer a -1 or -2 penalty.

Hospitality: Being a good host (and a good guest) is both a source of pride and honor to Baricans. No Barican will refuse to shelter a person in need (if only for a few days) and will freely share what food they have with their guest. Sharing a meal creates a “**bond of salt**” between host and guest that prohibits any hostility or

injury being inflicted from one on the other for as long as they share the same roof. Only a truly wicked and dishonorable person (of **Chaotic** alignment) would even think to break the bond of salt.

Modesty: Baricans of all faiths dress and act with modesty. In public, men are expected to cover their heads (with a cap or turban) and women to wear shawls or head scarves (a helmet for either gender is only appropriate for war-time duty and otherwise causes a -1 penalty to **reaction checks**). Failing to wear the appropriate headgear marks one as impoverished or as a barbaric foreigner (also worth a penalty). Women of high social class (SOC > 14) are expected to veil their faces when not in the privacy of their immediate family or female/eunuch servants, unless only in the company of women; this applies to Barican women of ANY religion, and they suffer a -2 penalty to **reaction checks** with members of their own social status for failing to do so. This tradition is likewise found in the kingdoms of **Sindar** and **Conzantium** (described in **Book 3**).

Negotiation: the art of haggling has long been appreciated in Barica, whether at the marketplace (“**bazaar**”) or between horse-trading sheiks. “Driving a hard bargain” is never considered deceitful, so long as the merchandise offered isn’t misrepresented (for example, attempting to pass-off a mundane object as “magical”). **Purchasing items from the equipment list after initial character creations costs double the usual price, unless a character wants to haggle.** Haggling is handled with a **reaction** check, with adjusted results: 2 or less – no deal done (bazaar closed); 3 to 6 – purchase available for double or not at all; 7 to 9 – items available for the listed price; 10 or better – items available for a reduced price (one-half OR D6x10% for purchases of more than 100gd). Haggling can be attempted once per market day.

Slavery: Despite the admonishments of the Prophet, Barica continues its long history of keeping and trading slaves. In Barica, slaves are seldom used as laborers (most labor is accomplished by paid free-folk); instead they are used as concubines (mostly female), guards (mostly male eunuchs), and domestics or household servants (either gender). Under the laws of the Caliphate, only a person born of two slaves (rare) or taken as a prisoner-of-war can be enslaved, and of the latter followers of the One True Faith are exempt (though conversion *after* slavery does not grant a slave freedom). Slaves can expect to be cared for, fed, and clothed in a manner equal or near equal to their master, and if abused or mistreated may claim justice from the local courts (resulting in a fining the master or possibly forced emancipation). Slaves cannot be lent or “hired out” by their masters to others (especially concubines!) and if allowed to work for pay, may keep any income they earn (many slaves enter agreements with masters to buy their freedom in this way). A slave must be freed to legally marry. Slaves are freed upon the death of their master, and sometimes freed as punishment for a master’s crimes. Suggested prices for slaves are found in the **Hireling** section of **Book 3**.

Religion (Salama)

Though the Salamaic Caliphate holds sway over all of Barica, only about 30% of its people are members of the **One True Faith** (as it is called). This is because Salama, both the religion and the movement, does not force its citizens to convert...though there are advantages to doing so.

Followers of the True Faith are expected to believe in the creed of Salama (“Halah is the only God, and the Prophet is His Voice”), to fast during the holy month of Revelation (commemorating the Prophet discovering his faith), and to perform ritual washing and prayers throughout the day. For PC members of the One True Faith, it is presumed they follow all these practices unless somehow prevented (for example, if imprisoned by heathens or trying to disguise their faith).

Followers of Salama are also expected to be charitable, and give regular alms to the poor, **including at least 2.5% of all treasure**, so long as doing so does not reduce the PC’s wealth to less than 20gd. These alms (called “**the zakar**”) must be paid at the end of every adventure from any loot recovered or income received. Failure to pay the zakar results in the character suffering a **-1 penalty to all saving throws** in the next adventure (game session). Historically, the Prophet urged his followers to free their slaves (and he himself purchased and freed thousands during his lifetime), but this is not an absolute requirement.

At some point in their lives, all True Believers are expected to make an overland pilgrimage through miles of dangerous desert to the **HOLY CITY OF CHEM**; characters that do earn a one-time award of **1000 XP**.

The Salamaic religion forbids the practice of magic. Magicians (and their subclasses) can still choose to be followers of the True Faith, but they suffer a -10% penalty to all earned XP (**-20% for sorcerers**). Known magicians receive a -1 penalty to **reaction checks** with non-magician followers of Salama.

Characters living in Barica and lands controlled by the Caliphate are not required to be followers of the One True Faith, and are allowed to worship and proselytize as they see fit. However, non-believers suffer the following penalties:

- They are required to pay a **poll tax of 5%** on all treasure and goods owned (double the zakar); this money is used to pay the salaries of civil servants and for civic improvements.
- They are not allowed to bear arms or serve in the military. A character may always carry a knife, club, or staff on their person; anything else is punishable by confiscation and imprisonment.

Non-believers found to be ignoring or skimping the poll tax are subject to imprisonment, confiscation of goods, and possible enslavement.

A number of different religions are found within the Caliphate, both polytheistic and monotheistic. The monotheists (including the **Chisholms** and the **Arasemians**) are found most often within the urban areas and their temples share the same streets as the Salamaic mosques. Shrines to lesser deities (including multi-god pantheons) tend to be smaller and harder to find, especially those of demonic cults (whose worship is strictly forbidden, poll tax or not!). Due to their relationship with old Rhyma and the Conzantium kingdom, known Chisholms suffer a **-1 penalty to reaction checks** with members of the One True Faith (however, being a Chisholm, even a Barican Chisholm, is much less hazardous when traveling in the kingdom of Conzantium than being a Barican Salamaic!).

The ancient city of **YERUSAL**, far to the southwest of Bagdabha, is deemed a holy site to all three of the monotheist religions, for different reasons (Yerusal is only the third-most holy site in Salama after **Chem**, city of the Prophet's birth, and **Mendab**, city of the Prophet's death). Yerusal is small compared to other cities in the Caliphate (30-50 thousand) but it has an almost equal division of the three faiths. It is also a powerful dimensional nexus, with **magical gates** occasionally opening and transporting the devout (temporarily) to Paradise or Perdition. Magicians in Yerusal enjoy a +2 bonus to checks for any type of **gate** or summoning magic, and all interactions with **Angels**, **Demons**, and **Jinn** within the city limits receive a +1 bonus to **reaction checks**.

Monotheists of any type require both parties to share the same religion prior to marriage, thus requiring conversion when two lovers have different beliefs. Heathens have no such requirements.

True Believers are forbidden from consuming alcohol, though some still do.

Crime & Punishment

Laws vary from city to city, but most law in Barica follows a few basic principles: an individual must be caught in the act to be judged of a crime (i.e. the crime must be witnessed), the testimony of slaves is generally not considered as evidence, and individuals of high honor are believed over those of low honor. The punishment for murder (unprovoked killing not in self-defense) is **death**; the punishment for theft is the loss of the right hand (or sometimes flogging); banditry is punished by death (if killing is involved) or else as for theft; and adultery punished by stoning (female) or flogging (male). Most other crimes are punishable by fining, flogging, and/or imprisonment. Execution is almost always accomplished via decapitation or hanging.

Public drunkenness is punishable by flogging (drunken characters receive a +1 bonus to **mettle checks** and a -1 penalty to all other dice rolls).



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