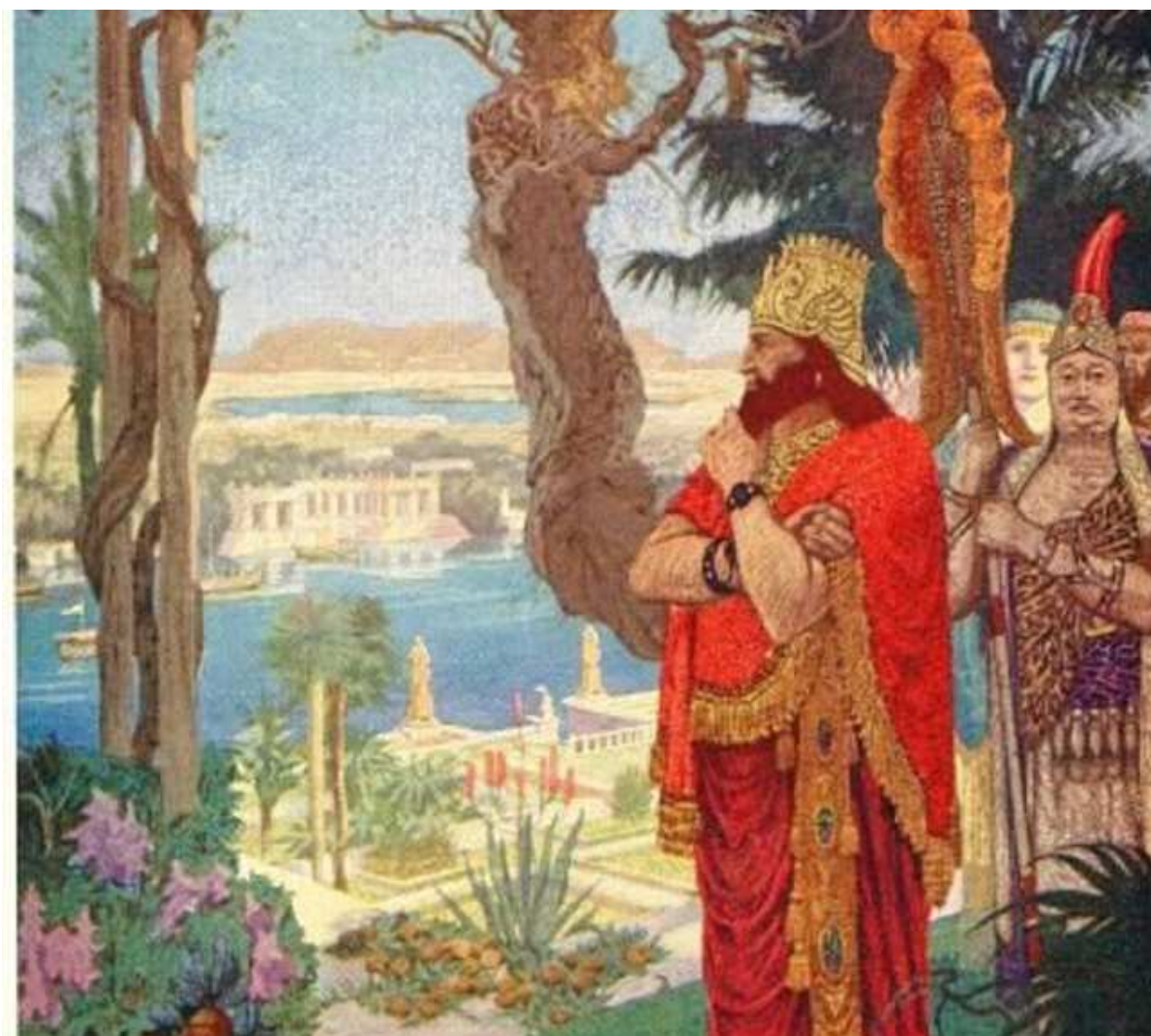


Issue 8

September 2010

MINOTAUR

The Official Webzine of the **Mazes & Minotaurs** Revival



EXPLORE THE LAND OF THE SUN ~ **ENTER** THE TRITONIAN GAMES
FIGHT THE SERPENT OF PROTEUS ~ **UNLOCK** THE POWER OF THE
ELEMENTS ~ **MASTER** THE ART OF PANKRATION ~ **DISCOVER** NEW
PERILS & WONDERS ~ **ENJOY** 62 PAGES OF FREE M&M GOODNESS!





MINOTAUR n°8



A Word from the Editor More of Everything

Welcome, dear readers, to the eighth issue of the *Minotaur*, the one-and-only official zine of the *Mazes & Minotaurs* movement!

Following a long tradition of triple-themed issues, this new instalment brings you 60+ pages of free M&M stuff, including **two complete adventures**.

Veteran Minotaurian Kevin Scrivner first takes us to the **Land of the Sun**, the exotic and mysterious East of Mythika, with a 20-page *Mythika Gazetteer*, plus a *Maze Master's Lore* article on top of that!

But Kevin did not stop here and decided to go all olympic on us with *The Tritonian Games*, a scenario which opens our second thematic section, **athletics for adventurers** – a section which also includes a variant system for feats of strength by everybody's favorite grumpy old Minotaurian Luke G. Reynard and a new optional Pankratiast class (Mythika's answer to Bruce Lee & Jean-Claude Van Damme), with some additional unarmed combat options, by Colin Chapman - welcome on board, Colin!

If **magic** and **monsters** are more your cup of tea, then we've got stuff for you, too - new options and rule clarifications for Elementalists, as well as an element-themed *Mythic Bestiary*.

And then, for our fourth theme - hang on a minute... did I write 'triple-themed issue' above?

Uh, in fact, we actually have a fourth theme of sorts, with a new optional **Sacred Healer** character class created by Christian Schmietzke, another newcomer to the Minotaur crew, and a selection of curative and medical mythic items in this issue's *Pandora's Box*.

And of course, there's always the bonus stuff – such as *The Serpent of Proteus*, a scenario in which Carlos de la Cruz Morales (the guy who brought us *Tomb of the Bull King*!) takes us back to the heroic past of the colony of Coristea and this issue's *Muse's Corner* – in which the recent *Clash of the Titans* remake gets 'reviewed' (with a big axe).

Oh – did I mention the *Play Nymph*?

Enjoy the end of the summer – and have fantastic adventures!

Olivier Legrand (2010)

MINOTAUR MIRTH



- What "Minotaur Mirth"??

You mean this is not for the cover?

All-Star Minotaurs Team



Tyrannical Coach: Olivier Legrand.

Endurance Champion: Kevin Scrivner.

Pankration Winner: Colin Chapman.

Coristean Finalist: Carlos de la Cruz Morales.

Living Legend / Former Glory : Luke G. Reynard.

Medical Staff: Christian Schmietzke.

Consultants: Maria Lourdes Batres & Steve Hill.

Nitpicking Commentator: Lyzishadow.

Supported by: Various Illustrators.

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All game material included in this webzine uses the **Revised M&M** rules (1987 edition).

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MYTHIKA GAZETTEER

THE LAND OF THE SUN

OUTPOST OF THE EMPIRE

Truth, Justice, and the Akamen Way - explored by **Kevin Scrivner**

Additional Material by Olivier Legrand



*"South of the Thanatari Mountains lies the fabled **Land of the Sun**, with its burning sands, desert ruins and golden cities..."*

(Maze Masters Guide, p 8)

The Sun Rises in the East

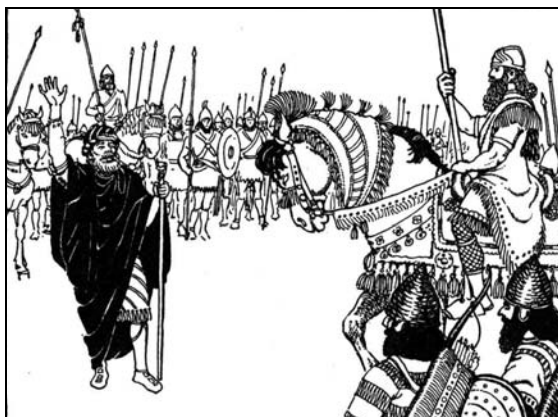
To most people in the Minean world, the Land of the Sun is merely an out-of-the-way desert where scruffy herdsmen with funny names raise sheep and horses, and where merchants in silly ball-shaped hats ply exotic wares.

After all, Minean kings are worried about what the Tritonians might do next. Tritonians fret about what the Umbrians are up to, while Umbrian pentarchs are occupied with the rising Atlantean threat. The Khettim are confident that their eastern border is guarded more effectively by deserts and mountains than it ever could be by troops and focus on unravelling the latest Stygian or Midian plot.

Everyone is looking west, oblivious to the fact that the so-called Land of the Sun, known to its citizens as *the Oromedon Province*, is merely the toe of a vast eastern giant.

And the giant is growing hungry.

During the Age of Heroes, while Minean sailors and soldiers were pushing west in search of conquest and commerce, peoples totally unknown to them were exploring and warring far east of the Phaeton Hills. Rival empires with different languages, gods and cultures rose, battled each other savagely, and eventually merged into one huge whole that dwarfs the petty "empires" of either Tritonis or Umbria.



The Akamen Empire: conquest and civilization

Although the Akamen Empire's inhabitants are (mostly) human, their outlook on life is as alien to the Minean worldview as if they had come from Mars (the planet, not the deity). And while Mineans consider the Three Cities the center of the world, Akamen monarchs have considered them beneath their notice, until now.

Civilization is ancient in the Land of the Sun, at least as old as those of Proteus and the Desert Kingdom. Unlike the latter, however, it has rarely been dominated by one single ethnic group, religion, or political entity. Rather, this region of the world has been constantly up for grabs by barbarian invaders and would-be emperors. The current Akamen kings are merely the latest claimants to the land but perhaps the most successful so far.

A Land of Contrasts

Despite the jealous rivalries among the Three Cities and their nearby competitors, the Minean world is pretty homogenous. Society is built around city-states clinging to the rocky sides of peninsulas and islands. The Olympians gods are universally worshipped even if not everywhere in exactly the same way. With minimal farmland available, fishing, privateering and sea trade are major pursuits. Despite their differences, Mineans, Umbrians, and Tritonians are racially, culturally and linguistically similar – and even the foreigners can speak Minean. Citizens give lip service to their local monarch but prize personal independence above all.

The Land of the Sun is just the reverse. Physically, the Empire encompasses lush coastal plains, arid river valleys, vast prairies, rocky deserts, mountainous forests, and – far to the east – the jungles of Kathai. Society is controlled by the King of Kings, who appoints regional satraps to enforce his decrees upon peoples of many races and languages (there are three official ones).

While local cults abound, moral and religious life is overseen by the suspicious eyes of the Wise Ones, politically powerful priests of the official Mazdan faith, who bear little resemblance to the priests of the Minean world.

The King of Kings has hired Tritonian shipbuilders to construct a Middle Sea fleet, but the Empire is primarily a land power, whose nimble cavalry must fend off restless Arimasbian tribes to the north, rival empires to the east, and crush internal dissent.

Society is divided among warriors, priests and laborers; a wise vassal knows who his superiors are and does his duty to them.

Religion, New and Old

The Way the World Works

Akmen society and behavior is based on their understanding of the way the spiritual and physical worlds work. Akamen theology is complex and, to Minean eyes, very strange. Unlike the Olympians or the gods of the Desert Kingdom, Mazdan “deities” and “demons” are not anthropomorphic creatures or even spiritual entities with personalities. They are defined by Mazdan theology as concepts of virtue or vice that the devotee hopes to emulate or avoid. For this reason, Mazdan priests reject all attempts at syncretism as ignorant and vile (but that hasn't prevented Minean scholars from trying).

Mazdan divinity is a three-tier structure. Above all is **Ahura Mazda**, the Creator and supreme god. He is assisted by the six Virtuous Immortals, his sons and daughters, who represent the ideals to which all right-thinking Akamen aspire. The third tier consists of the Worshipful Ones, innumerable sub-gods that the faithful pray to for daily guidance and help – a category into which the Wise Ones have subsumed the old gods of the Empire.

Ahura Mazda, the Creator, is opposed by **Ahriman**, the Evil Spirit, who is his opposite in every way and who seeks to destroy and corrupt Ahura Mazda's creation. If Ahura Mazda is wisdom, strength and righteousness, Ahriman is foolishness, weakness and sin. Ahriman has his own cadre of spirits to work evil on the earth, the Daevas, although he more commonly employs vicious animals such as wolves, reptiles, or slimy amphibians. Like their righteous counterparts above, each of these major demons tends to conceptualize a specific vice or undesirable state, such as greed, lust or deceit. Despite his alleged incompetence and assurances that Good will triumph in the end, Ahriman sometimes seems very nearly as powerful as Ahura Mazda. So far, Good has managed to hold back Evil, but there have been a number of close calls.

While Mineans believe in an underworld that all the dead go to, the Mazdan faith presents a separate heaven and hell for good and bad people. The good can achieve immortality by emulating the qualities of Ahura Mazda. The wicked are punished, but only their bodies since a man's soul (his “real self”) is considered incorruptible. Therefore, once the sins of the wicked dead have been purged, they, too, will be saved. But it would be wiser to avoid all that trouble and just be good in the first place.



One of the many old gods of the Empire

The Old Gods

Before they received the revelation of the Ahura Mazda's supremacy, the peoples of the Empire worshiped many gods. Many of them still revere the deities of their ancestors, as do the subject peoples theirs. The Wise Ones seek to unite the Empire with a more abstract, universal theology but many of the traditional clergy will have none of it, even though these new-thinking Mazdan priests have the weight of the King of Kings on their side.

One of the unique features of his rule is that although he exerts political control over conquered peoples, the King of Kings doesn't attempt to force them to adopt Akamen culture. Former citizens of the old Edonite, Hazarian and Oromedon kingdoms continue to speak their own languages and worship their own gods. Because the three ethnic groups repeatedly conquered each other, they came to worship many of the same gods, although deities often became known by different local names.

Over the last centuries, imperial scholars have studied these mythical correspondences and found they could "rationalize" all those many-named old gods into a unified pantheon comprised of **Ahura Mazda** as the supreme god and six other major deities. This approach has been taken a step further by the Wise Ones, whose theology presents these other deities as abstract concepts or divine facets of the Creator rather than as individual entities.

When citizens of the Empire refer to the "old gods," they usually have the following six deities in mind: **Anahita** the Earth Goddess; **Shamash** the Sun God; **Ishtar** the Sky Goddess; **Asshur** the Wind God, **Tishtrya** the Rain God and **Mithras** the God of Victory. Other ancient, significantly darker deities, like **Cybele**, **Nergal** or **Moloch**, also play a part in the complex religious tapestry of the Empire.

See this issue's *Maze Master's Lore* (p 25) for more details about the various *Gods of the East*.

Priests, Prodigies & Paradoxes

Whether they serve the old gods or the official Mazdan religion, the priests of the Empire are not Priests (with a capital P) in the regular *Mazes & Minotaurs* sense of the word. Simply put, they do not have any real magical power.

In game terms, these priests are just sages and religious officiants, with no access to any form of Divine Prodigies - regardless of what they or their worshippers believe (shock, horror).

The Wise Ones do not have access to Divine Prodigies or to any other form of magic because (according to them) Ahura Mazda does not need to show his power and prefers to work in mysterious (rather than spectacular) ways.

In the case of the priests of the various "old gods," this absence of real magical ability reflects the fact that the power of their deities has been eclipsed by the revelation of Ahura Mazda's supremacy. As direct manifestations of a god's power, Divine Prodigies as defined in M&M would be a challenge to this supremacy.

To sum up: the priests of the old gods do not (or is it "no longer"?) have access to Divine Prodigies because of the supremacy of Ahura Mazda - and it is that same supremacy which dispenses Mazdan priests from having access to Divine Prodigies.

Minean philosophers would dismiss such a contorted reasoning as a paradoxical loop, while priests of the Olympian gods would simply take it as the absolute proof that neither Ahura Mazda nor any of the old deities of the eastern Empire actually exists.

It should also be noted that the supremacy of Ahura Mazda does not seem to prevent the priests of Cybele and other forbidden cults (not to mention some heretic priests of Mithras) from exhibiting real (and sometimes very powerful) magical powers. And those rare Olympian Priests who have actually travelled to the Land of the Sun have found that they could use their powers as usual (including Divine Intervention) without being zapped into nothingness by the supreme Ahura Mazda.

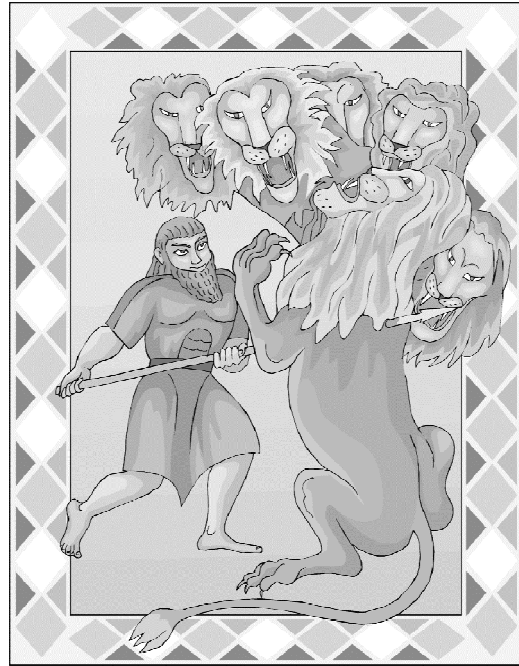
One is left to wonder what would happen if the Olympian gods decided to send their Priests on a grand conversion campaign in the eastern lands or - a much more likely proposition - if the Akamen Empire finally decided to conquer the West: in this case, the very real power of the Olympians and their Priests would certainly have an enormous (and spectacular) impact on events - even to the point of stopping or even breaking the otherwise irresistible might of the Akamen war machine.

Mages & Mystics

A **Mage** is an adept of the magical arts who manages to concile his arcane studies with the beliefs and virtues of Mazdan faith. Most of them are Wise Ones who have chosen to set aside the usual political and administrative aspects of their caste's duties to devote their lives to the pursuit of arcane wisdom. In game terms, these Mages are actually Elementalists with a distinctive eastern flavour – see *Heroes of the Empire* (p 11) for more details.

A **Mystic** is either a sage who follows the path of inner mysticism or a priest of a mystery cult, such as the Cult of Mithras described in the *M&M Companion* (pp 26-27 – but see also this issue's *Maze Master's Lore* column for more about Mithraism in Mythika). Most of them are seen as heretics or agitators by the suspicious Wise Ones but they are usually extremely popular with the common people of the Empire.

While they usually live at the fringes of Akamen society, Mages and Mystics occupy the front line in the great battle against the minions of Ahriman. Many travel the Empire in search of wisdom, rooting out evil wherever they encounter it. They are, in other words, typical *Mazes & Minotaurs* adventuring magicians.



The hero Fereydun slaying a foul beast of Ahriman

To ensure Zohak's complete corruption, Eblis caused a pair of giant black snake heads to grow from Zohak's shoulders, telling him the serpents' sinister hissing could only be quieted by feeding them the brains of two strong young men daily. These horrible feasts succeeded in making Zohak unspeakably cruel as well as immortal and unnaturally strong. The people began to refer to their former "liberator" as "Zohak the Monster."

Zohak held the world in his iron grip for 1,000 years, his reign encompassing what the Mineans call the Ages of Myth and Magic. Zohak's demand that his vassals sign an oath stating that his rule was just touched off a popular rebellion, and he was deposed by the great hero Fereydun. Since he couldn't be killed, Fereydun buried Zohak alive beneath Mount Damāvand, the tallest mountain in the Thanatari range, where he is said to await his release at the world's end.

Meanwhile, the world again was ruled by good kings, albeit human ones, until one of them unwisely split his kingdom among his three sons. One son gained the kingship of the West, over the Minean world. The youngest became ruler of Anshan. The third was given rule of Tarkas and Kathai to the East. The brothers who had been assigned to the West and East became jealous of the brother who ruled Anshan proper, complaining that he had been given the best part of the world. War broke out among the Three Kings, but the Akamen monarch was ultimately victorious.

In more recent history, the Akamen Empire has tended to ignore the West, embroiled as it has been with border disputes and wars of succession with Tarkas. The royal families of both empires have frequently intermarried, making the strife particularly personal and nasty.

Chaos in the East

The Akamen cities of which Mineans are most familiar, **Kandaria** and **Ishtar**, were once capitals of the rival civilizations of Edon and Hazar, both of whom were merely the heirs of even more ancient peoples. Whatever founding myths they had were destroyed along with the Library of Pisiris when Thukra IV swept in from the Thanatari foothills and forcibly united Edon and Hazar with his own short-lived Oromedon Empire. Fleeting clues to that remote period may be found scattered in the religion of the Desert Kingdom. The immortal demi-goddess Isis (see *Minotaur* n5) is sometimes said to have been a Hazarian princess from Ishtar.

Meanwhile, the ancestors of the Akamens began raiding from east of the Phaeton Hills. Driven by the spirit of conquest, these mounted barbarians took over some of the principal cities of Oromedonia and founded their own Anshan kingdom which has since expanded across a continent.

According to Akamen lore, the earth was originally ruled by a series of god-kings who valiantly battled the demon hordes of Ahriman, the Evil Spirit, while developing the arts and sciences for mankind. The last and greatest of these, Jemshid, grew mad with power until his excesses made his subjects forget his many gifts to humanity. His weary vassals overthrew Jemshid and placed handsome young usurper Prince Zohak on the throne of the world. But Zohak had been corrupted and groomed for tyranny by the demon shapeshifter Eblis.

The Current Regime

The King of Kings

Akamen government is very much focused on the King of Kings, but as his title suggests the Empire is a franchise business. It consists of Anshan proper plus 20 provinces, each of which is conquered territory. These provinces are home to no less than 23 non-Akamen ethnic groups.

The King and his advisers oversee national policy – preparing for defense; regulating international trade; setting common standards for currency, weights and measures; creating a uniform system of justice. Local affairs are administered by satraps appointed by the King of Kings, usually his family members, trusted court officials, or loyal soldiers who have distinguished themselves in some way.

Satraps

Satraps function as regional sub-kings and enjoy a great deal of independence, although wise kings retain control of each provincial military and budget. While it sounds like a cushy job, being a satrap can be incredibly stressful. A satrap's main duty is to maintain order. If he fails to do so, whatever the reason, he could be crucified or beheaded, along with his whole family.

Official business is conducted in Hazarian, since ethnic Hazars form the core of the civil service. It is possible for a capable man of any ethnicity to rise in the bureaucracy but satraps are always ethnic Akamen. The Wise Ones and the satrapy become nervous when non-Akamen officials rise too high in the King's favor, however. Placing nobles from conquered nations in the civil service is one way of controlling them. Once trained in Akamen law and theology, they are assigned to government posts far from their native lands and are paid in food rations more often than in coin. If they displease their royal master, they risk losing their meal tickets.

Imperial Capitals

The Empire has two capitals, essential government personnel being moved between them according to the season. **Batana** is the summer headquarters, a gleaming white stone fortress perched on a cool mountain peak and ringed by concentric walls. Rather than become snowed in as autumn draws to a close, officials move down the mountain to the squat stone winter palace complex in **Parsua**, located on an arid river plain (which would be miserably hot during summer). Maintenance staffs remain at whichever capital isn't being used at the moment. While both cities are built to impress, Parsua is notable for its dual receiving halls (so the King can shuttle between separate delegations and business meetings) and its massive audience chamber – supported by 100 ornate columns and capable of holding 10,000 people. It is there that the King of Kings receives tribute from his subjects.

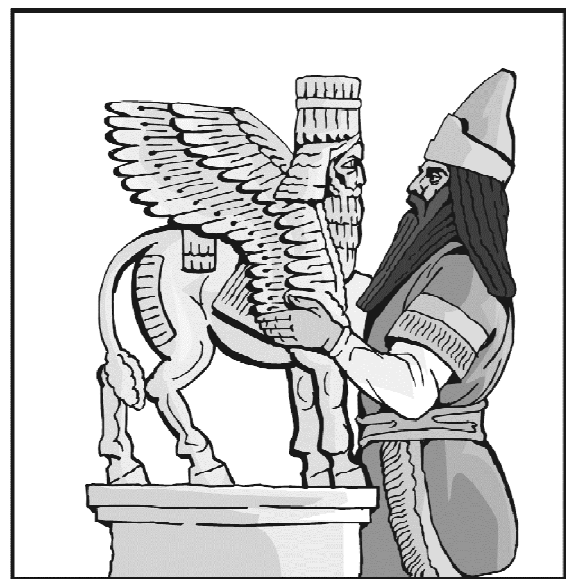
Majesty & Wonder

Whichever capital a traveler visits, getting even a glimpse of the King of Kings is not guaranteed. Entry to the palace requires an invitation. Once visitors get into the audience chamber, the King's throne at the far end is veiled by shadow as well as literal veils. Guests may approach and speak only if the King of Kings gives permission by lowering his scepter. Those who dare speak out of turn could lose their tongues or their lives.

The monarch is guarded by elite warriors known as *The Immortals* as well as a pair of "pet" lions. Even if they don't get to meet the King, guests can enjoy one of his sumptuous banquets, luxurious to a degree Mineans might find embarrassing. Delicacy after delicacy is served on golden plates by the King's concubines, who also provide entertainment by singing, dancing, or reciting poetry.

All Akamen public buildings, even satraps' palaces, simply crawl with statues and bas-reliefs of kings, gods, lamassu, dragons, horned griffins, leonine creatures, and sacred bulls. It is as if officials are protected by a host of supernatural allies as well as human guards. Akamen are such avid stoneworkers that the King of Kings uses the very mountains as his political billboards. Mountainsides throughout the Empire are decorated with giant statuary and multi-lingual inscriptions depicting the King's victories in battle, loyal subjects of various ethnicities offering gifts and obeisance, and the principle heroes and events of Mazdan theology.

A citizen is reminded of his civic and religious duties every time he looks up from his work. This form of propaganda is surprisingly effective. While subject peoples don't enjoy having been conquered, many of them come to appreciate being part of a larger, greater whole – even if they are relegated to second-class status in it.



The Akamens just love their statues



A typical Akamen footsoldier

Denizens of the Empire often surprise westerners with their willingness to embrace new languages, customs, or even religions. Mineans may be tempted to view the Akamen as insincere cultural chameleons, but the imperials' interest in new knowledge and experiences is genuine.

Unfortunately, there is no Akamen tradition for peaceful transfer of power, no matter how legitimate and competent the heir apparent is. When the current King of Kings dies, it inevitably sets off a chain of crimes and political crises that throw the Empire into chaos until a new strong man can seize and maintain power. Akamen history is filled with grandparents plotting their grandchildren's deaths, fathers- and mothers-in-law trying to wipe out not only their sons- or daughters-in-law but their own kids as well, and siblings arranging "accidents" for one another. Meanwhile, satraps attempt to secede from the Empire and the Akamen's rapacious neighbors try to grab all they can before order is restored. Exhausted citizens really mean it when they follow mention of the King's name with the phrase, "may he live forever."

The King of Kings is (officially at least) incapable of making mistakes. Therefore, once he signs a decree or edict, it cannot be rescinded. This stance has occasionally put the King in a difficult position; he can, however, issue additional decrees whose effect is intended to negate the original even if they don't countermand it. The King of Kings is also the Ruler of the World, or at least the worthwhile portion of it. If he attempts to annex a neighboring territory and fails, that piece of the world subsequently vanishes from imperial maps. It isn't that the Akamen forget about that region or ignore any threat its people may pose to the Empire. It's just that the territory is now officially Not Worth Having.

Akamen Society

Mobile and Mighty – The Military

The Warrior Elite

Although they have become civilized, the Akamens have never forgotten their nomadic, equestrian roots. The warrior caste, mostly ethnic Akamens, makes up the first leg of the Anshan cultural tripod. Warriors enjoy the social status that nobles fill in Minean society, and the King is usually (but not always) chosen from among their ranks.

Warriors mostly marry within their own caste although they occasionally take a spouse from the priestly caste. (King Utana, great-grandfather of the current monarch, was overthrown by a popular revolt when he dared take an Edonite bride. Both the King's Wife and her infant son suffered fatal "illnesses" after Utana was deposed.). Marriages between cousins and half-siblings are not unusual but are less common among members of the immediate royal family. Warriors frequently have multiple wives. Also, while they're not allowed to marry non-Akamen women, they routinely bring home foreign captives to serve as concubines.

Warriors have distinct obligations to those above and below them in the military pecking order. Every warrior is vassal to someone of higher rank, leading up to the King of Kings himself. And all but the youngest warriors have vassals beneath them that they're expected to train and lead wisely.

In addition to military service, a warrior's duty includes embodying the Mazdan virtues of truth, justice, purity, wisdom, obedience to lawful authority, and honor. Not all warriors live up to these ideals, of course, but they're drilled into them from an early age. Duty is accompanied by privilege, and most warriors of medium rank or better have estates granted them by the King to provide them with food and income. A warrior's palace also doubles as a fortress that he and his vassals can take refuge in during invasion or civil unrest.

The Imperial Army

The Akamen army is much larger than even that of Umbria but is smaller than it might be. Recent kings have emphasized mobility over sheer numbers of troops. The Empire is big, and soldiers have to move fast to be useful. The army's chief limitation is that it cannot be everywhere at once. Ambitious kings and generals find it difficult to annex barbarian neighbors when they've got two or three local revolts to put down and savage invaders to chase away.

Infantry troops consist of spearmen, but unlike Minean hoplites the Akamen aren't organized into tight phalanxes. This is because infantrymen are also equipped with bows and need elbow room to nock and fire. Akamen quivers hold 30 arrows.

Akamen Warfare in the Game



The optional **Cavalryman** class detailed in the *M&M Companion* should of course be used for heroic mounted warriors. In addition to their usual abilities, Akamen Cavalrymen should also be able to use the Mounted Archery option detailed in the *M&M Companion* (p 14) which is normally restricted to Amazons. Some of them even take the bow as their *weapon of choice*.

The "spearmen" of the Akamen army are not Spearmen in the usual M&M sense of the word (hoplites); in game terms, they are actually **Archers** who also use spears in melee. Note that since Archers are not, in game terms, warriors but specialists, Cavalrymen will enjoy greater prestige (thanks to their reputation bonus as warriors) as well as a greater Hits Total.

The mass combat rules given in the Appendix of the *M&M Companion* should come in handy as well, since the Akamen setting seems ideal for military-themed campaigns.

Regarding **weapons and armor**, Maze Masters should consult the *Twist In the Maze* column of the *Minotaur* n°5 which contains optional rules for lighter shields, armor and helmets (as well as an optional Slinger class) all of which seem pretty mandatory in the Akamen setting.

Akamen composite bows have a range of 500' (versus 300' for standard M&M bows) but have twice the normal price (80 sp) and Enc (2).

The great **wicker shield** for protecting shooting archers has an Encumbrance of 4 (lighter than a standard Enc 2 shield but really cumbersome and only intended for battlefield use); but its size allows a shooting archer to benefit from the usual +2 EDC bonus granted by a shield.

As some of our readers may recall, the *Minotaur* n°7 has nifty rules on war elephants, too.

Also, infantry equipment isn't standardized. In addition to short swords and daggers, soldiers carry whips, javelins, darts, axes and sometimes more exotic weaponry from further east. Frontline shield bearers carry huge rectangular wicker shields intended to protect their companions from missiles while they prepare to fire. Because of the need for speed and because much of the Empire's climate is extremely hot, infantrymen rarely wear armor, instead donning ankle-length robes that keep them cool during the day and warm at night. Instead of helmets, they wear thick, coiled headbands to keep sweat and their long hair out of their eyes.

Eastern spears and swords are generally shorter than their western counterparts. On the other hand, Akamen composite bows are considerably more powerful than the Minean variety, perhaps enough to overcome the westerners' advantage in armor.

Cavalry is the pride of the military. Horse troops include swift light cavalry equipped with bows (emulating the nation's honored ancestors) and the Empire's newest innovation: slower heavily armored cavalry equipped with 12-foot-long iron-tipped lances. Regular cavalrymen are more likely to wear breastplates than infantrymen but commonly are only robed, again because of the heat. They wear tall brimless stovepipe hats instead of helmets. In addition to their bows and quivers, they carry short swords, daggers, and oval wicker shields. Some of them also are equipped with lassos for entangling opponents and slings as a backup for their bows.

Heavy cavalrymen wear cone-shaped helmets with face guards and scale mail or breastplates; their horses are also clad in mail and have iron shoes on their hooves. They may carry maces or axes in addition to sword and dagger. They don't carry shields, since their lances require both hands. Heavy cavalrymen's swords are much longer than is usual for other warriors, enabling them to slash widely about them if they lose their lances. Typical tactics are to have the light cavalry shower enemies with a devastating hail of arrows then wheel out of the way to permit the heavy lancers to punch into their weakened ranks. While these techniques have proven effective, heavy cavalry can't keep up this activity for long in their hot metal suits.

The army also maintains a traditional corps of **charioteers** but has found the chariot less effective than cavalry in dealing with the many threats the Empire faces. Chariots are two-horse, two wheeled affairs. Standard lightweight models have side-mounted quivers and carry a driver and an archer. They're fast but require flat terrain to be effective and are less maneuverable than mounted archers. Heavy chariots are equipped with yard-long scythes attached to their axles intended to mow down enemy infantry and are manned by a driver clad in helmet and scale mail.

More useful is its **elephant corps** comprised of huge beasts imported from Kathai. The elephants terrify the horses of the Empire's enemies and provide elevated mobile platforms for Akamen

archers. On the other hand, the pachyderms tend to be rather skittish themselves, are too big to armor against enemy missiles, are slow, and require massive amounts of food and water. They're useful for shock and awe attacks but too expensive for sustained campaigns.

In addition to regular troops, the army includes the King of Kings' personal guard – the **Immortals**, a 10,000-member elite unit so called because any casualties are immediately replaced by fresh soldiers. Like the old Oromedon palace corps they were modeled on, Immortals earn their fancy gilded robes by being the best of the best at all things military. Does the army need to cross a perilous chasm or raging river? The Immortals' engineers are on it. A certain-death espionage mission must be undertaken? Guess who volunteers? Need a master swordsman to teach that boastful Arimasian chieftain a lesson in personal combat and humility? One of the Immortals steps forward.

When on actual palace duty, Immortals typically carry a 6-foot spear, a pair of javelins, and a bow and quiver. Alternately, they carry a spear and a large oval shield.

Warriors have developed a tradition of man-to-man combat, and it is not unusual for an Akamen champion to approach the enemy line before a battle and offer a challenge to single combat. Whichever side's champion prevails wins the battle without having to engage its entire forces. Most generals will abide by the outcome of such duels rather than risk the scorn of their fellow officers.



The Immortals – an elite unit of invincible warriors

Heroes of the Empire



Warriors

As noted earlier, the **Cavalryman** should be the primary warrior class for Akamen adventurers. Characters from the martial nobility should belong to this class rather than to the typically Minean Noble class but warrior player-characters may prefer to choose the **Immortal** class – which, as far as game mechanics are concerned, is simply the Noble class under a different name. It is recommended that you use the variant version of the class detailed in the *Minotaur n°2* (which emphasizes martial prowess).

There are no Spearman as defined in M&M in the Akamen army – the heroic footsoldier niche is filled by the Archer specialist class. Depending on their culture, barbarian warriors from unconquered lands should be treated as Barbarians or as Cavalrymen.

Magicians

The only magicians tolerated in the Empire are Mages and Mystics (see p 13). Nymphs, Priests and Lyrists simply don't belong to this culture, while Sorcerers are systematically persecuted. In game terms, **Mages** are Elementalists whose devotion to Ahura Mazda allows them to select the Light (see *M&M Companion*, p 19) as their primary element, something which other Elementalists cannot do, while **Mystics** can be defined as Priests of mystery cults and splinter Mazdan sects. See p 13 for more details on the powers of Mystics and Mages.

Specialists

Thieves and **Hunters** obviously exist in the Land of the Sun – and as previously mentioned, **Archers** should be used as a regular (rather than optional) character class in this setting.

Equipment

Akamen characters receive the standard wealth and equipment for their class, except that any free shields, breastplates and helmets should be replaced by their lighter equivalent (see *Minotaur n°5*, p 54-55). Players who wish their characters to have the usual equipment should be allowed to replace these lighter variants by the heavier and costlier ones by paying the price difference.

The Power of Faith



Because classic M&M Priests do not exist in their culture (nor Lyrists or Nymphs, for that matter), Akamen adventurers do not have access to the same amount of magical healing, ability-booster or special assistance as their Minean counterparts, which does make their lives harder when facing very powerful opponents or creatures.

Sure, having a Mystic (see p 11) in the party may help quite a lot but it never will be the same as having, say, a Priestess, a Lyrist and a Sorcerer at your side. Not to mention the possibility of becoming a Divine Agent, receiving Divine Boons and other such nifty perks. Maze Masters who wish to counterbalance this lack of magical support may use the following optional rule, which allows the followers of Ahura Mazda to benefit from the power of their Faith in the Creator.

Akamen characters with a Will of 13+ are given a special Faith bonus equal to their Will mod. When facing the minions of Ahriman (including Monsters, Animates, malevolent Spirits and those Folks who consider themselves natural enemies of man), he may call on his Faith to strengthen his resolve and wherewithal against the powers of evil.

In game terms, this allows the character to add his Faith bonus to one of the following scores when fighting or defending against Ahriman's minions: Melee, Missile, Defense Class, Mystic Fortitude or Danger Evasion.

This bonus can only be applied to one of those scores but this decision may be changed at the beginning of each new battle round. Thus, a character may first decide to add his Faith bonus to his Mystic Fortitude then, on the second battle round, to shift it to his Missile mod.

Moreover, if a character fails an attack or saving roll or is hit by his opponent despite his Faith bonus, his Faith fails him and he will be unable to call on it again before having regained Ahura Mazda's favour through his prayers and other acts of devotion (activities which can normally only take place between adventures).

Note that this option should never be used for characters with standard (i.e. polytheistic) religious beliefs, as it reflects the very specific type of single-minded devotion that only an highly abstract monotheism like the Mazdan faith can create.

A Myriad of Languages

The peoples of the Akamen Empire speak a myriad of different languages but for simplicity's sake, all of them can be assumed to speak at least one of the following languages: Akamen, Hazarian or Oromedon.

All player-characters from the Akamen Empire are assumed to be fully fluent in Akamen and *three* other languages, chosen from Hazarian, Oromedon and a foreign language like Midian, Khettim, Tritonian or even Minean.

Literacy (in Hazarian cuneiform script, the only form of writing widely used within the Empire), however, will take the equivalent of one language slot, as will literacy in any other form of writing (such as the Minean alphabet).

Keepers of the Faith – The Priests

Many Faiths, One Official Religion

As previously mentioned, two very different kinds of priesthood co-exist (for now) in the Empire: the traditional priests of the various local cults, who are similar to Minean priests but have little temporal power; and the Wise Ones, who form the priesthood of the official Mazdan religion as well as the backbone of the imperial administration.

The Wise Ones

The Wise Ones, caretakers of the nation's soul and morals, comprise the next major component of society. They are easily identifiable on the street by their spotless white garb: tall, tube-shaped brimless hats and straight long-sleeved ankle-length robes.

The Wise Ones devote themselves to spreading the true faith of Ahura Mazda, the Creator, passed down orally since Akamen nomadic tradition holds that writing is a sorcerous tool of Ahriman, the Evil Spirit. Because of this prejudice, religious and court records are transcribed in Hazarian cuneiform script by non-Akamen scribes. But being anti-writing doesn't mean the Wise Ones are anti-intellectual. They have made detailed astronomical observations and have developed advanced mathematical formulas to keep track of the movements of the stars and planets. They are supposed to be able to predict the future by studying the stars. They have also carefully collected medical lore from all the lands the Empire has contacted and added the results of their own studies to it.

Like the warrior caste, most Wise Ones are ethnic Akamens although those of Hazarian origin make up an influential minority. Also like the warriors, members of the priestly caste primarily marry ethnic Akamens. The resulting marital ties give the Wise Ones great influence among the important families that run the Empire and select the King of Kings.

Mages & Mystics in the Game



A typical Akamen Mage

Mages

In game terms, Mages are Elementalists who have the possibility (and the obligation) of choosing Light as their primary element – a path which is lost to all other Elementalists. Since this reflects their devotion to Ahura Mazda rather than a heightened form of magical expertise, the extra benefits they receive work slightly differently from the usual bonuses.

Arcane Lanthorn

The defensive bonus granted by this power also applies against missile attacks.

Aura of Helios

Mages simply call this power **Aura of the Sun**. The target number (15) of Danger Evasion rolls made by the Mage's foes to avoid being blinded is always increased by his Will bonus. In addition, allies of the Mage will not need to make a Danger Evasion roll if they are followers of Ahura Mazda (or any other sun deity). Finally, Sorcerers or creatures with Psychic Powers who are blinded by this light will be unable to use their powers for the duration of the effect.

Arrows of Apollo

Mages call this power **Arrows of Ahura Mazda**. Its damage is upgraded to 2d6 when used against minions of Ahriman. In addition, the target number (15) of the target's Danger Evasion roll is always increased by the Mage's Will bonus.

Mystics

In game terms, Mystics have the same abilities and powers as the Priests of Mithras described in the *M&M Companion* (p 26-27); in fact, many Mystics are actually priests of this mystery cult (see this issue's *Maze Master's Lore* for more details) but their alternate Divine Prodigies (with Divine Resurrection instead of Divine Intervention) would work just as well for all sorts of other Mazdan Mystics.

Maze Masters who wish to add an extra Mazdan flavor to the magic of these Mystics may choose to replace the standard names of the powers with those of the six Virtuous Immortals, divine facets of the Creator which also represent the supreme moral virtues of Mazdan faith:

Blessing = **Vohu Manah** (Good Purpose)

Vision = **Asha** (Truth)

Vitality = **Haurvatat** (Wholeness)

Gift = **Armaiti** (Devotion / Piety)

Wrath = **Kshathra Vairya** (Rightful Authority)

Resurrection = **Ameretat** (Immortality)

It should be noted that Mages and Mystics can only be male (for various religious reasons).

However much he resents their political interference, it is a rare Akamen monarch who can thumb his nose at the clergy and keep his throne.

Mazdan priests don't serve the gods in temples as other priests do. Regular animal sacrifices are performed on hilltop stone altars open to the sky because the greatness of Ahura Mazda cannot be contained within walls. These stone altars are tall rectangular platforms requiring a flight of stairs to reach the top. The really important rituals and ceremonies are conducted at remote mountain shrines visited by few ordinary worshipers.

Mazdan places of worship always have a sacred flame kept burning continuously. Because fire plays such an important role in their rituals, some foreigners have taken Mazdan Mystics to be fire worshipers. Of course, the Wise Ones regard such crude notions offensive, explaining that the flame represents the purifying power of Ahura Mazda, the Holy Spirit. Only men serve as Mazdan priests; there are no "Mazdan priestesses" or "wise women."

In Minean culture, temple service is as much a civic as a religious duty; a priest might conduct rituals then go on to his "day job" after he's swept out the premises. He oversees public observance but isn't necessarily expected to be a moral advisor or example. The Wise Ones, in contrast, are expected to embody the holiness of Ahura Mazda in their personal lives and to provide moral direction to both the King and the populace at large.

In addition to being honest, truthful, fair, diligent and chaste they're expected to follow strict dietary laws that exclude meat. Although some devout warriors and artisans follow the Wise Ones's culinary regime, they're not required to.

Religious Tolerance

In general, the Mazdan priests have tolerated the religious beliefs and practices of subject peoples while trying to persuade them to embrace the truth. However, the extent of that toleration has varied over the course of Akamen rule.

When the Empire is strong, crops are good, trade is profitable, and the throne secure, priests have tended to be expansive and lenient toward unbelievers. When powerful warrior clans battle for the kingship, invaders burn cities, floods or droughts produce famine, or plagues spread across the provinces, the Wise Ones often insist that these disasters are the result of a lack of piety on the part of the King, the people, or both. In such times of crisis, local priests either clash with the Wise Ones or prefer to adopt a low profile – and smart villagers hide their images of old-pantheon deities.

One belief group the Wise Ones have never tolerated is Sorcerers, who are persecuted and hunted as holdouts from Zohak's evil reign. Ahriman, unable to take material form, needs agents on the earth to perform his will. In addition to demons and other fell creatures, he recruits humans whom he empowers to work harm: Sorcerers, whose abilities are evil by definition. Minean Sorcerer adventurers had best keep an extremely low profile while traveling in Akamen lands. Because they may also be agents of Ahriman, charlatans who claim to possess magical powers are also treated as true sorcerers in this respect.

See also this issue's *Maze Master's Lore* (p 25) for a very enlightening story about the Wise Men and the Cult of Mithras.

Those Who Work – The Artisans

Peoples of the Land

The original Akamen invaders were nomads who raised horses, sheep and goats among rocky hills no one else wanted. These days, the Empire's work force is far more diverse.

The artisan caste includes cunning **Edonite** traders, brawny **Anakite** iron workers, sharp-eyed and quick-tongued **Hazarian** scribes, and sunburned **Oromedon** farmers who plant according to an annual flood cycle that would be familiar to their counterparts in the Desert Kingdom.

Further north and east are fierce **Verkan** lumbermen, felling trees, wolves and men with their broad axes. Nearby dwell grim **Sakan** cattlemen who live in the saddle, weave gold like hemp, and are said to drink blood.



Not everybody in the Empire is a warrior or a Wise One

Turbaned **Kaghi** miners dig copper and gold out of the sun-blasted Kalatian Mountains. Intrepid **Sugud** merchants travel the Empire and import precious goods from lands not even the palace cartographers have heard of.

On the far side of the Kalatians, hardy **Baktar** farmers coax plentiful crops from a string of oases fed by the rivers draining onto the desert plains. The desert ultimately gives way to a tangled, merging web of creeks and rivers, where dark-skinned **Sindus** fish and hunt among the marshes.

Social Status & Money

As mentioned before, non-Akamen citizens do enjoy some economic and political mobility. But there is definitely a glass ceiling. Commoners from the various conquered people groups will always be considered subjects by the Akamen, members of the slave races, no matter how accomplished, famous, successful or wealthy they become.

The Empire uses both a money economy and a barter economy. Akamen coins are an alloy of gold and silver and are typically stamped with the visage of the King who minted them. But there isn't enough currency to go around so many transactions are simple exchanges of goods. The King sets the weights and measures used in bazaars throughout the land, and royal inspectors travel from market to market to ensure they're being used properly. Merchants may sell their goods in town for cash, but they acquired them in the borderlands via barter.



A graceful young woman of the warrior-caste

Akamen Women

Polygamy & the Household

Men of the warrior caste typically marry several wives and, if they've enjoyed any military success at all, have added a number of foreign concubines to the household as well. It's a potentially volatile arrangement, particularly in the royal household. Warriors pattern their family organization on that of the King of Kings, whose women have evolved specific roles to help minimize the chaos.

Mother

In the royal household, the head of the palace women is the King's Mother (an official title as well as a familial relationship) rather than one of his wives. "Queen mother" would be a misleading term, since royal women are forbidden to interfere with politics. For example, neither the King's Mother nor the bearer of his children could serve as regent for an heir. And she could be punished by the King for overstepping her bounds.

That being said, the King's Mother enjoys incredible prestige, influence, and economic power and has established rights and responsibilities. She has unique access to the King and, along with the King's Wife, forms the core of the royal household.

The King's Mother's chief responsibility is to speak up for and protect members of the royal family threatened by the incessant power struggles of Akamen politics. She also has the right to appeal to the King on behalf of even distant relatives by marriage whose lives are endangered by the plots and counterplots of the court.

In the same way, warrior-caste women of lower rank have the right to appear before the King to plead for the safety and well-being of their family members. Given the complex web of marriage alliances among competing houses, the Mother role is essential in holding down the number of siblings, in-laws, or grandchildren executed or jailed because they are in the way of someone else's ambitions.

Wife

The King's Wife is the second most powerful woman at court, but it is a precarious position. Among all the other child-bearing wives, she's the one whose son has been chosen by the King as his heir. She has no influence on this decision, and the King could pick a different heir at any time. But, like the King's Mother, she has unique access to the King as well as a personal seal for signing official and business documents and can contact imperial officials on her own behalf. Also like the King's Mother, she owns vast estates, villages and towns scattered across the Empire. She travels with her husband to attend state events, conducts business alongside him, and crosses the Empire by herself to review operation of her various farms, factories and other businesses, some of which employ hundreds of people. Women of the warrior-caste, particularly the wives of satraps, also run profitable businesses, although not at the same scale as the Empire's First and Second ladies.

Concubine

Concubines are not merely sex slaves but have a respected role in the palace hierarchy. Many of them were queens and princesses in their own lands, and their presence demonstrates the King's glory. They act as the hostesses of official social events such as banquets and hunts. Unlike royal wives, they rarely leave the palace. They sometimes also serve as tutors to the royal children.

Daughter

The King's daughters have the least enviable role of all. They're political pawns, given in marriage to ensure the loyalty or reward the merit of generals, satraps, and officials. The princesses are used to bribe powerful families to cooperate with the King's policies or to stave off revolt. Once married, they're expected to look after the welfare of their families just as their mothers did.

Adventuress?

Let's face it. For various cultural and religious reasons, adventuring women are rare in the Empire. Classes like Amazons, Nymphs or Priestesses are simply not native to this culture and, there are obviously no female Cavalrymen, Immortals, Mages or Mystics – which leaves us with Thieves, Sorceresses and (at the Maze Master's discretion) the odd Huntress as far as native characters are concerned.



Teispes, King of Kings¹

Notable Personages

Teispes, King of Kings

He wasn't the oldest, strongest, smartest, or most capable of the myriad sons of Ochus, King of Kings, so Teispes was far from the palace when the monarch's sudden illness and death plunged the Empire into chaos. The gangly 13-year-old had been sent to the remote provincial capital of Ishtar to study original Hazarian texts (but had spent much of his time hunting instead). Friendly officials smuggled him out of the city before a squad of soldiers, sent by the boy's own brother, arrived to kill him. The frightened prince hid in the Phaeton Hills while rivals for the throne slew each other or fled to Tarkas. He was as surprised as anyone when his father's venerable advisor, Bel-Shapur appeared at his campsite and proclaimed him King of Kings.

Now 15, the ideal Akamen age, Teispes is Ruler of the World, is married to a beautiful young wife he met just before the wedding ceremony, and is surrounded by fawning courtiers who sneer in private at "that callow idiot." It is understandable that he leans heavily on the Vizier for advice, but he can't help but overhear the whispers that he's merely a puppet for the "decrepit foreigner."

¹ *The young monarch is seen here in hunting apparel and since he hasn't grown a beard yet, he is wearing a false one, for a manlier and kinglier look*

Everyone wants to tell Teispes what to do. His headstrong wife, Vashti, goaded no doubt by her mother-in-law, wants him to prove his manhood by slaying dragons or capturing griffins for her.

His mother, Shiptu, while forbidden to give policy suggestions, is always comparing him unfavorably to his father or his brothers.

His generals treat him like a figurehead, or would if Bel-Shapur didn't intervene and require him to speak up. The Vizier corrects him frequently (when they are alone) on matters of court etiquette and diplomacy. However, the formerly lazy youth is learning quickly and is eager to demonstrate that he has what it takes to run the Empire.

Shiptu, King's Mother

Still a stunning woman in early middle age, Shiptu was a slim Tarkasian princess when Ochus, the current King of King's father, slew an Arimaspien champion and fought his way through the Valley of Griffins to rescue her from a forced marriage to the Green Demon. Her husband adored her, and Shiptu never let him, her rival wives, or her sons forget that she was worth the sacrifices he had made to wed her. When Ochus died of fever after returning from a hunting trip, Shiptu was unable to save her older sons from the resulting carnage among brothers, half-brothers, uncles and cousins. She haughtily rejected marriage offers from more than one would-be monarch, refusing to become a pawn.

Shiptu was relieved when her husband's interfering old Edonite counselor found Teispes alive but outraged when he arranged to have the indolent little fool crowned. If Bel-Shapur didn't have the brat already wrapped around his finger, she'd use her motherly influence to have him banished or beheaded. For now, she's biding her time and trying to teach that mouse of a bride the nobles picked for her son how to be a real warrior's woman.

Vashti, King's Wife

So far, she's the only wife and hasn't yet become pregnant. Marrying the King of Kings is any warrior woman's dream, but after her initial excitement Vashti isn't so sure that the reality matches her expectations. Not that she had any choice in the matter. The daughter of a noble house opposed to Teispes' ascension, she was carefully selected as his bride to end the civil war.

She rarely gets to see her husband, and they are unbearably shy toward one another when they meet. Vashti is intimidated by her regal, arrogant mother-in-law and despairs of ever winning her approval. And she feels like the odd girl out in the women's quarters, which are still inhabited by Ochus' wives and daughters, most of whom are older than her and much too interested in her personal life. The Vizier's kind words encourage her but, like many of the palace's inhabitants, she's a little afraid of the old man.



*The royal vizier Bel-Shapur
Shrewdest and best-informed man in all the Empire*

Bel-Shapur, Vizier

Bel-Shapur, now an ancient man, has seen many kings, and kingdoms, come and go in the Land of the Sun. Although resented as a foreigner and feared as a sorcerer by Akamen nobles and bureaucrats, it has been largely through his efforts that the region has maintained as much stability as it has despite multiple regime changes.

He was born Hazithal on his father's seaside estate north of Kandaria but received his "official" name when conquering Hazarian soldiers took the sons of the nobility as hostages to Ishtar.

Trained in both politics and the occult to become a member of the Hazarian civil service, Bel-Shapur rose steadily in the bureaucratic ranks because of his uncompromising honesty, his preternatural good sense, and a talent for administration and delegation. He was one of the few "court magicians" not to be dismissed or executed when Ishtar was swallowed by the Oromedon Empire.

When King Ashurbanipal drank himself to death on the eve of the Akamen invasion, Bel-Shapur kept the Oromedon troops and citizenry in order while he negotiated a peaceful surrender of Ishtar, thereby preventing wholesale slaughter of the people by the eastern barbarians. The King of Kings, recognizing a good man when he found one, took Bel-Shapur with him to the capital. There, as he had in previous courts, Bel-Shapur rose in the ranks until he became Teispes' chief counselor and administrator, despite attempts by jealous rivals to discredit him or have him executed for supposed crimes.

What his enemies truly fear is not magical powers but Bel-Shapur's incorruptibility and his insistence that those under him be promoted and rewarded based on merit rather than on social rank or family connections. The Vizier is unflappable; after all, he really has seen it all during his long career. He's surprisingly spry for a man of his advanced years and only recently ceased skinny-dipping for exercise in the icy river that flows into the valley near Batana.

Bel-Shapur has a genuine love for the common people (dogs and children like him) but his kindly face grows frighteningly stern when he confronts a wasteful or dishonest public employee.

Also unnerving is his uncanny knowledge of every plot and counter-plot that occurs in either of the two imperial capitals. Cautious conspirators are routinely shocked to have the royal Vizier repeat their private, whispered words back to them during his interrogations. From his casual, knowing comments it sometimes seems that he has listened to every conversation and peered into every chamber in Anshan. How does he do it?

Teispes wouldn't have been Bel-Shapur's first choice for King but the Vizier judged him the best of the surviving heirs. You work with what you have. Over time, Bel-Shapur has become convinced that with discipline and encouragement the young man will grow into a decent monarch. He tries to cheer up the King's new bride whenever possible; strong families make good dynasties. The Vizier is aware of Shiptu's hatred but treats the King's Mother with studious courtesy.

Despite what some of his political enemies have been claiming for years, Bel-Shapur is no Sorcerer but simply a true master of political intrigue, with decades of experience, a razor-sharp mind and the best network of informants in the Empire.

Rostam, True All-Akamen Hero

Rostam, son of Zal of the White Hair, is the Akamen answer to Sir Lancelot, the hero's hero.

He's the warrior no opponent could kill, the dashing young prince who rescued a Tarkasian princess from the schemes of her unscrupulous father, married her and remained faithful, but who loved his valiant red horse best.

He's the grizzled veteran who outlived his own heroic children, whose career lasted longer than the reigns of five Kings of Kings, who served the various monarchs out of a sense of duty, even the ones he despised personally. He's the perfect vassal, who did his job and never betrayed his trust even when jealousies at court sidelined his career and forced him to retire to his estate. He's the living legend who even as an old geezer could humiliate adversaries forty years his junior, until an envious relative led him into a deathtrap. Rostam is the man every Akamen male wants to be.

No account of Rostam would be complete without his faithful horse, Rakhsh. If Rostam is the Akamen equivalent of Sir Lancelot (wounded often, never defeated, strong and skilled enough to humiliate opponents when he doesn't need to kill them outright), then Rakhsh the Big Red Horse is its answer to Roy Rogers' Trigger, Zorro's Tornado, or Pecos Bill's Widowmaker. He was more of a sidekick than a mount, smarter than many humans, always there when Rostam needed him. No one else could ride or control him.

Rostam



The greatest Akamen hero of his time

Level 6 Cavalryman, in his sixties

Attributes: Might 17, Skill 21, Luck 20, Wits 16, Will 21, Grace 13.

Combat: Initiative 18, Melee +12, Missile +11, Basic Defense Class 16, Hits Total 35.

Saving Rolls: Athletic Prowess +12, Danger Evasion +11, Mystic Fort. +10, Phys. Vigor +12.

Personal Charisma: +10 (+16 with reputation)

Weapons: Bow, sword, spear, dagger. His weapon of choice is the sword.

Other Equipment: Light armor, standard helmet, standard cavalry shield (for a total EDC of 21 or 26 on horseback)

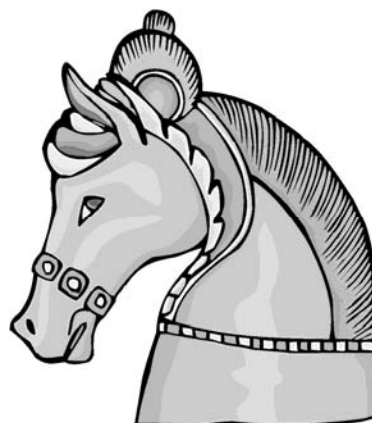
Background talents: Equestrian, Tactician.

Due to his training as a Cavalryman, Rostam adds his Skill mod (+5) to his melee Initiative and Defense Class when fighting on horseback.

Mythic Items: Rostam's bow has the usual characteristics of an Akamen composite bow and the same powers as a Bow of Herakles (allowing Rostam to add his Might bonus of +3 to his Missile and damage rolls); his sword, which was originally carried by the great hero Fereydun, has the same properties as a Sword of Ares (allowing Rostam to add his Skill bonus of +5 to his damage rolls).

Note: Using the optional variant formulas given in previous issues, Rostam's Mystic Fortitude would be +11 but his Danger Evasion would be unchanged, since his Skill is as formidable as his Will.

Raksh, Rostam's Best Friend



The greatest Akamen horse of his time

Said to descend from a Pegasus on his father's side, Raksh, Rostam's faithful horse is a truly extraordinary mount, as shown by his superior Ferocity, Cunning and special abilities.

Exceptional Horse

Size: Medium

Ferocity: Dangerous

Cunning: Clever

Mystique: Weird

Movement: 80' (320' galloping)

Initiative: 20

Melee Attack: +5

Damage: 1d6 (hooves)

Defense Class: 17 *

Hits Total: 16

Detection / Evasion: +8 / +12

Mystic Fortitude: +8 *

Special Abilities: Charge Into Battle (Init 22, Melee +7), Gallop, Lightning Fast, Magic Resistance, Sixth Sense, Supernatural Vigor, Trample, Uncanny Agility.

If the rules on taming and training animals (see *M&M Companion*) are used, Raksh has a Bond of 11 and knows all the Tricks detailed on p 35.

* Raksh is equipped with a magical **saddle of protection** which adds +2 to his Defense Class and Mystic Fortitude (already included in the above stats).



The Satrap Phraortes

Ambitious and crafty ruler of the Land of the Sun

Satrap Phraortes

Phraortes is the satrap of the Oromedon Province, known to westerners as *the Land of the Sun*.

A distant older cousin of the King of Kings, he isn't an ambitious man, but he does have a taste for money and a talent for intrigue. Not having the stomach to try for the throne himself, he sought to play kingmaker during the turmoil.

Phraortes' schemes failed miserably but he was slick enough to get through the crisis with his head and his lands intact. His attempts to worm his way among Teispes' counselors also failed. Bel-Shapur judged him too closely related and too clever to stay near the King. On the other hand, the shrewd Vizier reasoned that this sneaky coward was just the sort of person needed to deal with nosey alien envoys seeking audience in Kandaria.

Phraortes was installed with all suitable pomp in Ishtar, where he lives like a king even if he really isn't one. If the Tritonians mistake him for supreme ruler instead of an aristocratic lackey, well, he won't go out of his way to enlighten them. He'd enrich himself at the people's expense if royal inspectors didn't arrive regularly to check up on him. The barbarians receive no such protection.

Although certainly no Rostam (see above), he is not a man to underestimate. His skills with bow and bridle are excellent as befits an Akamen warrior. Despite spending much of his career as a venal bureaucrat, he retains a decent grasp of military tactics and strategy. Bel-Shapur worried about Phraortes' potential influence on the King, not about his competence to manage and protect a restless new province.

Above all, the satrap is crafty and adept at looking after his own well-being. He wouldn't have lived this long (or amassed such wealth) otherwise. Phraortes is bending all his powers to the task of keeping Oromedon Province secure and orderly since his neck is literally on the line.

The satrap of the Land of the Sun is a handsome man in his late thirties whose muscular physique is tending toward flab after years of high living. He's invariably charming and pleasant, regardless of his thoughts and motives, and he's quick to tell people who matter what they want to hear. Phraortes is quick to give servants and underlings an earful of invective but rarely stays angry as long as his creature comforts are maintained. His 28 wives and his personal attendants have learned to agree placidly then roll their eyes when he goes into the usual "I'm just an overworked public servant" tirade. They've also learned to go into hiding when he becomes pensive and worried.

Rivals, Dupes & Enemies

Anakites (see *Minotaur* n°3, p 36)

The Children of Anak, often taller than an ordinary man standing on another's shoulders, were the pride of the old Edonite army. They were renowned champions and shock troops after Hazarian and later Oromedon invaders subjugated their former masters. Anakites even enjoyed membership in the Quradu, the former Oromedon elite forces. Since the Akamen takeover, however, they've fallen upon hard times. The Land of the Sun's new rulers don't trust normal-sized Edonites to serve in the military except in an unarmed support capacity. The satrap certainly isn't going to arm and equip giants strong enough to arm wrestle a Minotaur and win.

Some Anakites find employment as private guards, others as professional athletes, and many of them have always had second careers as blacksmiths, armor-makers or other weapon-related craftsmen. But the blow to their prestige is a bitter one.

Anakites have begun to talk quietly among themselves of emigrating to other lands, even if it means serving as mercenaries or (Dagon, forgive them) traveling performing strongmen to earn their bread. Whether the Empire will allow them to leave is another matter.

Arimaspians

These feisty, fractious single-eyed nomads have been a thorn in the Empire's side since the founding of Anshan. The fact that the Akamen and their one-eyed neighbors both prided themselves on horsemanship and archery made them natural rivals. The northern tribesmen have made deep forays into Akamen territory several times during Anshan's history, and Arimaspians like to boast that the southern city-dwellers have gone soft.

However, with civilization comes organization. Chieftains strong enough to unite the squabbling northerners have been rare, and well-drilled Akamen cavalry successfully repulsed the raiders. Arimaspians have never held Akamen land for long, but the need to guard against them has given more than one imperial general or satrap ulcers.

Go East, Young Man!

The Minean and Akamen civilizations have remained largely ignorant of each other except for casual trading contacts, general things like, "Those Easterners are good with horses." Rare Khettim merchants may have made it as far inland as Ishtar but no further, and they assumed it was the capital.

In reality, the Empire's heart and brain are literally off the map. Ishtar is merely the headquarters of the local satrap with Kandaria as the province's major port. Even the Tritonians haven't caught on. The sea lords are scheming to march inland to seize Ishtar and annex the Land of the Sun to their "Empire," not realizing that is merely a prosperous but minor piece of a much larger entity. Once they run into trouble they'll appeal to their Minean or Umbrian "brothers" for aid, encouraging the Akamen to move west.

Land of the Three Cities

Minean mariners have been trading along the eastern coast pretty much since they first put to sea. Their business with Kandaria was formalized in the desperate quest for horses during the Umbrian War. However, like the representatives of other western trading nations, Mineans haven't made it much further inland than the port. Traders may have noticed a new set of coins circulating in the bazaar but most have been too busy loading goods and hurrying on to the next stop on their itinerary to wonder about any political changes in the region. There have been no formal contacts, and without ships the Akamen haven't been able to explore the Middle Sea or reach the Three Cities.

So far, the Empire and the Three Cities are largely unaware of each other's existence.

Tritonis

Of all the western nations, Tritonis has done the most to cultivate relations with the Akamen regime. After all, the fertile Edonite coast is practically within spitting distance of Acharnia. Kandaria's bustling port, loaded with all manner of exotic goods, has the sea lords drooling for wealth and glory.

Recalling their ancient history, the Heptarchs believe the region to be rightfully theirs even though any descendants of their old colonists have long since been assimilated. When an envoy from the satrap arrived requesting their help to construct a trading fleet, the sea lords were only too happy to comply, seeing the project as an opportunity to get their hooks back into the Land of the Sun. The problem with their schemes is that the rulers of the island "empire" have no idea who it is they are dealing with. Tritonians see the Land of the Sun's inhabitants as bucolic rubes ripe for conquest.

The Sea Princes of Tritonis incorrectly perceive Ishtar (which they haven't been allowed to visit) as the capital of a tempting bite-sized kingdom rather than a province of a much larger entity and the satrap as a local king rather than the minion of a much greater monarch. Used to island kingdoms and coastal city-states, the sea lords can't conceive of a land empire larger than the Middle Sea.

Desert Kingdom

The Desert Kingdom invaded the Land of the Sun three times during its Second and Third Dynasties. But that was long before the Akamen assumed control of the region, and the King of Kings has, until recently, been too busy consolidating his current territories since to look for new conquests.

The Hills of Brass have seemed a secure barrier between the two kingdoms, although mining parties from each have occasionally sparred with one another during the past 30 years.

State-level contacts have been rare between Ishtar and Sebentos but lucrative commerce has been incessant. Although some of this trade is by sea, the bulk of it is by tortuous caravan route. Both Akamen and Khettim merchants are familiar with the rigors of desert travel, and they dislike sharing their profits with overeager Tritonian, Minean or Midian middlemen.

The King's engineers are building a canal from Ishtar to the South Sea, ostensibly to help store annual floodwaters against summer drought and to facilitate trade with the Desert Kingdom's Cadmean ports. Not advertised is that the canal will be broad and deep enough to facilitate troop transport south.

The Desert Kingdom has periodically imported its queens from the Land of the Sun, most notably the divine Isis, who grew up in Ishtar. The King of King's generals would like to use this supposed link with Khettim royalty to justify "reunification" with its southern neighbor. The fact that those imported queens were "inferior" Edonites or Hazarians rather than Akamen warrior women is lightly glossed over.

Tarkasian Empire

Located to the north and east of the Akamen domains, the Tarkasian Empire is yet another civilization descended from nomadic horsemen.

The Tarkas are practically cousins, and the two kingdoms have long fought as only close relatives can. They've swapped land, queens, and renegades so often that the nobility of the two empires are literally related, and each emperor has a more or less legitimate claim to the other's throne.

It has been the need to protect itself from Tarkasian aggression more than anything else that has slowed the Akamen Empire's western expansion.

A Land of Monsters

Many of Mythika's most ferocious creatures (and people) have their origins in the Land of the Sun, wild regions now within the Akamen domains. Mineans may feel too well acquainted with some of these creatures but there may be more things to know about them than the best place to put a sword.

Asheebas (*Creature Compendium*, p 8)

Eastern monarchs have a long tradition of keeping guardian lions, leopards or other big cats by their thrones to highlight their majesty and general manliness. Naturally, they try to one-up each other by acquiring the biggest, most exotic and dangerous felines available, including the sinister, seductive hybrids known as Asheebas (sphinxes are simply too large and powerful to handle).

Although Asheebas are imported from the Desert Kingdom, Sugud traders arriving from Kathai say the creatures possibly have a different origin.

One of the barbarian tribes beyond the Sindu marshes worships the Creator in three incarnations, the third of which is Asheeba, Annihilator of the Universe. Merchants cannot confirm whether that deity has any feline aspects, but its nickname surely describes the typical Asheeba's outlook.

Elephants (*Creature Compendium*, p39)

Kathaian elephants are slimmer than the Charydian variety, with comparatively tiny ears, but have much better tempers. Although they are native to the extreme eastern Baktar grasslands and Sindu marshes they routinely head west into the dry hills and mountains in search of salt and other minerals.

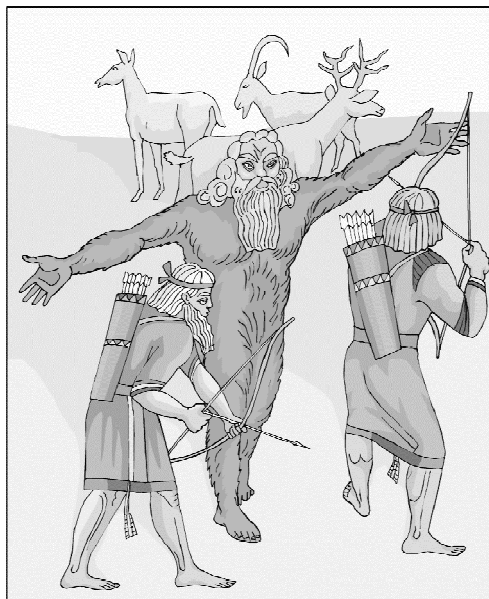
Travelers headed east from the twin capitals are occasionally surprised to see lone pachyderms or small family groups jogging across the rocks and sand, far from the nearest source of water or fodder.

Natural Fauna

Of course, the Akamen Empire is also home to numerous exotic but otherwise ordinary animals of varying size, beauty and ferocity.

It is a hunter's paradise, and hunting is a royal sport. The great forests of the Empire are stalked by bears, several species of big cats, wolves, jackals and foxes, which prey on abundant deer, rabbits, and game birds.

Gorgeous waterfowl shuttle between to Oromedon River basin and the coastal South Sea marshes. The arid hills are crawling with wild sheep and goats, and the deserts are likewise crawling with swift-moving lizards and venomous snakes.



- Enough! Don't kill more than you can carry!

Enkidu

Enkidu are a race of "wild men" who inhabit the deepest forests of the Empire; although their face appears human, they are far larger than men and their huge body is entirely covered in fur, making them look like the Akamen version of Bigfoot. They have the power of speech and consider themselves the protectors of the local wildlife; although they have a peaceful nature, they can become enraged if their families or animal friends are attacked by hunters, especially those who kill more than they can carry or show no respect for the lives they take.

Taxonomy: Folk

Size: Large

Ferocity: Aggressive

Cunning: Alert

Mystique: Weird

Movement: 90'

Initiative: 14

Melee Attack: +5

Damage: 2d6

Defense Class: 17

Hits Total: 24

Detection / Evasion: +6 / +4

Mystic Fortitude: +2

Special Abilities: Crushing Damage (bear hug; req. Grapple), Grapple (M = 20), Sharp Senses, Stealthy (14), Supernatural Vigor, Uncanny Agility.

Awards: Glory 130, Wisdom 10.

Gorgotaurs (*Creature Compendium*, p 78)

The Autarchs of Gorgoth who created the first gorgotaurs were sorcerous minions of Zohak, Ruler of the World. Their monstrous experiments were merely one of many crimes sponsored by that immortal tyrant. Gorgoth corresponds with the former homeland of the defunct Oromedon Empire, which perhaps explains why so many of the world's evils seem to be concentrated in the southern Thanatari foothills (and why Thukra IV and his followers were so anxious to settle elsewhere).

For more details about the origins of Gorgotaurs, see the *Maze Master's Lore* column of *Minotaur* n°7

Griffins (*Creature Compendium*, p 52)

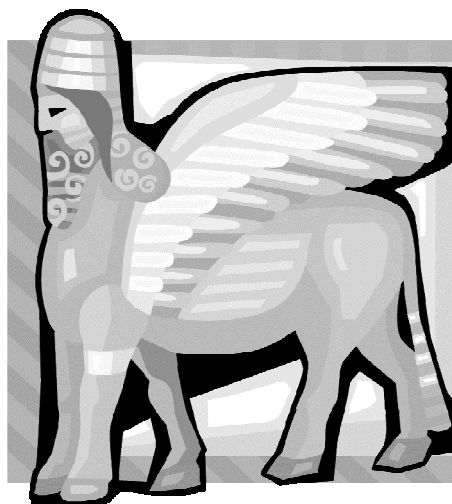
These winged quadruped predators and their kin are the bane of every horse breeder and cattleman in the lands surrounding the Middle Sea.

Oddly enough, however, Akamen bas-reliefs and sculptures consistently depict them with graceful antelope-like horns, which appears wildly inaccurate to Minean adventurers and herdsman who have battled the beasts. The answer is actually quite simple: Akamen griffins are a horned sub-species.

Male griffins shed their horns after the mating season. Paired griffins then build their nests and lay eggs or bear cubs – or whatever it is that they do when they reproduce. It's best not to get too curious. Meanwhile, exceptionally brave or greed-crazed merchants risk life and limb to collect the castoffs, which they sell for outrageous prices as unicorn horn in the markets of Kandaria. While unicorn horn is reputed to heal injuries and purify poison, some bazaar merchants claim that griffin horn has aphrodisiac qualities, but all this probably has more to do with merely maidenly admiration for men willing to enter the griffins' breeding grounds.



- Hey! What's this nonsense about horns?



Lamassu or Shedu? Perhaps we should ask him

Lamassu (*Creature Compendium*, p 66)

The ancient Hazarians used to regard the lamassu (and its cousin creature, the *Shedu* – see next page) as divine guardians rather than as monsters. An old legend says they were created by the high priest of Nannar (see next page) to defend the kingdom from marauding griffins and manticores. As long as the humans don't defile and loot the tombs and temples of their old masters, the feline creatures are content to leave them alone.

Lamia (*Creature Compendium*, p 66)

Kubaba, evil, libidinous witch-queen of a forgotten civilization whose capital is now a lost ruin in the Phaeton Hills, gave birth to the lamia as divine punishment for her unspeakable perversions. Like their progenitor, the snake women are hypnotically beautiful, seductive, and treacherous. According to one ancient Hazarian text (the Wise Ones smashed the source tablet), Kubaba never died but became increasingly serpentine herself.

Since Kubaba is also one of the names of Cybele, Akamen scholars have speculated that the ancient queen was deified after her death, and her worship diverged into the cults of Cybele, The Dark Mother, and the Serpent Goddess (see *Minotaur* n°6, p 18). Attempts to locate Kubaba's city have so far been unsuccessful, and one expedition failed to return.

Manticores (*Creature Compendium*, p 73)

Sometimes a monster is just a monster. Insatiable manticores have done as much to guard the Empire's northern borders as Akamen arrows. Unfortunately, the creatures aren't motivated by patriotism; manticores would cheerfully depopulate large sections of pastureland did not fierce competition with the griffins keep their numbers down. Their presence has also prevented the King of King's armies from crossing the Thanatari Mountains to invade Arcadia.

Rocs (*Creature Compendium*, p 94)

Known as the Simurgh in the east, these giant magical birds are said by the Wise Ones to roost in the branches of the Tree of Many Seeds, one of two sacred trees located far away in the cosmic ocean Vouruskasha. When the Simurgh feed, branches break and the sacred seeds are scattered to the winds, eventually carried to earth where they are the source of all worldly trees. Were the Simurgh to die out and no longer visit the Tree of Many Seeds, the earth would ultimately become deforested.

The Wise Ones also believe the Simurgh are able to speak, if one bothers to attempt to talk to them rather than to attack or run away. They're unlikely to respond favorably to western adventurers who boast of having slain one of the titanic avians.

Zal of the White Hair, one of the great Akamen mythic heroes (and the father of the illustrious Rostam!), is said to have been raised by the Simurgh after his royal parents exposed the infant because of his strange appearance; even as a baby he had snow-white hair instead of the ebon locks usual to Anshan nomads. As an adult, Zal is said to have been able to summon the Simurgh by burning a giant feather it had given him. Most of the huge "Simurgh feathers" sold by Edonite and Sugud merchants to tourists are really dried and painted palm leaves, but you never know what might turn up in an Akamen bazaar.

Tigermen (*Creature Compendium*, p 116)

Tigermen of Kathai encountered in the Land of the Sun come from the Sindu swamplands at the eastern edge of Akamen territory.

Like the cats they resemble, tigermen are solitary, highly territorial creatures who heartily resent the incursion of other sentient beings into their range.

They have no organized culture in the sense that humans do, keeping far apart from one another except during the mating season.

Afterward, males leave while the females raise and educate their young. It is this isolation, as well as the tigermen's tendency to gorge themselves into helpless stupor after kills, that enables extremely lucky or foolhardy human tribesmen to capture them for sale to decadent satraps as dangerous novelties. Female members of the species, particularly those with cubs, are rarely taken alive.

A typical feline pit fighter will have learned several languages and a respect and hatred for man. They require heavily fortified quarters separate from those of other gladiators. Adventurers underestimate tigerman intelligence and capacity for malicious treachery at their peril. Unlike the nobler Leonids, they are incapable of friendship, gratitude or loyalty. A tigerman might pretend to be an ally to achieve his escape from captivity only to slaughter his erstwhile human "comrades" once free.



Dunno, sort of reversed Minotaur (with wings)

Shedu

Shedu are cousin creatures of Lamassu. They look like winged bulls with human heads, and like their feline cousins they have the unnerving ability to camouflage as stone statues. Unlike Lamassu, however, Shedus have the power of speech and tend to be slightly more friendly toward humans – as long as the sacred tombs and ancient ruins they guard are not threatened by foolhardy adventurers.

Taxonomy: Monster

Size: Large

Ferocity: Dangerous

Cunning: Clever

Mystique: Eldritch

Movement: 90' (360' flying)

Initiative: 14

Melee Attack: +6

Damage: 2d6 (hooves)

Defense Class: 16

Hits Total: 30

Detection / Evasion: +4 / +6

Mystic Fortitude: +8

Special Abilities: Charge Into Battle (Init 18, Melee +10), Magic Resistance, Supernatural Vigor, Trample, Tough Skin, Winged.

Awards: Glory 300, Wisdom 30.

Zohak, Ruler of the World

Taxonomy: Special §

Description: Son of one of King Jemshid's vassals, usurper Prince Zohak was led into evil, transformed into a moral and physical monster. His human head retains his original good looks, now twisted with cruelty. From his shoulders sprout the bodies of two giant black snakes, which possess a venomous bite and a hunger for human brains. Zohak is said to have murdered his father to gain his throne, to have committed incest with his mother, to have enslaved Jemshid's two daughters (the most beautiful women in the world), and to have maintained his tyrannical rule for 1,000 years by means of sorcery and a host of demonic servitors. He sparked his own downfall when he attempted to force his vassals to sign an oath that his rule was just.

Size: Medium

Ferocity: Deadly

Cunning: Average *

Mystique: Eldritch

Movement: 60'

Initiative: 19

Melee Attack: +7

Missile Attack: +5

Damage: 1d6 (weapon)

Defense Class: 26

Hits Total: 20

Detection / Evasion: +6 / +4

Mystic Fortitude: +8

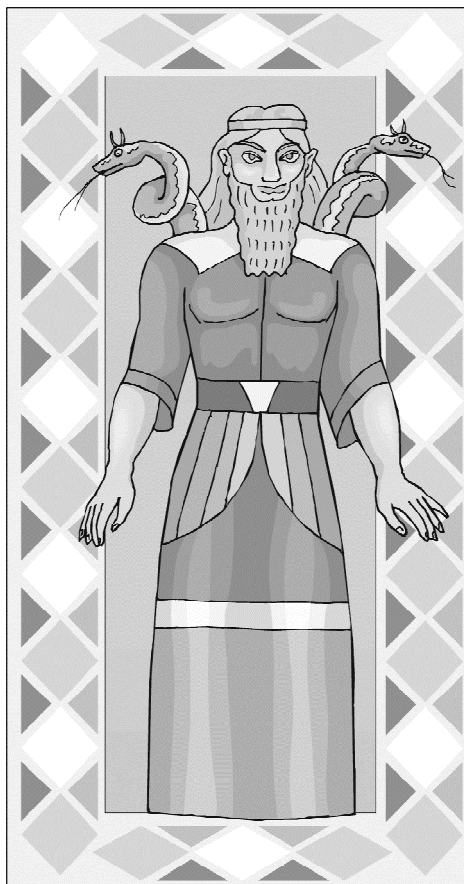
Special Abilities: Charge into Battle (Initiative 21, Melee +9), Crushing Damage, Grapple (Might 16), Fearsome, Invulnerability, Magic Resistance, Missile Weapons (bow), Marksmanship, Multiple Heads (two extra snake heads)**, Poison (instant death)**, Regeneration (1 Hit / rd), Sixth Sense, Supernatural Vigor, Uncanny Agility.

Awards: Glory 700, Wisdom 180.

§ Just like the Infernal Archfiends detailed in a previous Mythic Bestiary (Minotaur n°3) and as a unique mythical figure himself, Zohak enjoys a special Taxonomy which doubles his Glory and Wisdom awards – as if he was a Monster and a Spirit, all rolled into one.

* This may seem really mediocre for such an important mythical figure but Zohak's Average Cunning reflects his basic gullibility. If he hadn't been such a callow fop, he probably would have resisted the temptations that corrupted him in the first place.

** The snake heads merely grow back if cut off. The extra attacks they allow Zohak to perform are his Poison attacks.



Prince Zohak and his notorious shoulder snakes

Enter Azhi Dahaka

It is said that Prince Zohak will escape his mountain prison at the end of time, slaying one-third of the world's population before his second and final defeat by an ancient hero reborn. In this ultimate incarnation, he will have the form of a gigantic three-headed serpent or dragon known as Azhi Dahaka.

Should the Maze Master really need stats, a three-headed Hydra (*Creature Compendium*, p 61) with Wings and Invulnerability seems like a good starting point.

That being said, Maze Masters who do plan to unleash the full unbridled wrath of Azhi Dahaka on their players should take note that LGS and the *Minotaur* decline all responsibilities for any physical, psychic or even mystical damage that might ensue from such an apocalyptic event.

Lastly, it is worth noting that Azhi Dahaka is a dead ringer for King Ghidorah, the famous Kaiju from Toho Studios, and would probably sue were he not buried beneath Mount Damavand, waiting for the final days.

MAZE MASTER'S LORE

GODS OF THE EAST

An in-depth look at the ancient deities of the Akamen Empire, by **Kevin Scrivner**

Additional material by Olivier Legrand

The Old Pantheon

As mentioned in this issue's *Mythika Gazetteer*, the so-called "old pantheon" of the Akamen Empire is actually a syncretistic synthesis of several older pantheons of Oromedon, Edonite and Hazarian origins. Not surprisingly, all these deities are associated with earth, rain, the sky or the sun.

Anahita, the Earth Goddess

The most personal and beloved member of the old pantheon is Anahita, Source of All Waters. The goddess of both purity and fertility provides all the moisture on earth. The statues in her temples depict a tall, beautiful noblewoman with an eight-rayed crown and golden mantle. Her priestesses are usually daughters of the warrior caste pledged to chastity until they are ready to marry.

Most Akamen scholars have identified Anahita with the more rustic figure of **Asherah**, an old Edonite mother goddess honored by herdsman and farmers, who bake special cakes during her annual festival. She's much less popular with the higher castes. Her worship is associated with sacred trees or groves, and her shrines are sometimes marked by a simple wooden pole or column. She is notable for being the mother of 88 (obviously lesser) gods.

Asshur, the Wind God

Originally, Asshur was the Oromedon god of wind and war. The old Oromedon emperor Thukra IV claimed that with the power of the wind at their backs, his troops could never be defeated. Of course, since the Oromedon Empire crumbled before Akamen might, Asshur's reputation is a bit tarnished these days. Asshur is often symbolized by the image of a winged bowman, arrow at the ready.

In the easternmost parts of the empire, Asshur is identified with Vayu, or Wind, a bringer of both good (rain) and evil (destruction) to men. This brawny storm god wields his golden spear (lightning) against evil but doesn't care about the collateral damage he causes. Travelling the Void between Good and Evil and courted by both sides, Vayu is a bit of an anti-hero and it is sometimes uncertain where his true loyalties lie.



One of the many faces of the goddess Ishtar

Ishtar, the Sky Goddess

An Edonite and Hazarian fertility and war goddess, Ishtar (also known as Astarte or Inanna) gave her name to the old Hazarian capital. Although she's considered a sky goddess, her behavior is anything but heavenly. Ishtar wantonly seeks many lovers but never bears children and in some incarnations actively destroys men's lives.

The glory and power of Ishtar extend far beyond the borders of the empire. Minean scholarship identifies her with Aphrodite, although Khettim scribes are more likely to compare her to the war goddess Sekhmet or even to the more recently introduced Isis. Midians, however, remember Ishtar merely as the attendant of their own goddess Tanit.

Shamash, the Sun God

Shamash, the sun god, is seen as the law-giver and law-enforcer of Akamen civilization. His symbol is a winged disc of gold.

Originally an Oromedon deity, the solar god is seen throughout the empire as a lover of justice and vanquisher of darkness and crime. By extension, he is the god who relieves those who suffer unjustly, who assists those who can't get a fair shake from anyone else. The priesthood of Shamash compiled the system of laws used to administer justice among three empires before the Akamen takeover.

The current vision of Shamash also identifies him with several older sun gods, such as the Hazarian god-king **Marduk**, whose main claim to fame was the defeat of the great sea dragon (or chaos goddess) Tiamat, or the agricultural sun god **Rapithwin**, who embodies the warmth of noon-day sun and keeps the world alive during winter.

Tishtrya, the Rain God

The agricultural rain god Tishtrya requires annual sacrifices to strengthen him so that he can defeat the demon Apaosha (Drought) and bring the autumn rains necessary for agriculture to continue.

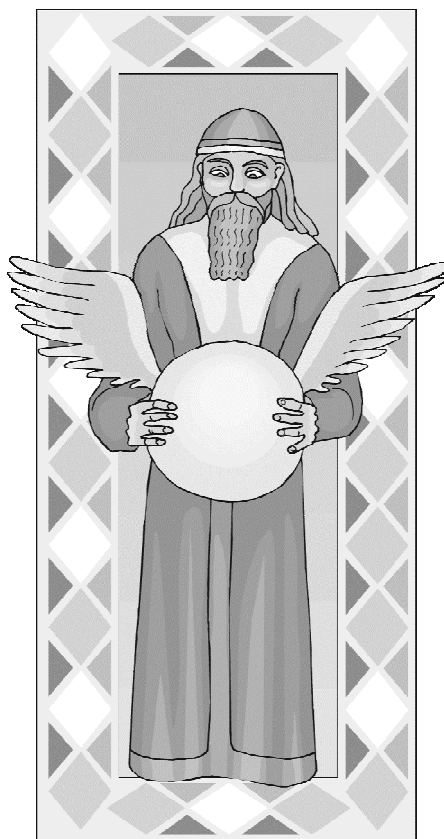
During this epic battle, Tishtrya appears as a magnificent white and gold horse while Apaosha takes the guise of a sinister black one. When he chooses human form, Tishtrya assumes the appearance of a 15-year-old youth, deemed by the Akamen to be the ideal age. He takes specific delight in defeating sorcerers, who are seen as servants of the evil Ahriman in Mazdan theology.

The Shadow of Baal

As an agricultural male deity, Tishtrya is in direct concurrence with another, much darker figure – that of Baal, the old god of fertility of virility who headed the old Edonite pantheon. He is said to be the brother and lover of Ishtar.

Baal is frequently depicted as a slim man wearing only a kilt and a tall, cone-shaped hat topped by a ball. His worship involves clouds of incense and orgiastic ceremonies in remote hilltop groves, which include human sacrifices.

His name (which was corrupted to "Bel" by the Edonite expatriates of Midia – see *Minotaur* n°7, p 16) means "master" or "lord," as in "boss of all the other gods" – a position which he has retained in Midia but has clearly lost in the empire, which acknowledges only Ahura-Mazda as the ruler of all the other gods. Because of the implications of his name (and also because his worship involves human sacrifices), the Wise Men have repeatedly admonished the King of Kings to suppress the cult.



Shamash, the solar law-giver

Mithras

Most Maze Masters will already be familiar with Mythika's version of the cult of Mithras – or rather with the cult of Mithras as described in the *M&M Companion*, as a very exotic form of monotheism which will obviously never eclipse the power of the Olympian gods. But this vision of the cult of Mithras is only a part of a much bigger (and much more complex) picture. Mithras' Minean worshipers, who revere him as "the creator of life" to the exclusion of all other gods, might not recognize his original incarnation – see next page for more details.

A God Named Nannar

Nannar, also known as Sin, is a somewhat obsolete Hazarian moon god nicknamed "The Illuminator" because of his role as the dispenser of wisdom. He is a patron of astrology and other sciences and is said to be the father of both Ishtar and Shamash. Nannar is depicted as a vigorous old man with a long, electric blue beard riding a winged bull. Nannar is still quite popular among the former Hazarian and Oromedon nobility. It is said that the Akamen invaders were able to conquer Oromedon in part because the last competent king in Ishtar abdicated to become a priest of Nannar. The Wise Men of today regard Nannar as an early, incomplete understanding of Ahura Mazda.



*A traditional depiction of Mithras
in his original role as Ahura Mazda's enforcer*

The Many Faces of Mithras

In the Beginning

Originally, Mithras was just another god of the old eastern pantheon.

Sometimes described as the son of the goddess Anahita, he is not the Creator but Ahura Mazda's right-hand enforcer, the god of the Contract, preserver of Truth and Order. He determines when the various ages of human history are complete and visits hell daily to ensure that sinners are not being punished more harshly than they deserve.

He carries an iron mace, with which to crush the forces of evil and judges men's souls at death, and drives his chariot through the heavens accompanied by his brother Varuna (True Speech) to reach their golden palace with 1,000 pillars and 1,000 doors; each man is responsible for his own salvation by adhering to the principles of Ahura Mazda. In this original incarnation, he is worshiped openly as the hilltop altars that serve all gods.

A few centuries ago, the worship of Mithras began to evolve into a semi-independent and far more secretive cult, known as the *Mysteries of Mithras*, which eventually gave birth to what the Wise Men of today call the *Mithraic Heresy*.

This transition from traditional, open worship to a mystery cult can be explained by two main factors: the long-established popularity of Mithras with soldiers and the rise of the Wise Men as a new priestly class; in many ways, the *Mysteries of Mithras* can be seen as a form of religious reaction or resistance to the Wise Men's highly abstract theology and political authority.

The Soldier God

As Ahura Mazda's enforcer and preserver of Truth and Order, the original Mithras was a natural choice of patron deity for many of the Empire's soldiers.

Within the military community, the figure of Mithras merged with that of an older soldier god known as Verethragna. A popular deity with the warrior-caste, Verethragna was Victory personified, the irresistible force of overwhelming success; it was believed that correctly made sacrifices to him before a battle or other important undertaking could ensure the desired outcome. In myth, Verethragna manifests himself in various human and animal forms - the most common being a fierce boar or a giant raven.

In the ranks of the army, the image of Mithras soon evolved into that of a solar soldier god, depicted as a warrior in golden armor, armed with mace and spear; Akamen soldiers prayed to him immediately before battle, usually at dawn - but his military cult also retained some of the more mystical aspects of Verethragna, such as the symbol of the raven.

The Mystery Cult

The *esprit de corps* and sense of hierarchy inherent to all civilized armies contributed greatly to structure the devotees of the martial Mithras into a close-knit mystery cult, complete with ranks, initiation rites, secret symbols and inner discipline.

At the same time, the religious changes brought about by the Wise Men, with their increasingly abstract vision of divinity, were met with defiance by many officers, who felt their men needed a god soldiers could really relate to: someone to pray before battles, a bearer of strength and victory - and not just some abstract aspect of a supreme Creator who (of course) only made his Will known to a class of ambitious scholars and bureaucrats.

From Mystery to Heresy

All this began to worry the Wise Men, who viewed this military cult as a potential challenge to their growing religious and political influence, especially since all this came from the only force which could really threaten their position of power - the army.

To many of the most powerful Wise Men, a military coup was always a possibility; at the very least, the existence of a secretive cult within the army was clearly a thorn in the side of the new order the Wise Men were trying to bring to the Empire.

Being the crafty schemers they are, they decided to shift the conflict from the political to the religious level and started throwing accusations of Heresy, claiming the so-called *Mysteries of Mithras* were a direct challenge to the supreme authority of Ahura Mazda and implying that its secret doctrine actually acknowledged Mithras as the Creator - which was, at least at that time, completely false.

Aside from the purely religious outrage that such accusations would cause to any “true believer” of the Mazdan faith, they also had a shrewdly-devised psychological and political angle, playing on the theme of usurpation of supreme power – a theme to which no proper King of Kings could be indifferent. And surely the whole thing was a fiendish ploy of Ahriman, that great enemy of humanity and Creation – a menace which could not only be fought by allowing the Wise Men to investigate the matter and uproot the heresy, preferably before Ahura Mazda could express his divine displeasure.

Mithras the Undefeated

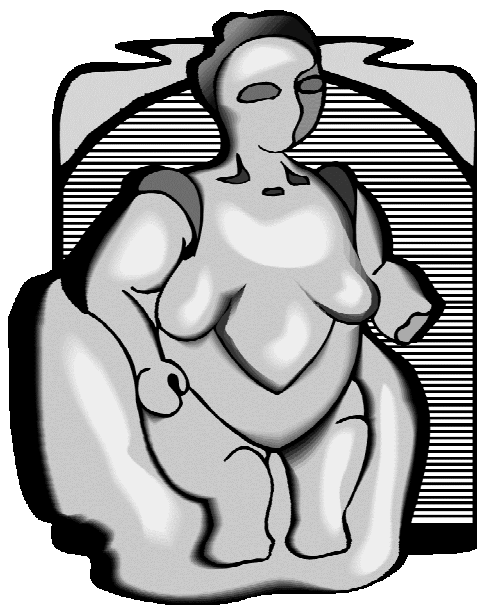
Much to the Wise Ones' discontent, their carefully constructed piece of political propaganda failed to achieve its intended goal. Not only did the King of Kings of that time (and his successors) refused to give them the inquisitorial powers they requested but the mystery cult of Mithras actually became a prominent force within the imperial army. In time, it even began to spread outside the ranks of the army, eventually giving birth to a splinter cult which gained an unexpected audience in the West as the “Cult of Mithras”, as described in the *M&M Companion*.

The fact that the priests of this heretical splinter sect do seem to exhibit real mystical powers (up to and including resurrection of the dead!) continues to baffle the Wise Men, who are taking every possible action to silence the matter and are now seeking to persuade the King of Kings of taking action of this cult of Mithras – which, ironically enough, only came into existence because of their own actions and does seem a bit more dangerous for the supremacy of orthodox Mazdeism than the military mystery cult they tried so hard to suppress.

The only Wise Men who do not see Mithraists as heretics are the Mystics – perhaps because, unlike other Wise Men, they possess true mystical powers, which are actually quite close to those of the “priests of Mithras”, as presented in the *M&M Companion*.

The whole business is far from over, though, and could lead to all sorts of very interesting possibilities for scenarios and even whole campaigns, from the Wise Men hiring the services of “deniable agents” to investigate the secret activities of Mithraist cults to commanders of the Akamen army sending their best men on secret missions for the Mithraist cause...

Editor's Note: The various incarnations of Mithras presented in the above section were inspired by the sometimes conflicting aspects of this deity in history and mythology. The real-world Mithras / Mithra evolved from its Persian roots into a Roman soldier god and then into a monotheistic solar deity whose mystery cult spread throughout all the empire before the triumph of the rival Christian faith. Mithras also has many different faces in fiction: in Robert E. Howard's Hyborian Age, for instance, the god Mitra is the supreme lord of light and the arch-enemy of Set the Serpent God. In the *M&M Companion*, the Cult of Mithras was presented as an exotic form of monotheism – a weird idea which will obviously never really prevail in a world dominated by the (very real) deities of the Olympian pantheon.



Cybele, the Dark Earth Mother

Dark Gods of the East

Cybele

Introduced in the *M&M Companion* (p 25), Cybele is the Great Mother, dark goddess of untamed nature and fertility, her worship is sometimes associated with that of Demeter, of Rhea (*Tomb of the Bull King*, p 21; *Minotaur* n°4, p 6), and of the Dark Mother (*Minotaur* n°6, p 18). Demeter's followers have officially distanced themselves because of the violence associated with Cybele's rites, but the full story is even more sordid than they imagine.

Cybele has links to Ishtar and Ereshkigal, and to Dionysos. She is also known as Kybele, the Cave Dweller; as Hebat, the Mother of the Mountain; and as Kubaba, also the name of an ancient queen whose forgotten civilization predated that of Hazar.

Before Edonite chieftains began warring with each other for supremacy, the Gamirri built a civilization where the Typhon Sea washes against the southwestern edges of the Thanatari Mountains. And even then the goddess' huge image was already carved into the side of Mount Ida above the caverns where her priestesses emerged to lead the tribesmen in frenzied dancing and ritual bloodletting around the Black Stone accompanied by the wild music of flutes, drums, and cymbals.

As Siburi, she attended Ishtar and kept the keys to the Seven Gates leading to Ereshkigal's hellish domains. As Kybele, she was raped by the Sky God (Baal? Zeus?) and fled into the caverns to give birth to her bastard offspring. As she dug her fingers into the stone in agony, the Dactyls (“finger men”) were born, dangerous subterranean dwarves (see this issue's *Mythic Bestiary* for more details).

As the Mother of the Mountain, she gave birth to crazed, uncontrollable Agdistis, a fertility deity possessed of both male and female characteristics. Dionysos attempted to tame the demon by emasculating it. From Agdistis' blood sprang the first almond tree, which impregnated the goddess Nana when an almond fell into her lap. Nana gave birth to Attis, who grew up to be a youth so handsome that he unwittingly attracted the amorous attention of his own grandmother. Cybele jealously interrupted Attis' marriage to a pretty local princess, her appearance driving all the attendees mad. Attis fled, insane, into the mountains and, stopping by a pine tree, emasculated himself. He quickly bled to death, his blood producing violets. At Cybele's pleading, the Sky God prevented Attis' body from decaying for three days until she could resurrect him. She then took Attis as her consort.

It is in memory of these events that Cybele's male initiates annually emasculate themselves. Veteran priests then chop down a pine tree, strew it with violets, and carry it to Cybele's mountaintop temple, where male and female worshipers mourn Attis' death for three days until his yearly "resurrection" signals the start of their orgiastic, drunken celebrations. Western statuary depicts Cybele as a sensuous matron in a cylindrical hat and flowing dress seated on a throne whose arm rests are savage lionesses. Eastern statuary shows her less dressed and squatting to give birth. Her original image, the one on Mount Ida, is a great irregular meteorite of utter blackness, the notorious Black Stone of which many unsavory rumors have been spread. The Wise Men regard Cybele with the same degree of affection they hold for Moloch.

Moloch

An extremely ancient Proteusan deity transplanted to both the Edonite and Midian coasts, Moloch may be the Titan Kronos in another guise.

It is hard to determine what the god's specialty or scope was or what was believed about him generally; the empire has vigorously persecuted Moloch's worshipers since his ritual involves placing infants and small children in the arms of a larger-than-life red-hot metal idol. Despite their past efforts, the Wise Men continue to discover and destroy hollow bull-headed furnace effigies.

The Moloch cult presents imperial authorities with a delicate political quandary. On the one hand, Akamen policy is to tolerate local religions. On the other, the satrap and his officers have a civic and moral duty to eliminate the heinous practices associated with Moloch's worship but must do so without offending Edonite religious sensibilities and touching off a revolt.

See also the *Mythika Gazetteer* of Midia in issue 7, for more details on the dark cult of Moloch.



One of the nicer depictions of Nergal, lord of the dead

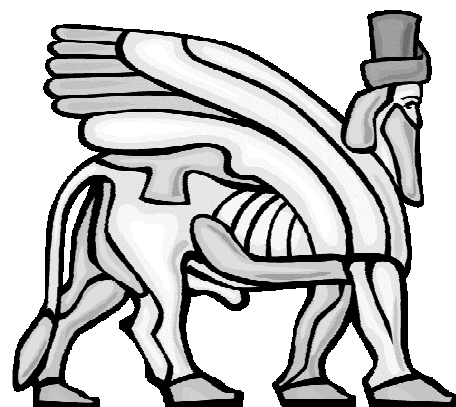
Nergal

A ruthless pre-Hazarian solar god, Nergal literally fought to become lord of the dead. He represents the killing, withering heat of the summer sun, and by extension, plague.

Nergal is sometimes depicted as a haughty king-like figure and sometimes as an enigmatic Lamassu and may have some mysterious connection to these dangerous hybrid creatures.

Nergal is said to have defeated Ereshkigal, queen of the underworld and sister of Ishtar, in battle but elected to marry her rather than slay her. A more romantic version of the tale says that Nergal was sent from heaven to carry offerings to Ereshkigal and had a tryst with her before leaving. The goddess, feeling herself pregnant, threatened to send all the dead back to earth unless Nergal returned to marry her. In either case, theirs is a love-match made in hell.

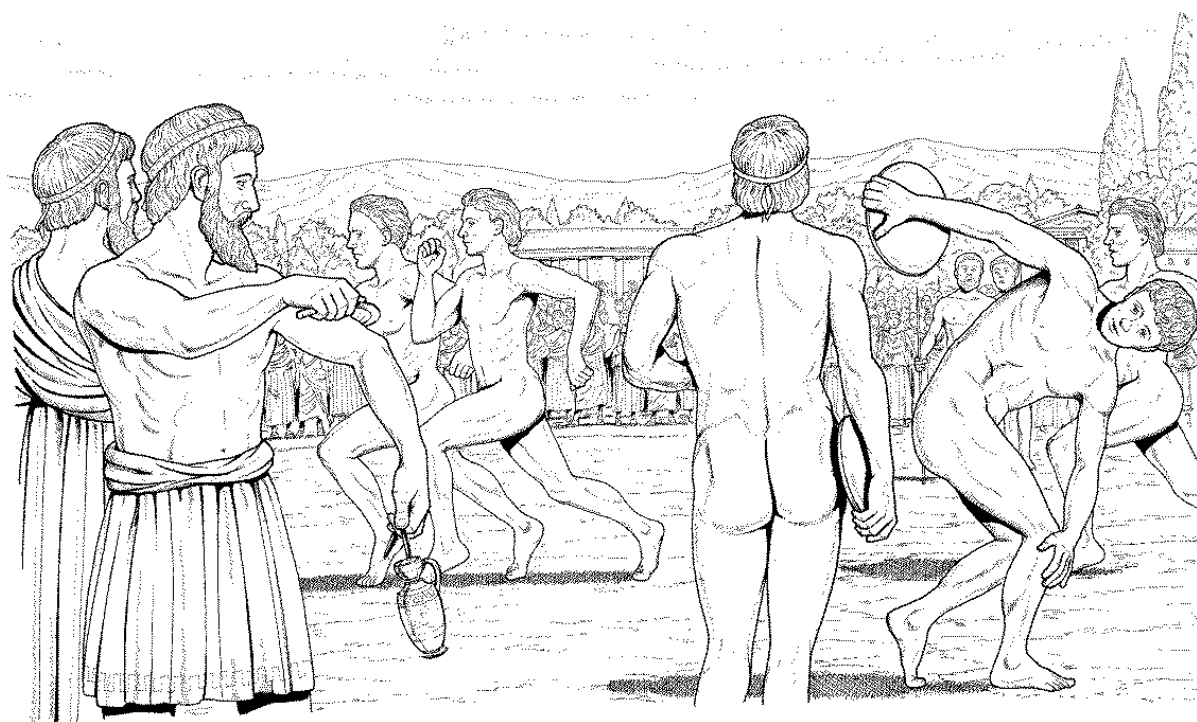
Nergal carries a sickle (he's the original grim reaper) and a lion-headed club. Like the Olympian Hades, he's not a popular deity. Unlike Hades, who has a reputation for being just and fair, Nergal is just plain mean. Ironically, or perhaps not, his worship is quite popular among lawyers and tax accountants.



THE TRITONIAN GAMES

A sporting scenario for athletic adventurers (and others) of any level

by Kevin Scrivner and Olivier Legrand



Introduction

Scenario Summary

In this adventure, the player-characters will be attending the Tritonian Games, a prestigious athletic event held by the Sea Princes of Tritonis. But more than athletic games are being played on the island empire. Someone is attempting to use the competition to enflame old hatreds. Can the adventurers discover the culprit and stop him before it is too late?

Warrior and specialist characters will obviously have the most opportunities to participate in this scenario's athletic events. But magicians (especially Sorcerers) and other adventurers who cannot attend the Games as contestants (see *Qualifying for the Games*, p 32) may easily become embroiled in the mysterious incidents which plague the Games – as investigators, wrongfully accused suspects, or both!

A Grand Event

Ostensibly held to honor Poseidon, the Tritonian Games are intended to be a public relations triumph for the Sea Princes of Acharnia, highlighting the island's military, economic, and cultural superiority. Champions from around the eastern Middle Sea have been invited to participate, including (naturally) the adventurers. The main sponsor of the Games is the Sea Prince Demonstrathes (typical Tritonian Noble NPC, see *Minotaur Quarterly* n°1, p 23).

The docks and agora of the city are packed with foreign visitors. The Tritonian marines (Soldier NPCs, see *Creature Compendium*, p 60) trying to manage them all are wary and gruff but have so far maintained order without any embarrassing brutality. If there is a Noble or a follower of Poseidon in the party, the characters will have been invited to stay at the home of a local noble while they await their turn to compete. Otherwise, they will be provided with a luxury tent at the athletes' camp near the sacred field of the Games.

Pankratasts & the Tritonian Games



This adventure could also be an interesting way to introduce the new optional Pankratiast character class described elsewhere in this issue (see p 42).

One of the player-characters could belong to this novel, rising new class of martial artists and would have an excellent reason for entering the Games: to prove the uncontested superiority of the pankration discipline over more 'old school' unarmed combat techniques.

Once a character has qualified for the Games, he is supposed to participate in all ten events. No special dispensations are allowed, except for Centaurs, who are only allowed to participate in the archery event since their hybrid anatomy would either give them an unfair advantage in some events (racing and jumping, obviously, but also discus and javelin-throwing, wrestling, pugilism, and weightlifting, when you come to think of it) or make them completely unfit for others (namely horse and chariot racing). It should also be noted that Satyrs are no longer allowed to participate in the Games at all, their raucous and boisterous behavior having caused all sorts of problems in the past.

The Tritonian Games consist of the following ten events: archery; discus and javelin throwing; jumping; foot, horse, and chariot racing; weight lifting; pugilism and wrestling. These events are held over a period of four days but the Games themselves last for six days (the first and the last of which are devoted to ceremonies).

There are no second-place prizes here, and the judges' rulings are final. Winners become instant celebrities and receive a substantial amount of gold.

Losers face the scorn of their families and friends. Cheaters will not only be thrown out of the Games but will have their terra cotta likenesses and names placed alongside the road to the stadium in the Row of Shame as a warning to other athletes.

The Big Magic Ban



Sorry, guy: these aren't allowed...

No magical effect can work within the limits of the sacred field, the event area, where the Games are held. This applies to magical powers as well as to the properties of any mythic items, which simply cease to function once they enter the Games area.

This rather unique effect is the result of a Divine Intervention by Poseidon himself. The King of the Sea created this anti-magic zone at the request of the Tritonian priests to prevent any form of magical treachery or "support" and to put an end to constant litigations about such matters. Note that this special anti-magic effect also prevents other Olympians from unfairly boosting the capabilities of their own chosen champions or from turning the Games into a pointless duel of divine skullduggery.

If a magician player-character does insist on trying to influence the competition (thereby challenging the very power of Poseidon), his attempt will fail and he will suffer a quick show of divine anger from the King of the Sea, taking his level in d6s of damage (no saving roll) and being immediately reduced (albeit temporarily) to 0 Power points.

Lastly, Maze Masters should keep in mind that this effect only works on the fields of the Games proper – and not in their surrounding areas (such as the athletes' camp or the spectators' tiers). Thus, magician characters will be able to use their full powers to Investigate the mysterious incidents which are disturbing the Games.



The famous athletic champion Leander of Argos

Qualifying for the Games

To qualify for the Tritonian Games characters must meet certain **Might** and **Skill** requirements, which reflect the very high athletic standards of the event: the character's combined **Might** and **Skill** scores must reach a total of **30** or more. Thus, a character with a **Might** of 13 and a **Skill** of 17 will qualify since his **Might+Skill** total is equal to 30 – but even a **Might** of 20 will not let you in if your **Skill** is less than 10. These athletic requirements are evaluated by official judges during the first day of the games, known as the **Selections**, which quickly separates the true athletes from the common rabble.

Only a character's natural scores are taken into account here as the use of mythic items is strictly prohibited during the Games – and even impossible, for that matter (see *The Big Magic Ban*).

Athlete NPCs & Stats

For the sake of simplicity, the stats of the various NPC contestants follow the simplified format used for creatures and minor NPCs.

For events which use **Athletic Prowess** (discus, javelin, foot race and jumping), the NPC's mod is the same as his **Melee** mod (which is also the case for player-characters, since both mods are based on the same attributes).

For weightlifting, the NPC's **Might** score is the same as for his **Grapple** ability (20 for Gilgalon and **16** for everybody else). This also gives them a subdual damage roll of **1d3+2** for pugilism.

Human Athletic Champion

Size: Medium

Ferocity: Deadly

Cunning: Average

Mystique: Normal

Movement: 60'

Initiative: 15

Melee Attack: +7

Missile Attack: +5

Damage: 1d6 (if armed)

Defense Class: 14

Hits Total: 16

Detection / Evasion: 0 / +2

Mystic Fortitude: 0

Special Abilities: Grapple (16), Missile Weapons, Marksmanship, Uncanny Agility.

Awards: not applicable in this context.

The Competition

Arctos of Heraklia

A famous (and quite arrogant) Heraklian athlete, Arctos has won many events in the last Tritonian Games. He has a long-time rivalry with Leander of Argos, his "only serious challenger." In game terms, he has the stats of a typical *Human Athletic Champion* (see above).

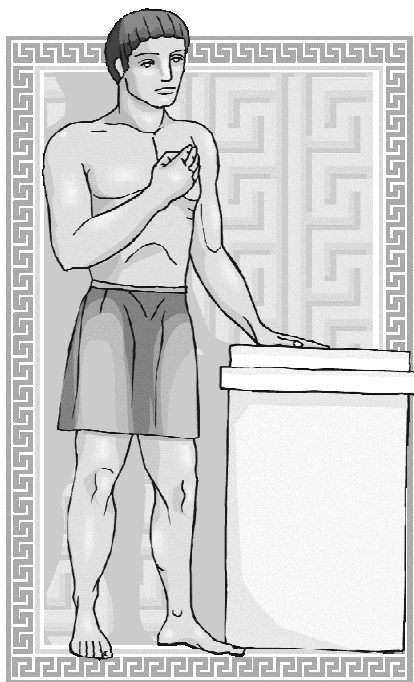
Artesia of Phatos

A proud Amazon princess – and the first woman ever to enter the Games after an initial ruckus when she attempted to participate in the **Selections**. She is accompanied by a small group of extremely assertive Amazon supporters.

Artesia has the stats of a typical Amazon NPC (*Creature Compendium*, p 59) except for her **Deadly Ferocity**, which raises her **Melee** to +7, **Initiative** to 16 and **Hits Total** to 16. She also has the **Grapple** special ability (for wrestling). Because of the Amazon's participation, the judges have decided to rescind the traditional requirement that athletes compete in the nude.

Bakdur the Akamen

A stern-looking, extremely disciplined athlete from the Land of the Sun – or, as Bakdur calls it himself, "the great and glorious Akamen Empire." He has the stats of a typical *Human Athletic Champion*.



Draxos of Acharnia, the Tritonian favorite

Draxos of Acharnia

The Tritonian champion is very athletic, very popular with the local crowd – especially with the ladies – and very arrogant. Draxos and many of his supporters see the Games as a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate the athletic and cultural superiority of their country and show these foreigners what it means to be Tritonian. Draxos of Acharnia also claims to be the grandson of Poseidon and seems to have an unlimited confidence in his own abilities – which does not change the fact that his stats are those of a typical *Human Athletic Champion*.

Alternatively, the Maze Master could decide that there is more to this divine lineage story than self-delusion or Tritonian propaganda – in which case Draxos could be given Supernatural Vigor (raising his Hits to 20) as well as a truly exceptional Might score of 20 (and a pugilistic damage roll of 1D3+4)..

Gilgalon the Anakite

A brutish half-giant from the Land of the Sun. His outstanding height (10') will obviously give him an unfair advantage in many events – but the Tritonian judges have decided to let him participate anyway. At least two athletes withdrew from the Games when they learned they'd be facing Gilgalon in the pugilism and wrestling events. Gilgalon has the stats of an Anakite Champion (*Minotaur* n°3, p 36).

Note that his size will prevent him from participating in the horse race – simply because no suitable horse could be found – but *not* the chariot race.

Juma of Solus

A Charybdian by birth, Juma comes from Midia, where he works as a bodyguard and mercenary. An impressively muscular black colossus, Juma seems to be the typical strong, silent type but is actually a very sociable fellow, with a sense of humor as well as a sense of honor. Juma has the stats of a typical *Human Athletic Champion*.

Leander of Argos

A famous (and quite arrogant) Argosean athlete who has won many events in the last Tritonian Games, Leander has a long-time rivalry with Arctos of Heraklia, his “only serious challenger.” In game terms, Leander of Argos has the stats of a typical *Human Athletic Champion*.

Pontus of Zethos

This unknown but quietly confident athlete has traveled a long way from his native Zethos, a small (and pretty obscure) island kingdom located about 120 miles west of Argos.

This man is, in fact, a covert agent working for an Umbrian king who seeks to sabotage the Minean Alliance by creating political friction between Argos and Heraklia. Pontus will be responsible for most of the incidents and mishaps which will cause increasing tension during the Games.

He, too, has the stats of a typical *Human Athletic Champion* – except for his Crafty Cunning, which raises his Initiative to 18, his Missile Attack to +8 and his Detection / Evasion to +6 / +8. His skills as a spy also give him the Stealthy special ability at 20.



Pontus of Zethos, a man with a plan...



Theon the Sagittarian with a young fan

Theon the Sagittarian

Theon is a Centaur archer from the plains of Sicania renowned for his marksmanship. He is naturally expected to dominate the Archery contest (the only one Centaurs are allowed to participate in.) Theon has the usual stats of a Sagittarian (see *Creature Compendium*, p 26).

Vorkos the Arimasbian

Like Gilgalon the Anakite, Vorkos the Arimasbian is another "half-human newcomer" to the Games (see *Creature Compendium*, p 8). He is quite aggressive and cannot help bragging about his future victory in the horse race. Vorkos has the usual stats of an Arimasbian.

Other Contestants?

Of course, the Maze Master is free to add any other character he sees fit to this roster of champions, including NPCs the adventurers have already met or heard about in previous scenarios.

Bringing legendary heroes like Tharsus or Titania (see issues 2 and 3 of the *Minotaur*) onto the scene may seem tempting at first but may not be such a good idea, since such invincible personages are likely to steal the show and thus spoil the fun of the player-characters, unless they are themselves very high-level characters. Alternatively, the Maze Master could also use the Tritonian Games as the perfect occasion for the player-characters to meet and befriend such legendary heroes.

Let the Games Begin!

Game Schedule

The Tritonian Games last for six days, according to the following schedule. All events are listed in the order in which they take place.

Day One: Selection of the athletes by the official judges ; opening ceremonies.

Day Two: Discus throwing, javelin throwing and archery (in that order).

Day Three: Weightlifting, jumping and foot race.

Day Four: Horse race and chariot race.

Day Five: Pugilism and wrestling.

Day Six: Triumph of the victors, followed by closing ceremonies.

The following pages describe simple rules for running each of the ten events of the Games. Events are presented in the order in which they take place.

Victory & Glory

Since competition and victory are essential aspects of a warrior's way of life, warriors who win an event will also gain 100 Glory points. Remember that there are no second prizes. The Tritonian Games are all about supreme victory.

The winner of each event will also receive 100 gold pieces (almost the price of a merchant ship) as well as a reputation bonus of +2 applicable anywhere from Umbria to the Land of the Sun. Thus, a warrior who wins three events will gain 300 Glory points, 300 gold coins and a Popularity of +6.

Day One

Inauspicious Beginnings

Unfortunately, the Games don't proceed as smoothly as Prince Demostrathes, their sponsor, would have preferred. The opening ceremonies are interrupted by the arrival of a band of protesting Satyrs (*Creature Compendium*, p 97).

These protesters are the former Decathlon hero Philomedes of Minea and his pupils. They were of course expected to dominate track events before the Satyr ban. Philomedes vehemently protests his team's exclusion, particularly since three other non-human contestants have qualified.

The Anakite Problem

The fact that Gilgalon was allowed to participate in the Games really does go against the most basic rules of fair play and has already caused quite a bit of discontent among the other athletes and some of the spectators. This tension will increase every time the Anakite brute wins a contest thanks to his unfair size advantage. If Gilgalon keeps on winning event after event, the tension will almost certainly escalate into a fight, especially given the uncouth Anakite's tendency to brag about his superior strength.

This incident will cause such an uproar, however, that the judges will try to quell the anger of the other athletes (and quite a lot of spectators) by banning the Anakite from the pugilism event (something that they had seriously considered in the first place, given the difficulty to land a punch in the face of a 10' tall guy). This half-baked measure will be enough to calm down the Anakite, who is eagerly awaiting the wrestling event and will not run the risk of being banned from this final event as well, which was the reason he came to the Games in the first place (he just loves crushing other people to death).

If the adventurers decide to get to the bottom of the matter and attempt to find out why the Anakite was allowed to participate at all, they will eventually discover that the judges were *ordered* to do so by the local authorities. Why? Because Draxos of Acharnia, the immensely popular (and supremely overconfident) Tritonian champion, was sure he could beat the Anakite at wrestling – a victory which would be a spectacular demonstration of Tritonian superiority (but will most likely turn into an unforgettable public humiliation, as detailed below).

Day Two

Discus & Javelin Throwing

Discus and javelin throwing use the thrower's Athletic Prowess rather than his Missile modifier, since the goal here is not to hit a specific target but to hurl the object as far as possible. Remember that a NPC's Athletic Prowess is equal to his Melee.

Roll 1D20 + Athletic Prowess for each contestant and note the resulting total.

The higher the roll, the farther the discus or the javelin lands. The character with the highest total is the winner. In case of ties between two potential winners, roll again until the tie is broken.

Characters who have the javelin as their weapon of choice will be *advantaged* (rolling two D20s instead of one and keeping the higher result) for this contest; no similar advantage exists for the discus.



Yes, size matters in archery too.

Archery

Make three (1D20 + Missile mod) rolls for each contestant; add the three rolls together to get the character's total.

The contestant with the highest total wins the event. In case of ties between two (or more) potential victors, make new rolls to break the tie.

Adventurers who have the bow as their *weapon of choice* will benefit from their usual advantage (rolling two D20s instead of one and keeping the higher result for each of the three rolls).

Foul Play!

As the discus winner is preparing to celebrate his victory, someone accuses him of using gimmicked equipment, producing a discus which appears to be made of wood rather than stone. The identity of the accuser depends on that of the accused.

If the winner is Leander of Argos, then his accuser will be Arctos of Heraklia - and vice versa. If the winner is Bakdur the Akamen, Artesia the Amazon or Vorkos the Arimaspiian, the accuser will either be Arctos or Argos (Maze Master's discretion).

If the winner is Pontus himself, no discus-related incident will happen. Likewise, if the winner is Gilgalon the Anakite, no gimmicked discus will appear but his obviously unfair victory will cause much discontent among the other athletes.



Running for the gold – and the Glory points!

In both cases, Pontus will simply save his “irregular equipment” trick for the javelin contest, replacing the bronze javelin of the winner with a wooden one.

Another possibility for the dastardly Pontus would be to sabotage the archery contest by deliberately tampering with one of the other contestants’ bows (preferably Leander or Arctos) before the contest, resulting in a -2 penalty to the archer’s Missile rolls. The victim of this dirty trick will notice the problem if any of his Missile rolls result in a total lower than 10 – and will definitely notice it after the contest. In both cases, his righteous fury will cause much tension among the other athletes and the authorities of the Games.

Regardless of which of the three events of Day Two was sabotaged by Pontus, at the end of the day, some of Arctos the Heraklian’s equipment will go missing, only to turn up in Leander the Argosean’s quarters.

If one of the adventurers comes from one of the appropriate cities (or even Thena, for that matter), the equipment either disappears from or shows up in his rooms. If the character finds the items before the owner misses them he might turn them over to the judges or try to sneak them back into the owner’s rooms if the owner can be determined.

If the characters are caught with the goods, the owner will decline to have them thrown out of the Games, preferring to humiliate the adventurers on the field in a later event. If the heroes are the ones whose stuff is missing, their reaction is up to them.

Day Three

Weightlifting

Instead of using the original M&M rules for Feats of Strength, this event should be resolved as follows: every contestant rolls 1d6 and add the result to his full Might score. The highest roll wins. In case of ties between potential victors, roll again.

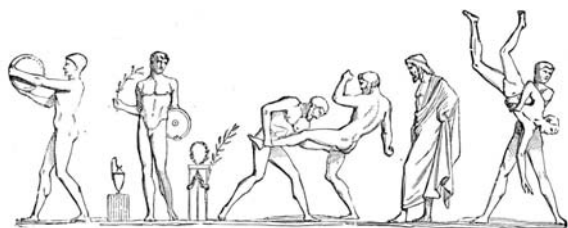
All NPCs are assumed to have a Might of 16, except Gilgalon, who has a Might of 20 and should logically win the event. Note that the system used here is a simplified version of the optional variant rule for Feats of Strength from this issue’s *A Twist In the Maze*.

Jumping

Roll $1D20 + \text{Athletic Prowess}$ for each contestant and note the resulting total. The higher the roll, the farther the character jumps. The character with the highest total is the winner. In case of ties between two potential winners, roll again until the tie is broken.

Foot Race

Make three $(1D20 + \text{Athletic Prowess mod})$ rolls for each contestant; add the three rolls together to get the character’s total. The contestant with the highest total wins the race. In case of ties between potential victors, make another roll to break the tie.



Trouble at Dinner

Normally tightly disciplined (well, as far as Satyrs go), Philomedes and his crew become uncharacteristically boisterous in the athlete's dining area (as a former champion, Philomedes is allowed to enter whether his team is competing or not). A brawl erupts when a Satyr makes an impolite suggestion to one of Artesia's Amazon followers.

Adventurers who make a successful Danger Evasion roll (target number 15) will be able to determine that the wine has been spiked with some sort of distilled liquor.

Unless the characters intervene quickly, injuries (and hangovers) will prevent many of the athletes from being able to compete the next day.

If the characters failed their Danger Evasion rolls, they'll need to make successful Physical Vigor rolls (target number 15) to avoid becoming intoxicated themselves (resulting in a -4 penalty to all saving rolls, attacks, and Initiative). If the characters aren't able to break things up, the Tritonian marines will intervene.

Characters who think to examine the kitchen and kitchen rubbish after the dining area brawl may discover an amphora containing a small quantity of distilled liquor. Anyone who has ever visited Umbria will be able to identify it as a potent concoction from the Umbrian hills and the same stuff that was put into the wine. Its presence alone isn't a decisive clue, since the liquor commonly finds its way into better-stocked wine cellars around the Middle Sea, as Demostrathes' steward will be quick to point out.

If the player-characters begin to suspect Umbrian involvement, remind them that no Umbrian champion is competing in the Games. Astute adventurers may recall that Pontus claimed to come from some obscure region south-east of Sybaris, which is actually quite close to Umbria. Characters who speak Umbrian *and* who start paying attention to Pontus' elocution will notice that the athlete does speak Minean with a slight (disguised?) Umbrian accent but these are suspicions, not proofs.

Prince Demostrathes is, of course, infuriated by the incidents. He doesn't want anything to interfere with "his" Games. He'll beef up security and may put the athletes under guard, especially after the brawl and the equipment theft. And he won't like foreigners (the adventurers) sneaking around investigating.

Day Four

Horse & Chariot Races

Both events are resolved in exactly the same way. The only difference is that contestants may use their own horse for the Horse Race if they have one (those who don't own the horse will be given a standard horse for the duration of the event). For the chariot race, however, each of the contestants will be given a standard chariot with a pair of standard horses.

The important score here is the Evasion modifier of the horse – so exceptional horses with abilities like *Uncanny Agility* or *Lightning Fast* will be extremely useful here. Standard horses have an Evasion of +2. The horse of Vorkos the Arimaspien has an Evasion of +4, thanks to its Uncanny Agility.

Make three (1D6 + horse's Evasion mod) rolls for each contestant. Add the three rolls together to get the character's total. The rider with the highest total wins the race. In case of ties between potential victors, make another roll to break the tie.

Racing is, however, a dangerous sport. After each D6 roll made for the horse, the rider must immediately make a Danger Evasion saving roll with a target number equal to 10 + the result of the horse's roll. Thus, if your horse has an Evasion of +2 and you roll a 4, you add 6 points to your total and must make a Danger Evasion roll against a target number of 16. If this Danger Evasion roll fails, the rider falls from his galloping mount (or suffers a critical chariot mishap) for 2D6 Hits of damage and must abandon the race.

Characters with the *Equestrian* talent will benefit from their usual advantage on their Danger Evasion roll but will not get any particular benefit on their D6 rolls.

More Foul Play

During the previous night, Pontus of Zethos will have secretly drugged the horse of Leander of Argos for the horse race and the horses of Arctos of Heraklia for the chariot race, making the animals disoriented and lethargic (and reducing their Evasion modifier from +2 to -4).

Each athlete will have the absolute certainty that his rival is responsible for this dirty trick. This incident will be the boiling point of the escalating tension between the Heraklian and the Argosean, and things are likely to get *really* nasty between the two champions.

The horses can only have been drugged during the previous night – but the Tritonian marines who were guarding the stables didn't see *anybody* sneaking around – let alone entering the building.

At this stage of the scenario (and this being *Mazes & Minotaurs*), the characters should begin to suspect some sort of supernatural subterfuge – especially Sorcerers, since they are well aware of what their own powers can accomplish. Indeed, any Sorcerer worth his salt should sooner or later come to the conclusion that Sorcery is somehow involved in all this, especially since all those strange happenings occurred outside of the zone covered by Poseidon's anti-magic field. Unfortunately, since some NPCs may also come to the same conclusion, the party's Sorcerer is also very likely to be suspected to be the culprit, especially since no other Sorcerer is known to be present in the area – and since that Sorcerer has friends competing in the Games, his motive simply seems all too clear.

Even if there is no Sorcerer in the party, the fact that the player-characters have been relatively spared by all those unpleasantness might be enough to make them prime suspects in the eyes of some of the other athletes or even the Tritonian authorities.

If the adventurers have begun to suspect Pontus and have given him reasons to believe they were watching him, he will of course try to incriminate them further, adding more dissent and confusion to the situation and covering his own tracks. If Pontus tries to frame the adventurers, he will try to make them pass for co-conspirators of either Leander or Arctos, since those two are the prime targets of his plan, as explained in *The Shadow of Umbria*.

Pontus' Little Secret

So how does Pontus manage to sneak about unnoticed around the other athletes' tents or inside the stables to steal equipment, plant incriminating evidence or spike food and drink with drugs?

The immediate surroundings of the Game fields may not be a maximum security area but they are actively guarded by Tritonian marines and the risk of being seen (not to mention being caught red-handed) seems quite high... unless, of course, you happen to be very stealthy and to own a Cloak of Concealment (*Maze Masters Guide*, p 44).

While the anti-magic effect created by the power of Poseidon prevents magic from working on the fields where the contests are held, it has no effect on the surrounding areas, including the tents where the athletes can dine, relax and meet their fans between the various contests.

Of course, Pontus only wears his magical garment at night during his clandestine expeditions. During the day, he keeps it well hidden in his tent. Adventurers who try to search through Pontus' possessions in his absence will only find the Cloak with a successful detection roll (target number 15) – and only a magician may recognize it as a magical garment, as per the usual rules for identifying mythic items (see *Maze Master's Guide*, p 49).

The Shadow of Umbria



Behind all this strife and confusion is a prophecy by the Pythian Oracle of Umbria (see *Minotaur* n°4, p 25) that the sons' sons' sons of Glaukos of Lysaidon, a petty king of Umbria, one day will rule the Middle Sea.

Never a patient man, Glaukos has decided to speed the process up a bit, but the Three Cities and their troublesome Minean Coalition (see *Maze Masters Guide*, p 13) stand in his way. He hopes to weaken them by renewing the old feud between Heraklia and Argos, enabling his growing private army to sweep through the Minean-speaking lands and beyond. When he heard that the two rival cities were sending their champions Arctos and Leander to the Tritonian Games, a devious plan began to take shape in his power-obsessed mind.

By turning the Tritonian Games into a public fiasco and casting the shadow of dishonor over the two rival athletes, Glaukos seeks to cause a serious diplomatic incident between Heraklia and Argos in order to create a major crisis within the Minean Coalition and perhaps even encourage the ambitious Tritonians to attack the Three Cities. Such a situation might even escalate into a full-blown war between Heraklia and Argos, with Thena being caught in the crossfire, spelling the demise of the Minean Coalition.

All of this would allow Glaukos to fulfill his grand destiny (or that of his descendants if things do not go as quickly as he expects) and would also be a major contribution to the restoration of Umbrian supremacy, with the downfall of Minean civilization as an added bonus.

To carry out this devious plan, he has sent his best spy, alias "Pontus of Zethos," to the island of Tritonis on a destabilization mission.

Despite what he prefers to believe, Glaukos' mad scheme doesn't have the support of Talos. King Meinetes would be enraged to discover that an underling was taking actions that could undermine his own carefully plotted strategies.

Day Five

Pugilism

If the match involves a player-character, resolve the combat normally, using the regular pugilism rules (see *Players Manual*, p 26). Each match lasts until one of the pugilists is knocked out.

If, on the other hand, the match only involves NPCs, victory automatically goes to the NPC with the highest Melee mod. (If both competitors have the same Melee mod, simply roll a die for each).

When all matches have been resolved, compare the amount of subdual damage taken by the winners: the one with the lowest damage total wins the event. To determine the amount of subdual damage taken by NPCs who have won a NPC vs NPC match, roll 2D6-2. In cases of ties between two or more potential victors, victory goes to the one with the highest Melee mod; if this still proves inconclusive, just roll a die to break the tie.

Contestants are given 6 hours of rest before the final contest – wrestling, by far the most popular event of the entire Games. This period should allow them to heal most (if not all) of the subdual damage sustained during the pugilistic match.

The Cestus Scandal

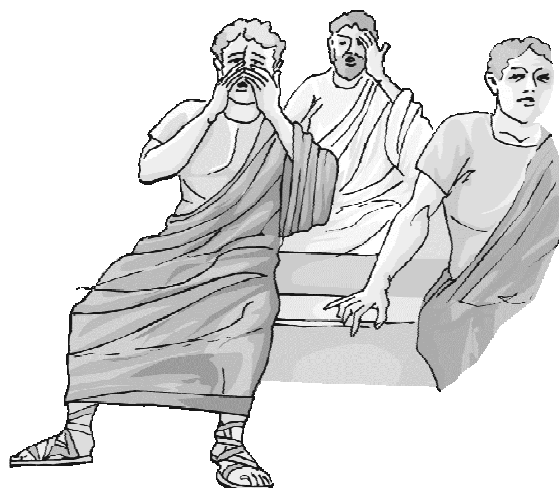
Pontus has another dirty trick in store for Leander of Argos or Arctos of Heraklia (Maze Masters' choice). Before the competition, he will replace this athlete's regular boxing cesti with a pair of loaded ones.

Everytime the cesti's wearer will score a hit against his opponent, the defender will suffer the usual subdual damage as well as one-half this damage in regular Hits (round down).

If the victim is a player-character, he will obviously realize that something is wrong after the first such injury; if the victim is a NPC, the Maze Master will determine the extent of his injuries based on his rolled subdual damage total (see above).

Random Opponents

Write down the name of each contestant on a small piece of paper and draw pairs of opponents at random for each match. Don't forget that our friend Gilgalon has probably been banned from this event. If you have an odd number of contestants, the one who ends up with no opponent is simply excluded from the competition – that's justice for you. Alternatively, you could simply decide who gets to fight whom in order to make the most interesting pairs of opponents, such as Arctos vs. Leadner for pugilism or Artesia vs. Barduk for wrestling (see below).



Spectators of the Games voicing their indignation

Wrestling

Wrestling is undeniably the most popular event of the Tritonian Games, which is why it occurs after all the other competitions. It marks the climax of the Games - as well as the culminating point of Pontus' sabotage operation – but it will also be marked by another dramatic event completely unrelated to the schemes of the Umbrian agent (see below.)

Who Fights Whom?

The Maze Master may randomly assign opponents using the method given above. As previously mentioned, things have been rigged to ensure that the overconfident Tritonian champion, Draxos of Acharnia, meets Gilgaon the Anakite. Gilgalon, who is not aware of the stratagem (and wouldn't give a damn anyway), is quite pleased with this opportunity of walloping Draxos in front of his people.

As for Draxos himself, his attitude will depend on how well he fared in the previous events; if he has won several events, he will display the supreme confidence of an invincible champion.

If, on the other hand, Draxos has not won anything yet, he will begin to have serious doubts about his athletic abilities – and second thoughts about the "great idea" of wrestling the Anakite (but it's too late, since everything has already been arranged.)

The Maze Master may also decide that the various incidents which have occurred between Leander and Arctos have prompted the Tritonian judges to fudge things a bit further in order to offer the spectators (not to mention the local bookmakers) a final showdown between the two rival athletes...

Another incident might occur when the opponents are announced. If Artesia's designated opponent is Leander of Argos, Arctos of Heraklia or Juma of Solus, neither of them will seem very enthusiastic at

the prospect of wrestling against a woman (much to the irritation of Artesia and her followers) but if the opponent is Barduk, he will categorically refuse to wrestle against Artesia “for religious reasons”.

This will infuriate Artesia, who will feel insulted by the Akamen’s attitude – and the intended wrestling match is very likely to erupt into a *real* fight, as the Amazon retorts that she only wrestles against *real men* anyway. The ensuing brawl is very likely to cause both Artesia and Barduk to be disqualified and banned from the next Games.

Resolving the Matches

If the wrestling match involves a player-character, resolve the combat normally, using the regular wrestling rules found in the *Players Manual* (p 26). Characters with the *Wrestler* background talent will of course benefit from their usual advantage.

Each match normally lasts ten battle rounds. Each wrestler gains 1 point for each round during which he managed to keep his opponent immobilized.

Matches which only involve NPCs do not need to be resolved in detail. Simply roll 1D6 for each wrestler: the higher roll wins the match and scores a number of points equal to the difference.

When all the matches have been resolved, the wrestler who has scored the most points wins the event. In case of ties between two or more potential victors, proceed as for *Pugilism* above.

Wrestling for Blood

Should Leander and Arctos be pit against each other, the tension and hate they have accumulated over the last few days will erupt and they will start wrestling for blood (see *Minotaur* n°5, p 56).



*Leander of Argos and Arctos of Heraklia
finally come to grips with their mutual feelings*

The two champions try to kill each other with their bare hands and shaming themselves and their respective cities under the cries of the booing crowd (not to mention the Tritonian nobility) - unless somebody intervenes quickly enough to break up the fight. If needed, an infuriated Demonstrathes will order his soldiers to overpower the two athletes to “prevent them from dishonoring the Games further”.

The ensuing humiliation may well break the spirit of Leander or Arctos, who could well be tempted to take his own life in a moment of despair.

Death of a Champion

It has been decided that the wrestling match between Gilgalon the Anakite and Draxos of Acharnia would be the last contest of the Games – a suitable finale for a grand competition. Unfortunately for Draxos and his compatriots, things will not proceed as expected. After a few seconds, the brutish Anakite will grapple the Tritonian champion in a bear hug and crush him to death. As the stunned crowd watches in horror, Demonstrathes, white as a sheet, will order his Tritonian marines to “take down the monster.” The Anakite brute will die under a volley of arrows and javelins.

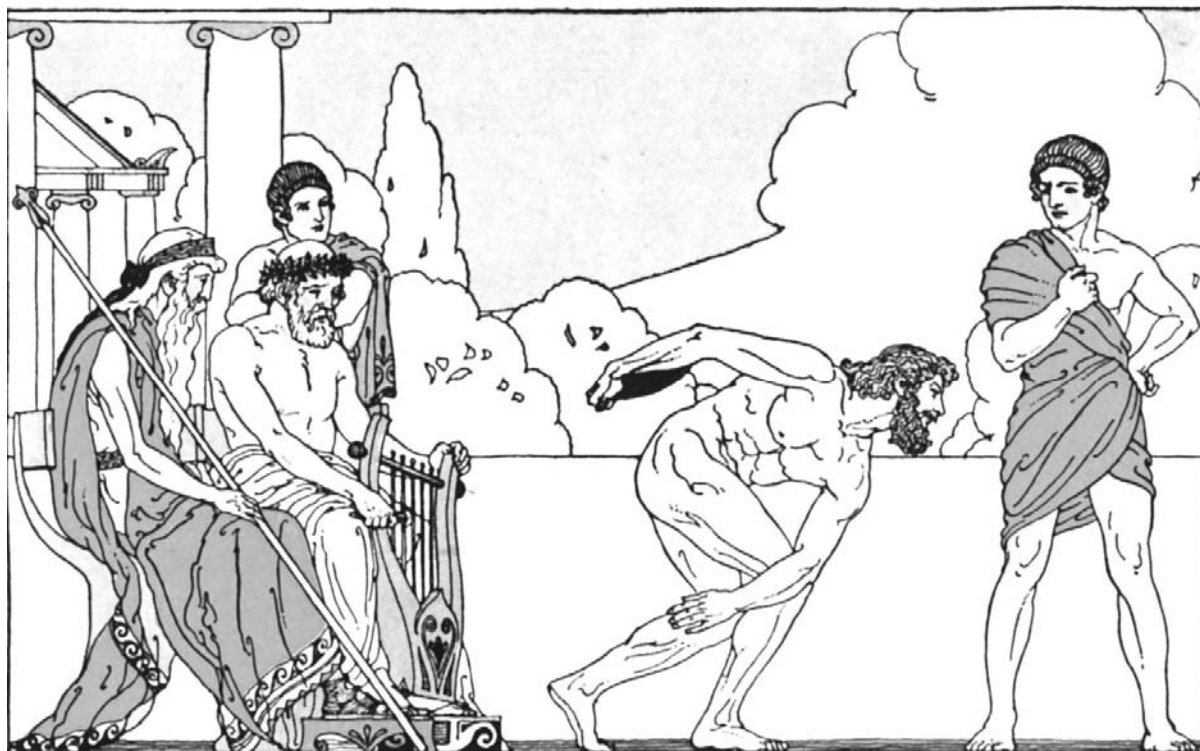
Day Six

Closing Ceremonies

Since the Games ended with the untimely (and pretty stupid) death of the Tritonian champion, the closing ceremonies will sound more like a grand eulogy to the glorious memory of Draxos rather than the intended triumph of the victors. The winners of the various contests will still receive their laurel crowns and their gold, as well as the corresponding Glory points and Popularity bonus (see p 34).

So Long, Tritonis

The reactions of the Sea Princes to the incidents and scandals which turned the Games into a disaster will depend on how much they (and the characters) have discovered about the Umbrian plot. For their part, the Tritonians wouldn’t be heartbroken should the Three Cities be wracked by internal strife. On the other hand, they don’t want a political scandal to mar the Games. If they discover the Umbrian plot they will permit it to continue as long as the schemers are discreet. If the plot should risk becoming known, the Tritonians will swiftly seize the culprits to keep the skullduggery from getting out. They might attempt to seize adventurers and athletes who know too much as well. This could be an interesting basis for a much more violent follow-up scenario, in which our heroes (and possibly the other contestants) would have to fight (and sail) their way out of Tritonis’ harbor.



Remembering the glory of the Tritonian Games

No matter how the events of the Tritonian Games were resolved, the adventurers have made an enemy of Prince Demonstrathes, who will blame them for the humiliation he had to suffer before his fellow Sea Princes – not to mention the diplomatic scandal he had to defuse (or so he says).

The Fate of Pontus

If he was not apprehended during or right after the Games by the local authorities, 'Pontus' will quickly disappear, sneaking out of the area under his Cloak of Concealment to head straight to the docks where a ship is awaiting him.

An unexpected piece of information or coincidence (or perhaps even a Divine Vision) might allow the adventurers to intercept the Umbrian agent as he is about to sail away. Alternatively, his capture could involve a dramatic sea chase between his ship and the ship of the adventurers; this could be especially interesting if the party includes a Nereid or a Mariner. If he is indeed captured, 'Pontus' will prefer to take his own life (with a poison capsule hidden in one of his teeth – yes, Umbrians do take espionage seriously) rather than reveal the name of his master.

Aftermath

If the adventurers foiled Glaukos' schemes without publicly exposing Umbrian involvement, they may be contacted later by members of the Minean unification movement. These will be Heraklian or Thenan nobles who have been talking secretly with Umbrian agitators. The aristocrats will first invite the adventurers to a series of parties, attempting to determine their political opinions during dinner conversation. If the characters seem sympathetic, the nobles will attempt to recruit the player-characters to their cause. If the heroes refuse, the nobles will remain polite but the dinner invitations will cease.

Shortly after this meeting, the characters may begin to notice that they're being shadowed after the refusal. The Umbrian secret service now knows who they are. On the other hand, they may be contacted by representatives of the Thenan Assembly, asking them to accept the nobles' offer so that they can help the Assembly keep tabs on the movement.

Lastly, foiling Glaukos' mad plans will earn them an enemy for life in the person of the Umbrian Warlord himself – but that's another story...

PANKRATIASTS & PUGILISM

A new optional character class, unarmed critical hits and a fistful of other things!

by Colin Chapman, with a few additional ideas by Olivier Legrand

PANKRATIAST

The Pankratiast is an athlete, the undisputed master of pugilism and wrestling. Punches, kicks, grapples, chokes and takedowns form his arsenal, one he requires no weapons to employ.

Primary Attributes: Might and Skill.

Gender: Male only.

Basic Hits = 12

Duck and Weave: Pankratiasts are skilled at making themselves difficult targets and add their Skill bonus to their melee EDC, unless they are *surprised* or wearing a breastplate.

Special Moves: Their training gives Pankratiasts access to various special unarmed combat moves. In game terms, this allows them to combine pugilism or wrestling with any of the following special tactics (which can normally only be used in armed melee): *Charge Into Battle*, *Subterfuge*, *Bashing*, *Double Attack* and *Disarming*. See the *Players Manual* (p 24) and *M&M Companion* (p 14) for more details.

Unarmed Master: Each Pankratiast must choose whether his greatest skill lies in pugilism (Master Pugilist) or in wrestling (Master Wrestler). This mastery gives him two extra combat benefits (one offensive and one defensive), as detailed below.

Weapon of Choice: Pugilism.

Level Benefits: Each level beyond the first gives a Pankratiast +4 Hits, +1 to Luck and +2 to Might, Will or Skill (player's choice).

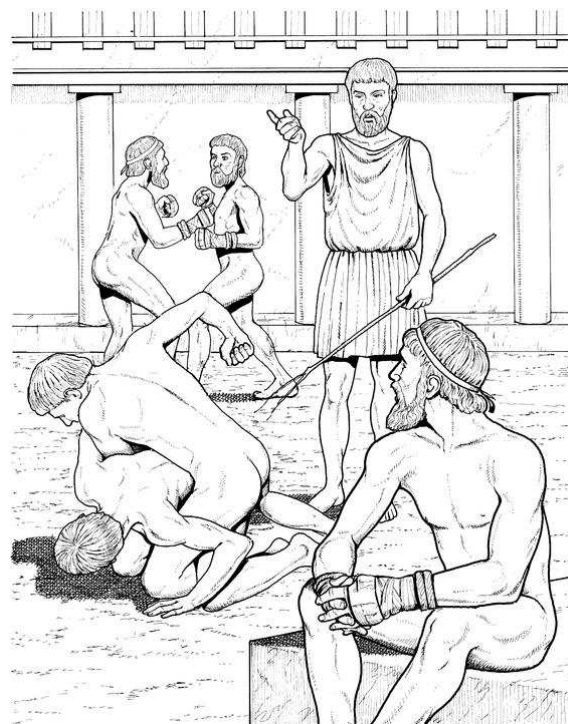
Possessions: Cesti (leather straps that wrap around and protect the fists). Their starting wealth is equal to 3D6 x 5 silver pieces.

Background Talents: Pankratiasts must take the Wrestler talent and another chosen from Acrobat, Healer or Orator. If you do not use talents but intend to use this class, Pankratiasts should still be given the benefits of the Wrestler talent.

Patron Deities: Most Pankratiasts follow Palaistra, the goddess of unarmed combat (see next page).

Advancement: As other warriors.

Reputation Effect: **Athletic Fame.** Pankratiasts benefit from the reputation effect when dealing with other athletes and sport enthusiasts.



Master Pugilist

Attack: The Pankratiast increases the damage of their blows from 1D3 + Might mod to 1D6 + Might for subdual damage, and may choose to inflict 1D3 + Might mod of real damage instead (pugilism is still ineffective against beasts and monsters, however).

Defense: The Pankratiast can block the attacks of other pugilists and melee weapons as per the *Weapon Parry* tactic. This cannot be used, however, against Large or Gigantic opponents or against the natural attacks of Beasts and other creatures.

Master Wrestler

Attack: The Pankratiast adds their Skill mod to their Might score when applying grappling holds, making it harder for opponents to break free. They also add their Skill mod to their damage when 'wrestling for blood' (see *Minotaur* no.5, pg. 56).

Defense: The Pankratiast adds their Might mod to all attempts to break free from a grapple, entangle, or hold whether delivered by a creature or wrestling opponent. It cannot be used, however, against Large or Gigantic opponents.

Palaistra



Palaistra is the goddess of wrestling, and daughter of Hermes. A boyish figure with very short hair, she cares nothing for femininity, but delights only in the arts of wrestling and pugilism, of pitting raw skill and power against an opponent for enjoyment or sport.

Symbol: An olive branch (olive oil is used by wrestlers, and victors wear an olive wreath).

Typical Worshippers: Pankratiasts, as well as some other athletes. Since she is, at best, a minor deity, she is not allowed to have proper Priests (let alone Divine Agents) or temples of her own – but every pankration schools has a shrine dedicated to her.

The Art of Pankration

New School vs. Old School

Over the last few years, a new style of unarmed combat combining the techniques of wrestling and pugilism with some never-seen-before moves has appeared in the Land of the Three Cities.

Scoffed and scorned by the traditional tenants of proper pugilism and wrestling, this new “martial art” (as it is sometimes termed), known as *Pankration*, has grown increasingly popular with young men who want to devote their life to mastering the science of unarmed combat – as Pankratiasts.

Since it is a novel (and not so well-accepted) art, *pankration* is only taught in three schools – one in each of the Three Cities. The first pankration school was that of Thena, with the royal blessing of King Theseos (himself a keen connoisseur of unarmed combat techniques); Heraklians quickly felt they couldn't let the Thenans boast the exclusive mastery of some new fighting technique and the pankration school of Heraklia was created less than two years after its Thenan forerunner; not to be outdone, Argos quickly jumped on the bandwagon and pankration soon became something of a craze among the young men of Minea – many of them frequent the school of their city for occasional practice (or just to show off because, you know, *pankration is soooo cool*) but only a few of them have what it takes to become true Pankratiasts.

The Legacy of Bruxos

Pankration was invented some 20 years ago by the great Thenan philosopher **Bruxos**, who also was a peerless athlete (which does tend to be something of a rarity among philosophers) and had always been fascinated by the concept of unarmed combat as a true *art*. The three schools were created (and are still run) by his former disciples.

According to most reliable sources, Bruxos began to develop pankration after returning his travels to the far east, beyond the Land of the Sun, where he had learned many forgotten secrets of unarmed combat, but some of his disciples insist that their master was actually visited by the goddess Palaistra - who, it should be noted, was almost unheard of before the creation of pankration helped to popularize her name throughout the Land of the Three Cities.

A few years ago, Bruxos met a heroic and untimely death under the gaze of a Gorgon, who turned him to stone before he could use his art on her. The stone statue of Bruxos which can be seen in the pankration school of Thena is actually the petrified body of the great martial sage. The statue is always shown by the pankration masters to their pupils as a reminder of no matter how perfect your fighting skills are, you are never truly invincible.

Pugilism Critical Hits

Maze Masters who already use the Critical Hits tables from the *M&M Companion* and who wish to extend these rules to pugilism should use the table given next page when a critical hit is scored by a player-character or major NPC (whether or not he is a Pankratiast) fighting with his bare hands. Keep in mind, though, that pugilism cannot be used against animal or monstrous opponents.



- And that's a Pugilism Critical Hit, buddy!



Beware the right hook of the Boxotaur...

Pugilism Critical Hits

1-4 = Stunned!

Opponent takes normal unarmed damage and is -2 to attack and EDC next round.

5-8 = Dazed!

Opponent takes normal unarmed damage and is -4 to attack and EDC next round.

9-12 = Knocked Down!

Opponent takes normal damage and is knocked down and must spend a round getting back up. Prone characters suffer a -4 penalty to EDC.

13-15 = Disarmed!

Opponent takes damage as normal and his weapon is knocked from his hand — picking it up takes a full round, during which the opponent can perform no other action than defense (with a -4 penalty to his EDC). If the opponent has no handheld weapon, treat as Knocked Down.

16-17 = Crushing Blow!

Opponent takes subdual damage as normal and suffers the same amount of real damage.

18-20 = Knock Out!

Opponent is instantly knocked out. His subdual damage total is immediately bumped to its maximum and will be decreased by 1D6 when he regains consciousness, as per the usual rules (see *Players Manual*, p 26).

Special Bonus Section

OFFICIAL ORACLE

Unarmed Combat

The rules state that "pugilism is a purely human technique and can never be used against beasts or monsters" - but what about humanoid Folks?

Yes. Pugilism can be used against Folks, as long as they are humanoids of Medium or Small size. For obvious anatomical reasons, it cannot be used against Large or Tiny Folks. Nor against Beasts, Monsters, Animates or Spirits.

Can special tactics like Charge, Subterfuge or Double Attack be used in unarmed combat?

No, unless you're a Pankratiast.

Humans are allowed to make two melee attacks per round against Small opponents - but does this also apply to wrestling attacks?

Indeed — as shown on the nifty illustration below.

So if I manage to grapple two Small opponents, will each of them have to break free against my full Might or will it be reduced by the fact that I'm maintaining two holds at the same time?

Because of the size difference and for simplicity's sake, you may apply your full Might to each hold.

This article gives us a nice critical hit table for pugilism - but what about wrestling?

Sorry, no critical hits for wrestling.

The Wrestler talent advantages characters when breaking free from grappling attacks - does this also extend to the Grapple or Entangle abilities of monsters and other creatures?

No. This only applies to the grappling attacks made by other humans or medium-sized humanoids.



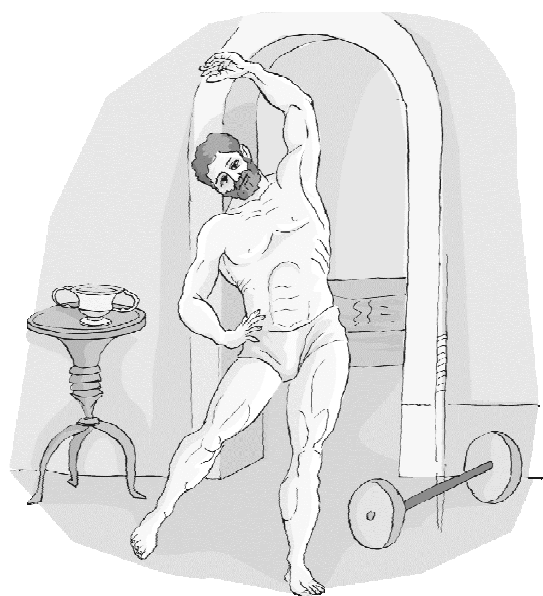
- Go on! Ask me your goddamn rule questions!

A TWIST IN THE MAZE

A Regular M&M Column by Luke G. Reynard

NO MEAN FEAT!

A new & nifty optional system for lifting boulders, breaking chains & other feats of strength



- Ah, at last! A new system for Feats of Strength:

What's Wrong?

I've never liked the way Feats of Strength worked in *Mazes & Minotaurs* – for at least two excellent reasons (*Oh no, don't tell me you're just going to rant about how rotten the M&M rules are - Ed*). The first reason is a purely esthetic one: Feats of Strength use 1d10 and require you to “roll under”, which seems to be an arbitrary, gratuitous and quite warty exception to the general M&M rules, in which almost all challenging actions are resolved with a d20 roll and, perhaps more importantly, according to the “higher is better” principle.

The second reason is more technical. Under the current rules, having a higher Might does not actually allow you to do better (ie lift heavier objects etc) but simply gives you a higher chance to succeed at the same generic Feat of Strength – whereas logic would seem to dictate that being Mightier should make you *stronger* in terms of *capacity* – as is the case with Encumbrance, which is another direct application of a character's Might.

These problems become even more prevalent in the Revised rules, which dumped the Initiative d10 roll (thereby leaving Feats of Strength as the only “d10

wart” in an otherwise smooth and elegant system) but also introduces things like Will and Physical Vigor – characteristics which should logically have some incidence on the ability of a character to push the limits of his physical strength. For all these reasons, the official Feat of Strength rules really suck – *sorry*, really feel as a leftover from the Original rules and should have been harmonized with the streamlined Revised rules but were NOT.

Since it's never too late to correct a mistake and this issue has a strong athletic theme, I thought I could give it a shot and devise a much better system for resolving Feats of Strength.

Basic System

Unlike the official rules, this new system allows the Maze Master to rate the actual difficulty of a given Feat of Strength, in terms of how much Might is actually required to perform the task. Let's face it: not all actions which can be described as “Feats of Strength” have the same uniform level of difficulty and ripping iron manacles from a wall should logically require even more Might than, say, breaking down a heavy door. The Maze Master simply rates the difficulty of the Feat of Strength on the following scale, which is roughly similar (but not identical) to the usual d20 target numbers:

Challenging = 15

Spectacular = 20

Herculean = 25

Most Feats of Strength will be either Challenging (difficult) or Spectacular (bloody hard). Herculean feats are normally beyond the possibilities of player-characters – except those with truly phenomenal physical strength (Might 19+), who *may* have a chance of success (as detailed below) and, of course, characters who have been bestowed the Divine Gift of Strength (see *Players Manual*, p 31), who always succeed at such feats.

Breaking down a door, for instance, is usually a Challenging Feat of Strength, unless that door is especially heavy, in which case the difficulty could become Spectacular, while breaking iron chains will qualify as a truly Herculean Feat – note that these examples clearly show the need for different levels of difficulty here.



- Does this qualify as a Titanic Feat?

Once the difficulty level has been defined, simply compare it to the character's Might score. If the character's Might is equal to or greater than the difficulty, then the Feat is automatically successful. Thus, characters with a Might of 15 or more will always succeed at Challenging Feats of Strength (such as, say, breaking down most doors). If, on the other hand, the character's Might is lower than the required threshold, he may still have a chance of accomplishing the Feat by *pushing the limits*.

Pushing the Limits

This requires a Physical Vigor saving roll against a difficulty level of 20. A successful roll does not mean the character succeeds at the Feat but allows him to boost his Might score by 1d6 for this particular Feat; if this is enough to bring the score to the required threshold, the Feat succeeds; otherwise (or if the saving roll failed), the character is simply unable to push his limits and may not attempt that same Feat again – at least not until he has increased his Might score or until he benefits from some strength-boosting item or magical effect (such as, say, a Divine Prodigy of Strength).

If the saving roll fails *and* its total roll is less than 10, the character has sprained a muscle and suffers a temporary loss of 1d3 points of Might, which will return at the rate of 1 point per full hour of rest.

Let's now take a closer look at the inner workings of the system. Might remains the most important factor here – and even the only relevant factor, unless the character has to push the limits of his strength, in which case Might (sheer physical power), Will (ability to exert oneself) and Luck (overall divine favor) all come into play in the form of the Physical Vigor mod). Thus, this rule variant seems much more consistent with the game mechanics and overall philosophy of the Revised rules.

Example: Trapped in a terrible death trap with his adventuring buddies, Krondar the Barbarian decides to lift the heavy iron gates that prevent him and his friends from escaping certain death. The ruthless Maze Master rules that this will require a truly Herculean Feat of Strength – which would normally make it impossible but since Krondar has an awesome Might of 20, he does have a small chance of success if he manages to push his limits. This will require a successful Physical Vigor saving roll against a target number of 20 and then a roll of 5 or 6 on 1d6 (in order to bring his Might score to the required 25). Krondar has a Physical Vigor of +9, so he must roll 11 or more on 1D20: he makes it easily, but this only allows him to boost his effective strength by 1d6. Rolling 1d6, he gets a measly 2... which brings his Might to 22 – not enough to succeed at a Herculean feat! Despite his extraordinary Might and his best efforts, Krondar fails to lift the iron gates. "Any clever idea?" he asks his friends. The Priest of Poseidon then remembers he does have access to the Divine Prodigy of Strength; he uses it on the party's Noble, who easily lifts the iron gates, allowing the party to escape (and leaving Krondar a bit upset).

Working Together

But what, you ask, if two or even three characters try to pool their strength together? This might not always be possible (depending on the actual nature of the feat) but how do we solve this when the possibility does arise in play? Simple. Take the highest Might score as your basis and add the Might bonus(es) of the other character(s). Thus, if Pyros the 1st level Spearman (Might 13) gets the help of Krondar the über-Barbarian (Might 20, for a Might mod of +4), his effective Might will be equal to 17. Since the system relies on Might bonuses, those with a lower Might won't be of any help here; if the characters need to push the limits, everybody makes a Physical Vigor roll and if at least one of them succeeds, then the collective Might score get the usual 1d6 boost (but no more – i.e. two successful rolls won't give you a 2d6 boost).

Monstrous Strength

Since creatures never need to make Physical Vigor saving rolls anyway, Maze Masters should simply use common sense and dramatic license here. As a rule of thumb, Large creatures should automatically succeed at Feats of Strength, regardless of the level of difficulty – and may even be able to perform even more impressive feats of strength, at the Maze Master's discretion. As for Gigantic creatures, well, we don't need a system for that, do we?

Herculean Exploits

Maze Master who wish to add an extra mythic touch to this already very nifty (*you know, Luke, humility and genius are NOT necessarily incompatible – Ed*) and suitably heroic system may reward warriors who succeed at a truly Herculean feat of strength *by their own means* (ie alone *and* without any form of magical assistance) with 20 Glory points, especially if the feat was performed in highly perilous or dramatic circumstances.

THE SERPENT OF PROTEUS

A short but very perilous scenario for heroic adventurers, by **Carlos de la Cruz Morales**

Translated from the Spanish by Maria Lourdes Batres with the help of Carlos de la Cruz Morales

This scenario takes place approximately five years before the events of the Tomb of the Bull King mega-module. Bellerophon, depicted as a wounded king in his early forties in Tomb of the Bull King, appears here as a heroic, adventurous prince of Heraklia in his late thirties. Ideally, the player-characters should start as companions and counselors of the prince – either Heraklian compatriots or friends met on a previous trip or adventure. They should be level 2-3; 1st level characters will probably have a very hard time here...

Introduction

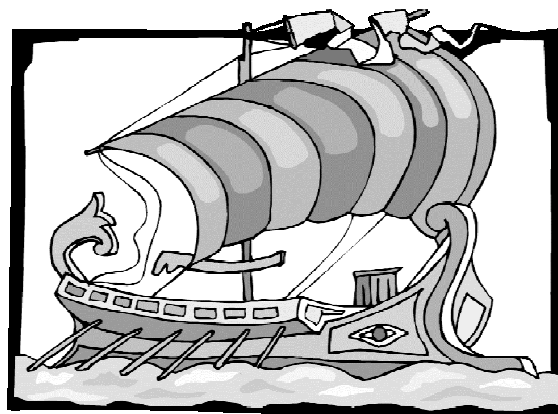
Long ago, before the Age of Heroes, a curse fell upon the island of Proteus. The ancient human civilization that had flourished there collapsed from the folly of their last king. The kingdom was invaded by Beastmen and Chaos monsters and only a few coastal villages survived, thanks to the sacrifice of the king's daughter.

The Olympian gods decided to isolate Proteus, for the pollution of Chaos not stain the rest of the world. Almighty Zeus ordered the Nymphs of the Sea to create fog around the island, for the sailors to become disoriented, and the Great Cyclops to throw large rocks at the coast, so that the few ships that arrived there sank before they reached the shore.

Finally, he ordered Poseidon to look for a great keeper, and the Lord of the Seas brought from the Western Ocean a large sea snake, which he called Coristos. Zeus ruled that until a Hero killed the monster, the ban that had fallen on Proteus would not be lifted.

Centuries passed, and the few human inhabitants of the island dwindled in numbers and in culture. When the Age of Heroes came, there were only small isolated villages inhabited by simple farmers and hunters, who only remembered old legends about their past glory. Proteus' residents were now afraid to travel within the island, inhabited by monsters, and they knew that if they ventured into the sea, the curse of the gods would fall upon them.

Coristos, the sea serpent grew into a fearsome monster. She lived in a cave that opened into a cliff, near a long sandy beach. From there she swam around the island, following Poseidon's orders. But every few years, she moved away in search of prey and reached the Land of the Three Cities and the island of Seriphos, devastating coastal towns and sinking ships. The sages and priests of the kingdoms that were attacked figured out the name of the Sea Serpent and the name of Proteus' Monster became famous, and a number of heroes found their demise attempting to end the beast's life.



The Aphrodite's Foam, proud ship of a proud prince

The Prince's Ship

Bellerophon is one of the Magnificent Seven of Heraklia, the sons of King Thalos of Heraklia (see *Minotaur Quarterly* n°2, p 10). At the beginning of the adventure, the Prince is returning to its city in a vessel, the **Aphrodite's Foam** after having visited Argos. The **Aphrodite's Foam** is a War Galley with 12 Structure Points, 30 Warriors/Oarsmen as crew and a normal Fortune of 0 points.

One beautiful morning, a crewman of penetrating sight, warns the crew: in front of them there is a ship having difficulties. Bellerophon orders them to come close, and as they do, they discover that it is the *Eye of Nereos*, another Heraklian War Galley.

It is evident that the Eye of Nereos has suffered an attack: the mast is broken and a leak is sinking it slowly. But the most disturbing fact is that no survivor can be found, dead or alive, either on board or floating in the water.

Bellerophon orders someone to swim to the Eye of Nereo to investigate. The distance between the two ships is 40 feet, so it will be necessary to make two Athletic Prowess rolls to cross from one vessel to the other (see the Swimming rules on p 44 of the *Players Manual*).

If none of the player characters offer themselves as volunteers, one of the crewman will swim there. In any case, they will only find signs of struggle and destruction that could only have been caused by a giant monster or a god. There are no survivors.

After this unpleasant discovery, Bellerophon orders to continue the voyage to Heraklia.

The Devastated Village

After a few hours' voyage, the Aphrodite's Foam reaches the vicinity of Colpa, a fisherman's hamlet loyal to Heraklia. The bay in which the hamlet is located has only one narrow exit to the sea, surrounded by rocks and shoals and is very dangerous to any vessel bigger than the small boats of fishermen.

As the Aphrodite's Foam approaches the hamlet, the crewmen discover that something isn't going well. A boat lays in pieces near the bay's entry and those with better eyesight can see that there is a great excitement in the hamlet.

And then, when they are all looking towards Colpa, they can clearly see something huge moving among the huts. It is a serpent-like body of enormous size. At a given moment, the monster suddenly lifts up its triangular head over a house and launches itself towards the ground, trapping a man between its jaws. As the monster devours the unfortunate man, an old crewman from the Aphrodite's Foam screams: "*It's Coristos!, the Serpent of Proteus!*"

An Attack Plan

Bellerophon orders his men to advance towards the coast. His plan is to attack on land, as he expects the Serpent to be less agile out of water, its natural element. He wants to save the fishermen, if possible, but most of all, he wants to end the monster's life and obtain immortal glory. The players can propose alternative plans, but they will have to convince Bellerophon that these have a significant advantage. Some options are:

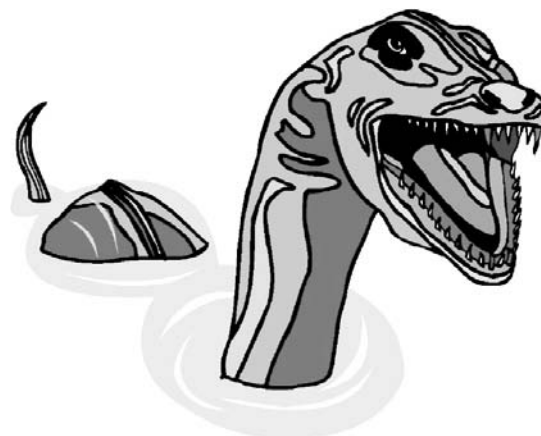
Enter the bay aboard the Aphrodite's Foam and attack the monster on land. This is very dangerous, as the narrow entry to the bay can cause the ship to sink even before facing the monster. But if they manage to reach the hamlet, the heroes could attack Coristos on land, where it will presumably be easier to slay. See *Crossing the Bay*.

Wait until the monster attempts to abandon the bay and attack in the open sea. This option is more prudent, but prince Bellerophon wants to attack immediately, so the characters have to make a Persuasion roll (see p 32 of the *M&M Companion*) with a target number of 18, due to the high Will of Bellephoron. See *Fighting from the Ship*.

Escape. Not an option, since bold Bellerophon will not retreat without battling the monster.

Other plans: Perhaps the players might want to lay an ambush by swimming towards the rocks near the bay's entrance or use a raft to reach the shore while the ship waits at sea. It is up to the Maze Master to decide if such plans are feasible.

The crewmen of the Aphrodite's Foam should be treated as standard Human Soldiers (see *Creature Compendium*, p 60) but without armor or shield (giving them a Defense Class of 12).



The Serpent of Proteus rears its monstrous head

Crossing the Bay

To be able to cross the narrow strait that leads to the village, Bellephoron or one of the characters must make a Danger Evasion roll against a target number of 15. Bellephoron's modifier is +7.

If this saving roll fails, the ship will suffer 2d6 damage points to its Structure as it crashes against a rock. If the ship loses all its structure points, it will start sinking and Coristos the Serpent will start advancing to devour the shipwreck victims. See the *Sunk!* section (p 50).

If the ship manages to get passed the rocks, even if it has sustained damage, Bellerophon orders the oarsmen to advance with all their might. The monster isn't yet aware of their presence and will continue to devour villagers.

By the time the sea serpent becomes aware of the ship, Bellephoron has had time to reach the coast and disembark alongside the adventurers and some valiant warriors. See *Fighting on Land*.

Fighting on Land

If the characters manage to reach land, the Serpent will launch itself against them, with the intent of destroying them. Here are a few things to keep in mind when running this battle in play:

- Due to the *Fearsome* ability of Coristos, most of the warriors would rather run than face the beast, but the high Leadership of Bellerophon makes it possible for all to follow him into the fight. However, if the prince dies or becomes unconscious at any moment, one of the heroes must assume control of the warriors and will have to make a Morale check immediately (See p 47 of the *Players Manual*)

- Being a Gigantic monster, the Serpent can attack up to four human-sized opponents each round. However, it becomes much slower on land, where it can only attack three different targets per round.

- The Gigantic Size of Coristos also means that all missile attacks against him receive a bonus of +4. This modifier applies only to Missile rolls made by player-characters; for simplicity's sake, the use of bows and other missile weapons by crewmen is already taken into account in the rules given below.

- Recreating a battle between a large number of NPCs and a giant monster such as Coristos can become an arduous and tedious task for the Maze Master, and boring for the players that watch as the Maze Master makes multiple rolls against himself. Instead, it is recommended that the warrior NPCs that fight alongside Bellerophon and the adventurers be handled according to the following rules. There are 30 warriors aboard Aphrodite's Foam and all of them will fight Coristos. As long as there are at least 20 warriors fighting against the Serpent, the monster will receive 2d6 points of damage. If there are between 20 and 10, it will automatically suffer 1d6 points of damage per round. If there are less than 10 warriors, they will only serve as monster-fodder and will have no impact on the fight.

- Each round, the Serpent will try to Grapple one of the warriors, unless it has already Grappled a victim in its coils, in which case it will crush him during two battle rounds (using its *Crushing Damage* ability). The targets of the other two attacks of the Serpent will be determined randomly by rolling 1d6: 1 = The Serpent attacks Bellerophon, who is fighting one to one against it; 2-3 = The Serpent attacks one of the adventurers; 4-6 = The Serpent attacks one of the ship's warriors and will leave it out of combat.

When the Serpent reaches a Hits Total of 10 or less, refer to the *Poseidon's Intervention* section.

Fighting from the Ship

The sea fight will follow the same advice as in the *Fighting on Land* section, but with a few differences.

- In water, Coristos gets its four melee attacks.

- Every three rounds, Coristos stops attacking the warriors and attempt to damage the ship, as is explained in the description of the creature. If the Serpent manages to reduce the ship's Structure points to 0, refer to the *Sunk!* section below. If Bellerophon is fighting against the monster, he won't be able to captain the ship, so another player character will have to make a Danger Evasion roll or else, leave command to one of the warriors, who has a Danger Evasion modifier of 0.

- The warriors aren't as effective against the Sea Serpent when fighting from the ship, and as some are very busy simply attempting to keep the vessel afloat they can only deal 1d6 damage each round, provided that there are between 30 and 15. They will not cause any damage when their number is reduced to less than 15 men.

As soon as the monstrous Sea Serpent gets its Hits Total reduced to 10 or less, move to the *Poseidon's Intervention* section below.



Behold the fury of Coristos!

Coristos

Taxonomy: Monster

Description: Coristos is certainly the most fierce and powerful Sea Serpent of the Inland Sea (as shown by its Deadly Ferocity and Eldritch Mystique). Poseidon himself has ordered the monster to guard the island of Proteus, but every so often it roams the neighboring regions in search of food.

Size: Gigantic

Ferocity: Deadly

Cunning: Alert

Mystique: Eldritch

Movement: 120'

Initiative: 16

Melee Attack: +10

Damage: 3d6

Defense Class: 18

Hits Total: 60

Detection / Evasion: +2

Mystic Fortitude: +8

Special Abilities: Aquatic, Crushing Damage (constriction), Fearsome, Grapple (M = 24), Magic Resistance, Regeneration (3 / round), Supernatural Vigor, Tough Skin.

Awards: Glory 1200, Wisdom 50.

Unique Ability: Like all Sea Serpents, Coristos can damage a ship by ramming and crushing its hull. Each round, the creature may select to forfeit all its other attacks to inflict 1D6 Structure points damage on a ship. This attack takes place at the Serpent's usual Initiative score and requires no attack roll. It can only be avoided if the captain of the ship makes a Danger Evasion roll (counting the ship's Fortune bonus, if any) against a target number of 15.

Sunk!

If at any point the Sea Serpent manages to sink the Aphrodite's Foam, the situation will become even more desperate. The monster will then begin to devour the helpless NPCs one by one. After 1d10 battle rounds, it will start attacking the adventurers and Bellephoron. In these 1d10 rounds, players will be able to attempt to make two Swimming rolls to reach a large piece of wreckage, but from that moment on, they will have to fight alone against the monster, without the help of the rest of the warriors.

Poseidon's Intervention

When Coristos the Serpent gets its Hit Total reduced to 10 or less, the monster will attempt to flee. At that moment, the god Poseidon will appear from the sea as a gigantic human figure brandishing an equally gigantic trident.

Poseidon will strike the Serpent with his trident. Coristos will try to retaliate against the god, but he's invulnerable to the monster's attacks. The deity will address Bellephoron or the surviving characters and say "You have vanquished Coristos the Serpent, the guardian of Proteus' Island, by the will of the gods. By the will of Zeus Almighty, the ban on visiting the island is therefore lifted".

After that, he will start advancing towards the South, the Serpent coiled around one of his arms. Bellephoron will order the oarsmen to advance, following Poseidon. But then, a northerly wind will swell the sails and will propel them supernaturally towards Proteus. The wind has been sent by Zeus from Olympus, something that will be noticed by any of Zeus' Priests or Noble descendant of the deity.

After one hour's time, the characters will see land. Poseidon will swim towards a beach and he will destroy all the rocks that kept ships from landing with his mighty trident, and after that, he will toss the Serpent onto the shore. Then, the King of the Sea will vanish, turning into a column of water.

Bellerophon and the Aphrodite's Foam will reach land moments later and the prince will disembark to end what he started. Coristos will be there, with a Hits Total of 15, and is willing to fight to the death against its enemies. Poseidon has obeyed Zeus' orders and has allowed the beach to be reached by ships, but before leaving, he has revived the monster, and he doesn't care if Bellerophon and his followers are vanquished.

Due to the power of Poseidon, however, the Serpent has lost its Regeneration ability, and can 'only' make three attacks per round, being on land.

If Coristos has sunk the Aphrodite's Foam before Poseidon's intervention, the Maze Master should allow the adventurers to grab onto a large piece of wreckage to stay afloat. Such an improvised lifeboat will be carried towards the south on a giant wave.



The King of the Sea to the rescue!

Epilogue

If Bellerophon and his followers finally manage to defeat Coristos, the monster will recoil in great agony, destroying rocks and uprooting trees, until its death in a promontory near the beach.

Bellerophon will decide to build a city in the spot of the Serpent's death and he will name it Coristea, as a reminder of the guardian of the island. The bold prince will then bring a group of valiant colonists from Heraklia and will start exploring the island of Proteus – but that's another story...

Bellerophon

Prince Bellerophon is one of the Magnificent Seven (the seven sons of the King of Heraklia). A seasoned warrior, he inspires great loyalty in his followers – but his lust for personal Glory sometimes leads him to act impulsively.

Level 3 Noble

Attributes: Might 15, Skill 17, Luck 20, Wits 12, Will 17, Grace 15.

Combat: Initiative 17, Melee +9, Missile +7, Basic Defense Class 16 (22 with helmet, shield and breastplate), Hits Total 22.

Saving Rolls: Athletic Prowess +9, Danger Evasion +7, Mystic Fort. +9, Phys. Vigor +9.

Personal Charisma: +9 (Leadership +12)

Equipment: Bow, sword (weapon of choice), dagger, breastplate, shield, helmet. His sword is a Sword of Ares (+3 to damage) and his bow is a Bow of Herakles (+2 to attack and damage).

Background talents: Tactician, Wrestler.

Note: Using the optional variant formulas given in previous issues, Bellerophon's Mystic Fortitude would be +7 but his Danger Evasion would be unchanged, since his Skill is as good as his Will.

Each issue, **Griffin Archives** unearths an old Griffin article from the glorious 1980s

FUN WITH THE FOUR ELEMENTS

New Options for Classic Elementalists, by Igor A. Rivendell

Ever since they first appeared in the old *Myth & Magic* supplement, Elementalists and their flashy, spectacular powers have been a favorite class choice of many M&M players – but there is more to Elemental Magic than showy FXs and brute force. The purpose of this article is to examine a few nifty (and sometimes dirty) tricks to the Elementalist's repertoire - beyond the elementary (eh eh) uses of his powers. Of course, all the following stuff is strictly optional (for those among you who actually care about such things).

Air Tricks

Sky Diving

An Air Elementalist may use the **Swirling Winds** power to “feather fall” from any height, taking no damage whatsoever from the fall.

Since using magic takes a full battle round of intense concentration, this trick cannot be used as an emergency parachute to save yourself from the consequences of an unexpected fall – but it can save your skin if you are trapped on top of a mountain, tower or other great height with no apparent way of escape...

This effect can be used on a group, with all the usual restrictions (see *Players Manual*, p 32) – but only if the Elementalist himself is part of the falling group, since using this power in this unusual manner requires some very careful manipulation of the aerial currents.

Gone with the Wind

Since it applies to “every piece of equipment”, the **Talons of the Wind** power is a great way to strip away an opponent's mythic items – especially amulets, garments and other accessories. An exception could probably be made for rings, though.

The concept of “equipment” also extends to the saddles of horses - in such cases the rider will have to make a Danger Evasion roll (target number 15) to avoid falling from horseback.



- Gee! How can I learn to do this, sir?

Anti-Aerial Defense

The **Gale Fury** power may be used with great efficiency to slow down winged pursuers, as long as they are within the required range; flying creatures who fail their saving roll have their Movement rate reduced by half for the duration of the effect.

Earth Tricks

We Shall Not Be Moved!

The **Hands of Stone** power is primarily used to immobilize enemies but can also be used in a more defensive manner against the *Gale Fury* power of Air Elementalists; by deliberately placing himself in the grip of the Hands, a character becomes immune

to the effects of the Gale as long as he remains immobilized.

The Bronze Look

Since this power imbues its recipient with “the essence of bronze”, it could probably also be used to disguise oneself as a very convincing bronze statue or even as a bronze Automaton.

Titan Booster

Since nothing in the description of the **Skin of Bronze** power prevents you from using it on Animates - YES, this means you can combine it with **Animate Statue** to imbue your animated Stone Titan with some extra power, raising its damage to 2d6+2 and its Defense Class to a titanic 25!

Fire Tricks

Creative Pyrotechnics

The **Dart of Fire** power is essentially an attack power but it can also be used to light a torch or set fire to a highly flammable object or material such as wood, cloth etc. The resulting fire, however, can be put out in a few seconds by a single person as long as this person reacts immediately (so no, you cannot use this power to set fire to someone's clothes and burn him alive instead of “just” doing him 1d6 damage).

At the Maze Master's discretion, this trick could also be used to ignite arrows. Lastly, a Dart of Fire is also a sure (if a bit showy) way to light a campfire.



- Help! We need a Water Elementalist here!

Portable Firelight

OK, a **Blazing Sphere** is a great way to char your enemies – but have you thought about their other uses? Since the Elementalist can control the movement of the Sphere as he wishes, it could make it hover over the party's head, providing a great source of illumination in a dark tunnel or cave, especially for those moments where holding a torch is either impossible or extremely risky.

It could also be used for reconnaissance, to probe a pitch-black tunnel or to check if anybody is waiting in ambush behind that corner...

Fire on the Water

Since it can “ignite any flammable material it comes into contact with”, a **Blazing Sphere** can be used to set fire to a ship, with devastating effects: a burning ship must make a special saving roll against fire *each round* or lose 1 Structure point. This d20 roll has a target number of 15 but only uses the ship's Fortune modifier (which is equal to 0 in most cases).

Water Tricks

Anti-Flamoid Defense

A **Torrent of Water** or a **Swirling Flood** can be used to extinguish a fire or to inflict damage to Flamoids (see *Creature Compendium*, p 41) or any other Insubstantial beings made of living flame (1d6 damage if the creature fails the required saving roll, in addition to the other effects detailed in the rules).

Fresh Water Dispenser

Since nothing in the rules states that the water created by a **Torrent of Water** or a **Swirling Flood** is non-drinkable, having a Water Elementalist in the party can be very useful when adventuring in the desert or in other water-deprived environments, such as the Underworld – not to mention those long, uncertain sea voyages on uncharted oceans...

Arcane Firefighting

The two aforementioned powers can also be used to destroy a **Blazing Sphere** (Fire, Magnitude 2) if (and only if) their magically-produced water comes into contact with the burning globe; the **Torrent of Water** must be specifically aimed at the Sphere, while the **Swirling Flood** simply needs to come into contact with the fire.

In all cases, the **Blazing Sphere** is allowed a special saving roll, using the Fire Elementalist's Elemental Mastery as its modifier (doubled if the Elementalist has Fire as his primary element) and the Water Elementalist's Mystic Strength as its target number. If this saving roll is failed, the Sphere is destroyed; otherwise, it is unaffected.

MYTHIC BESTIARY

BORN OF THE ELEMENTS

A Quartet of New Creatures of Air, Fire, Earth & Water

Genie

Taxonomy: Spirit

Description: Genies (or *djinn*) are elemental spirits from the eastern Land of the Sun, associated with the element of air. In a distant past, they used to serve the members of a now extinct order of Hazarian sorcerers and are often found inside magical jars or lamps (see *Additional Lore* below for more details about such items) or guarding the hidden treasure of their long-dead masters.

Size: Medium

Ferocity: Deadly

Cunning: Clever

Mystique: Unearthly

Movement: 80'

Initiative: 21

Melee Attack: n/a*

Damage: special *

Defense Class: 17

Hits Total: 16 **

Detection / Evasion: +8 / +12

Mystic Fortitude: +10

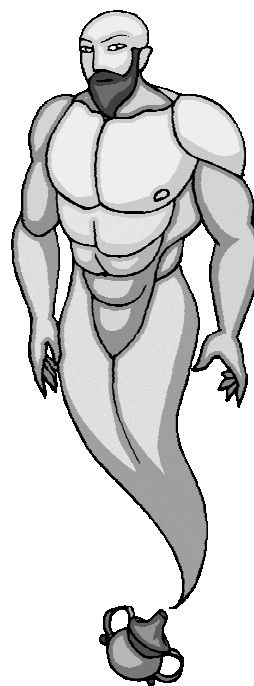
Special Abilities: Insubstantial, Lightning Fast, Magic Resistance, Sixth Sense, Uncanny Agility.

Elemental Powers: In addition to the abilities listed above, Genies are natural Elementalists, with Air as their primary and only element. They have a Mastery of 5, a Mystic Strength of 17 and 20 Power points. This unique ability adds 20 to their basic Glory award and 200 to their Wisdom award.

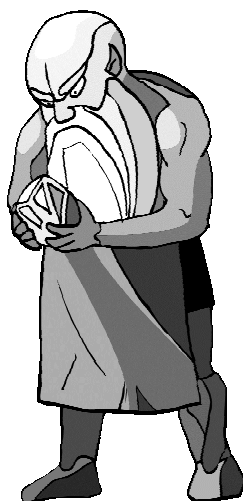
Awards: Glory 130, Wisdom 500.

* Like all other Insubstantial beings, Genies cannot make (and cannot be harmed by) physical attacks. Their only attacks are their Elemental Powers.

** When reduced to 4 Hits or below (or to the same number of Power points), Genies will retreat to their magical lamp or jar – if they have one – where they will recover their lost Hits at the rate of 1d6 Hits and Power points per hour.



Additional Lore: The reason why many Genies are found in jars or lamps is because they were magically bound inside these items by the now forgotten magic of their Hazarian masters. These bound Genies have a very ambivalent relationship to their magical container, which actually holds their vital essence: on one hand, their bond with their container allows them to recover their ethereal and mystical forces very quickly when resting inside it (see above); on the other hand, it also puts them at the mercy of whoever takes the item, especially when they are low on Power. If his lamp or jar is broken, a Genie is automatically and instantly destroyed, even if he is not inside the container at the moment of its destruction. Because of this, many Genies choose to appear to those who open (or simply find) their container and put themselves in the service of their new “masters” - of course, no Genie in his right mind will ever tell his new boss that his influence over his new servant is entirely dependent on the Genie’s goodwill (as opposed to some magically enforced obligation). Many Genies behave as obsequious servants but this is just a façade. Likewise, the “three wishes” cliché found in so many folk tales of the East has no basis in fact and may simply be a clever lie crafted by some Genie to limit the extent of his “contract” with the owner of his magical container.



Dactyl

Taxonomy: Folk

Description: Dactyls, also known as “finger men” or “gnomes” (from ‘genomos’, ‘earth dweller’), are a race of subterranean dwarves who live below the mountains of the Land of the Sun. They look like short, dwarfish humanoids with distinctively bald heads. According to their own traditions, they were the first of Mythika’s mortal races to discover copper and iron and also invented smelting, smithing and casting. They also are skilled healers, with a wide knowledge of natural remedies and poisons. Mountain tribesmen who dwell near the entrances to their underground domains regard them as dangerous – and they are certainly not friendly toward humans, whom they tend to see as unworthy upstarts and stealers of secrets.

Size: Small

Ferocity: Aggressive

Cunning: Clever

Mystique: Weird

Movement: 45’

Initiative: 13

Melee Attack: +2

Missile Attack: +3

Damage: 1d3 (weapon)

Defense Class: 15

Hits Total: 6

Detection / Evasion: +8 / +4

Mystic Fortitude: +6

Special Abilities: Magic Resistance, Missile Weapons (bows, 150’), Poison (on their arrows, usually *paralysis*), Sharp Senses, Stealthy (18), Supernatural Vigor, Tough Skin.

Awards: Glory 14, Wisdom 30.

Additional Lore: According to their own legends, the eastern Dactyls were created by the ‘Great Earth Mother’ (most probably Cybele or Rhea) during her birth agonies. They see themselves as her most loyal worshippers – a point which they seem eager to prove by their merciless sacrifices of human captives. They are also said to be in league with the forbidden cult of Cybele, whose members provide them with useful information about the outside world as well as sacrificial victims.

The Dactyl – Derros Connection

Nasty, callous subterranean dwarves? Doesn’t this sound a bit too familiar? Well, indeed it does – and for a very good reason: the Dactyls are actually the parent species of both the Derros and the Morlocks.

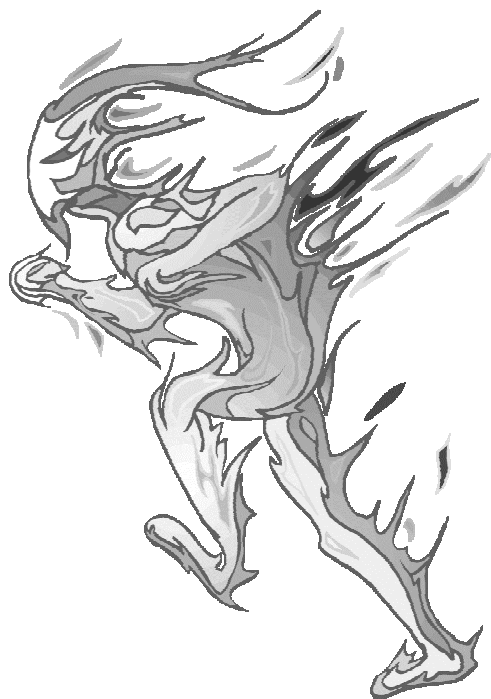
As the struggle of the Lemurian Dactyls against Atlantean domination dragged on and on, with the sorcerers’ victory looming near, decadent General Derro urged his followers to forsake the worship of the Great Earth Mother, claiming that the goddess had abandoned them. Instead, he promised liberation if the Dactyls would embrace “the Machine” (see *Minotaur* n°6, p 20) and the extra knowledge and power this would give them in the form of advanced technology they could use against their foes.

Derro’s engineers indeed produced weaponry the like of which even the most skilled Dactyl smiths had never seen. However, many of the finger men refused to reject the Earth Mother, unwilling to sacrifice the favor of the goddess even if it meant defeat and subjugation.

The General’s goons (who called themselves *the Derros*, after the name of their totalitarian leader) persecuted the faithful, and the resulting internal religious war ensured the Lemurian defeat. In her divine anger, the Great Earth Mother punished the infidels by taking away the “earth gifts” she had bestowed upon their race (Supernatural Vigor and Tough Skin, which the Derros no longer possess); with a deity’s typical sense of poetic justice, she even cursed the Derros further, so that an ever growing number of their children would be born as degenerate brutes, incapable of learning any form of science and craft – the Morlocks.

In the Halls of the Dactyl Kings

Each Dactyl community is ruled by its own king, who happens to be a particularly powerful and shrewd member of his race. Dactyl Kings have the same abilities as other Dactyls but have a Dangerous Ferocity, a Crafty Cunning and an Eldritch Mystique, which add +1 to their Defense Class and +2 to their Initiative, Hits Total, Melee, Missile, Detection / Evasion and Mystic Fortitude (Glory award = 18).



Pyroid

Taxonomy: Spirit

Description: Pyroids are powerful fire spirits who appear as huge humanoid beings of living flame. They are obviously related to Flamoids (*Creature Compendium*, p 41) but are much more dangerous (not to mention far bigger), as they embody the savage and destructive essence of fire. They are said to be born from the fires of crashing meteors (which, fortunately, makes them pretty rare).

Size: Large

Ferocity: Deadly

Cunning: Alert

Mystique: Unearthly

Movement: 120'

Initiative: 22

Melee Attack: n/a*

Damage: special *

Defense Class: 19

Hits Total: 30

Detection / Evasion: +2 / +8

Mystic Fortitude: +10

Special Abilities: Breath Weapon (fire, range 30', damage 2d6), Fearsome, Insubstantial, Lightning Fast, Magic Resistance, Uncanny Agility.

Awards: Glory 250, Wisdom 140.

* Like all other Insubstantial beings, Pyroids cannot make (and cannot be harmed by) physical attacks. Their only attack is their Breath Weapon.

Undine

Taxonomy: Spirit

Description: Undines are elemental water spirits who dwell in waterfalls (each waterfall normally has its own resident undine). Undines are related to Naiads in the same way that Hamadryads (see *Minotaur* n°3, p 31-32) are related to Dryads – and like Hamadryads, Undines cannot leave their natural environment. They are actually made of living water but sometimes take a very graceful semi-human form to interact with mortals. Undines tend to be very shy beings but some of them are actually quite curious and playful; they are peaceful, benevolent spirits – as long as their water is not threatened by the actions of men or other creatures.

Size: Medium

Ferocity: Peaceful

Cunning: Clever

Mystique: Unearthly

Movement: 80' (water only)

Initiative: 18

Melee Attack: n/a *

Damage: n/a *

Defense Class: 13

Hits Total: 4

Detection / Evasion: +8 / +12

Mystic Fortitude: +10

Special Abilities: Aquatic, Camouflage (in water, 24), Insubstantial, Lightning Fast, Magic Resistance, Sixth Sense, Stealthy (20), Uncanny Agility.

Undines can also use the same **Nature's Gifts** as Naiads, with an Odyllic Charm bonus equal to the sum of their Cunning and Mystique (+5), a Mystic Strength of 17 and 20 Power points.

Awards: You should be ashamed to even ask.

* Like all other Insubstantial beings, Undines cannot make (and cannot be harmed by) physical attacks. Their only 'weapons' are their Nature's Gifts



SACRED HEALERS

A new optional priestly class for *Mazes & Minotaurs* by Christian Schwietzke



Sacred Healers are the priestly servants of Asclepius, the god of medicine (see *Maze Masters Guide*, p 7). Much like regular priests, they receive sacred powers from their patron deity; unlike other priests, their duty lies not in tending temples and sacred places, but rather in tending their fellow mortals – as the resident healer in towns or villages, as a wandering healer in more remote or rural regions, or even as an adventurer.

Healing Prodigies

Magnitude 1: Divine Diagnosis

This power allows the Healer to ask Asclepius to reveal the nature of another mortal's physical condition. This can reveal, for example, not only that someone was poisoned, but also what creature poisoned that person, or what poison was used by another person. Similarly, the power can identify the perpetrator of a Petrification or Life Energy Drain, or of a physical injury. If the body is still in a sufficiently intact state, i.e. decomposition has not advanced too far, it can also determine the cause of death.

This power can also be used to determine the cause of plagues and other collective illnesses, including those of magical or divine origin. Asclepius will always truthfully reveal information to his devotee, as far as he knows it; only the intervention of another deity at least as powerful as him could conceal such information from him.

SACRED HEALER

Primary Attributes: Wits and Luck

Gender Restrictions: Healers can be male or female; unlike with regular priests, Asclepius place no gender restriction on his sacred servants.

Basic Hits: 8

Healing Prodigies: Sacred Healers are able to call on the divine powers of Asclepius; their repertoire of Prodigies, however, is more specialized than that of other Priests, with a narrower range of applications.

Curative Gift = Wits mod + Luck mod

Starting Power = (4 + Wits mod)

Power Recovery: Like Priests, Healers recover Power by praying their god, at the usual rate of (level) points per hour of prayer to Asclepius.

Level Benefits: Each level beyond the first gives a Healer +2 Hits, +4 Power points, +1 to Luck and +2 to Wits, Will or Grace.

Possessions: Staff, dagger, ceremonial robes and a starting wealth of 3d6 x 10 silver pieces.

Restrictions: Because of their sacred commitment, Healers cannot wear armor, use shields or carry weapons other than their staff or dagger. Much like Lyrists, their person is considered sacred by all those who worship the Olympians.

Patron Deity: Asclepius, the god of healing and medicine (see *Maze Masters Guide*, p 7).

Background Talents: All Sacred Healers obviously have the Healer talent, plus a second talent chosen among the following: Beastmaster, Orator, Scholar, Woodsman or Wrestler.

Reputation Effect: Sacred Healers benefit from their reputation bonus when dealing with other healers and with priests and devotees of Apollo, Hermes, Athena and Hestia.

Advancement: Like all magicians, Sacred Healers advance by accumulating Wisdom points. They do not, however, gain any Wisdom for exploring the unknown but gain twice the usual amount for defeating any creature with Life Energy Drain, Petrification or Poison.



Behold the power of Divine Resurrection – but beware the wrath of Hades!

Magnitude 2: Divine Vitality

This power works exactly like the Divine Prodigy of the same name, with each use restoring a number of Hits equal to 1d6 + the Healer's Curative Gift.

It should be noted, though, that each use of this power only costs 2 points of Power, whereas regular Divine Vitality is a Magnitude 3 power; thus, while his healing powers are not inherently more potent than those of a standard Priest, a Healer can use them more frequently – and thus more effectively – than a Priest of equivalent level and Power.

While we're on the subject, be sure to check the rules on poison detailed in *Minotaur n°3* (p 44).

Magnitude 3: Divine Protection

This power is a triple-dosed Divine Blessing (hence the higher Magnitude). It adds +2 to the recipient's Physical Vigor, Mystic Fortitude and Defense Class for a number of hours equal to the Healer's Curative Gift. Unlike those of a standard Divine Blessing, these bonuses can be combined with those of another deity's blessing, for an even greater effect.

Magnitude 4: Divine Immunity

This power operates like a Divine Gift but its effects last for a number of minutes (not rounds) equal to the Healer's Curative Gift.

The recipient (whom the Healer must touch with his staff or hands) becomes completely immune to Life Energy Drain, Petrification and Poison – as well as to a Heleard's Fatal Kiss. This immunity also extends to all diseases, natural or otherwise – but only for the indicated period of time.

Magnitude 5: Divine Caduceus

This power allows the Healer to infuse his staff with the righteous anger of someone who serves life against those who take it.

The Healer can use the staff as a regular melee weapon, with a Melee bonus equal to his Curative Gift and standard damage (1d6)*. In addition, Monsters and Spirits with Life Energy Drain, Poison or Petrification will suffer extra damage equal to the Healer's Curative Gift (with no saving roll). These attacks can also affect Insustantial beings, which will suffer full damage. Lastly, the Healer adds his Curative Gift to his EDC against all melee and missile attacks. All these effects last for a number of rounds equal to the Healer's Curative Gift.

This power cannot be used to harm Beasts or anyone who has never harmed another creature in anger or in cold blood.

Magnitude 6: Divine Resurrection

This power allows the Healer to bring the dead back to life. Unlike the Napaea's Kiss of Life, it does work on individuals who died from natural causes – but not anyone who has been dead for a number of rounds greater than the Healer's Curative Gift.

However, every time this power is used incurs a cumulative 1% chance (1% the first time, 2% the second time, etc) of arousing the anger of Hades for disrupting the flow of dead souls to his realm. The nature of this anger is left to the Maze Master to determine. Once triggered, the chance of arousing it again is reset to 1% for the next use of this power.

* Without this power, a staff can only be used according to the staff-fighting rules given in *Minotaur n°4* (p 49).

PANDORA'S BOX

A regular selection of mythic items for Mazes & Minotaurs

MEDICAL MARVELS

Forget about swords of invincibility, cloaks of intangibility and tunics of invulnerability! This issue, we offer you some altruistic and curative mythic items, inspired by the Sacred Healer class described in the previous pages.

Greater Caducei

These wands are more potent (and consequently rarer) versions of the Caduceus staff described in the *Maze Masters Guide* (p 42); each of them has the usual properties of a Caduceus as well as an additional magical virtue which can only be used by a true Sacred Healer. They are listed below in increasing order of power and rarity. All have an Enc value of 1. In all cases, the Caduceus must touch the patient for the magic to operate.

Silver Caduceus

In addition to its other properties, this silver-tipped Caduceus allows a Sacred Healer to cure blindness (be it natural, accidental or magical) in an individual by spending 3 Power points.

This can also apply (with the same Power cost) to the temporary form of blindness caused by powers like *Aura of Helios* (*M&M Companion*, p 19)

Golden Caduceus

In addition to its other properties, this golden-tipped Caduceus allows a Sacred Healer to regenerate severed hands, missing legs and other mauled limbs. This requires an expenditure of 6 Power points by the Healer and is not instantaneous: the missing limb(s) will not immediately reappear but will grow back over a period of 2d6 months.

At the discretion of the Maze Master, a Golden Caduceus could also be used to perform similar medical miracles, such as restoring the appearance of a disfigured person's face.

Obsidian Caduceus

In addition to its other properties, this obsidian-tipped Caduceus has the power to restore Petrified individuals to life (regardless of how long the victim has been turned to stone) by spending 12 points of Power; if the Healer does not have 12 points of Power at his disposal, then the power of the Caduceus will simply not operate.



Balms of Asclepius

The formula for the preparation of these wondrous ointments has been lost – and even if it was found or discovered again, it would probably not work, since the balms were concocted during the Age of Magic, a time of bygone enchantments and extinct wonders. They can only be found in ancient treasure rooms, tombs, temples and other similar places, usually in small pots or jars containing enough ointment for 1d6 applications.

There are three different types of balms, presented below in increasing order of potency and rarity:

Balm of Recovery

This balm must be applied once per week to speed up the recovery of a wounded patient, doubling the amount of Hits recovered during the week.

Multiple applications during the same week will not result in increased effectiveness and will simply waste the balm.

Balm of Restoration

Each application of this balm restores 1 point of Might, Skill or Grace lost as a consequence of grievous injury (see *Players Manual*, p 23); such permanent damage is normally impossible to heal, even by magical means, which makes the Balm of Restoration the proverbial exception to the rule.

Balm of Revivification

This most potent balm can be used to restore the corpse of a recently deceased individual, essentially reversing the effects of decay and decomposition to allow a Divine Resurrection by a Sacred Healer.

“Recently deceased” here means “within the last six weeks” – and even then, the process is not automatic: using the balm merely “erases” 1d6 weeks of decomposition and multiple applications will not have cumulative effects.

Amulets of Immunity

These amulets make their wearer immune to the venom of a specific family of creatures. They were supposedly crafted during the Age of Magic by the now extinct sorceresses of Thessalia, who helped the heroes of Minea and Umbria in their struggle against the Autarchs and their monstrous allies.

Like the other items above, the amulets are listed in increasing order of rarity:

Amulet of Arachnid Immunity

This spider-shaped amulet makes its wearer immune to the effects of spider venom – including the poison of Giant Spiders, Daughters of Arachne and other arachnid creatures.

Amulet of Scorpion Immunity

This scorpion-shaped amulet makes its wearer immune to the effects of scorpion venom – including the poison of Giant Scorpions, Scorpion Folk and Manticores; it has NO effect, though, against the venomous sting of Chimeras – see below for that.

Amulet of Ophidian Immunity

This serpent-shaped amulet makes its wearer immune to the effects of snake venom – including the poison of Giant Snakes, Stygian Serpents and Lamiae ; this immunity does NOT extend to the poison produced by the snakehead-like tail of some Chimeras or by some venomous Dragons.

Amulet of Chimeric Immunity

This very rare amulet makes its wearer immune to the poison of Chimeras, whether it is secreted by a sting or by a snakehead-like tail.

Miscellaneous Items

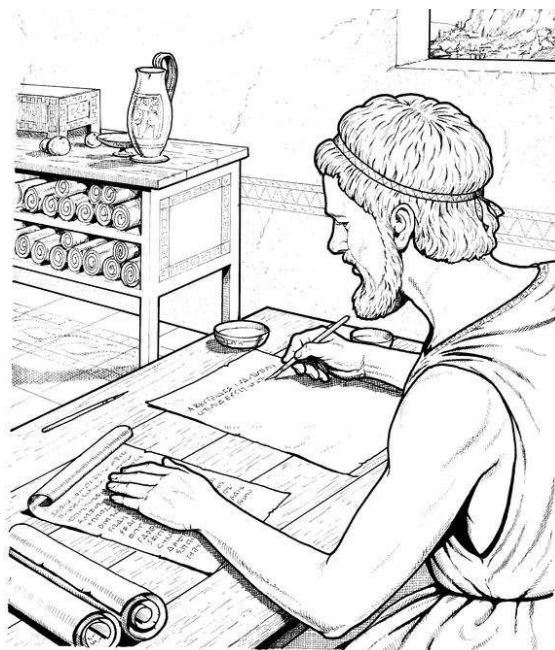
Ring of Poison Detection

This amulet will automatically detect the presence of poison in any food, drink or other form within a 10' radius. The wearer of the amulet will be able to tell precisely where the poison is but not its origin or its specific effects – such information requires a Sacred Healer's Divine Diagnosis. The amulet will also react to the presence of venomous creatures.

The Treatises of Hippokratos

These seven scrolls of unmatched medical insight collect the complete works of Hippokratos, the greatest Sacred Healer of the Age of Magic. Any Sacred Healer reading these masterworks will acquire 100 Wisdom point per scroll for the first four scrolls and 200 points for each one of scrolls V to VII. Reading each scroll takes approximately a week. A given library, tomb or temple will generally contain 1d6+1 such scrolls, in numbered order (thus, a result of 3 means scrolls I to III).

Characters who have no knowledge of the healing arts will find the Treatises a very complex and strenuous read, with many obscure passages and ambiguities but may still get something out of it if they show sufficient intellect and patience (which, in game terms, means they must have a total of 30+ in Wits and Will): for such characters, reading a single scroll will take 1d6 weeks of uninterrupted study, at the conclusion of which a second d6 must be rolled. If the result is lower than or equal to the total number of Treatises read, the character will acquire the Healer background talent. A single new attempt can be made after each study of a new scroll.



Muse's Corner

Nine Good Reasons to Loathe the New

CLASH OF THE TITANS

1) The plot just doesn't make sense and shows an astonishing lack of, well, *love* for Greek mythology. Taking liberties with your source material is one thing; mangling and it beyond recognition and turn it into shapeless nonsense is another.

2) Putting **Hades, the god of the Underworld**, into the role of the stereotypical arch-baddie is just plain silly. And having him played by Ralph Fiennes (an otherwise outstanding actor) seems like the surest way of having a kid in the audience shout: "Look! It's Lord Voldemort with a wig!"

3) They should have called it **Cliché of the Titans**, really. Even the trailer seems like an exercise in hype and *déjà vu* and the overall look of the movie looks like an uninspired cross between *300* and the *God of War* PS game, without any touch of originality. Sure, the 1981 movie had its flaws, as well as some seriously kitsch moments. But it was memorable. But perhaps it's only nostalgia speaking here. After all, who knows how much nostalgia the 2010 movie will generate? (probably none)

4) In the original movie, Harry Hamlin's haircut and pretty face were probably more memorable than his acting – but at least he looked the part. With his crew-cut hair and "Mr badass" expressions, Sam Worthington's **Perseus** looks more like a US Marine (or the space marine he played in *Avatar* – perhaps he didn't have time to grow his hair back) or a football hooligan than a noble mythical hero.



Call me Perseus, Badass Perseus...



*The 2010 Acrisius-Calibos (left) and the original (right)
As we say in France, y'a pas photo.*

5) **Zeus' shiny suit...** Liam Neeson is a wonderful actor but even wonderful actors can find themselves trapped in less-than-wonderful movies (just ask Ralph Fiennes). And oh, remember that kid in the audience? Now he's shouting: "Look! It's Master Qui-Gon Jinn in disco armor!"

6) Sure, some of the CGI **creatures** look "more real" than Ray Harryhausen's Dynamation monsters... but they simply cannot compare to the originals in terms of design and, well, "fear factor". I mean, just have a look at **Medusa**. Harryhausen's Gorgon looked like a true monster, while her 2010 counterpart looks like a pretty girl in a monster suit. Sure, the three blind witches are scarier than their 1981 counterparts – but they also look suspiciously familiar to anyone who has seen *Pan's Labyrinth* (a true masterpiece, incidentally). Speaking of make-up FX, the original Calibos was one of the greatest looking villains of the 1980s, whereas his 2010 homologue looks like a 1980s Klingon in a skirt.

7) **Djinns in turbans?** Sorry: djinns in turbans who are in fact pseudo-undead? Maybe someone in the creative team looked at a map and noticed that, gee, Greece was actually quite close to the Middle East. If the same guys decide to make a *Sinbad* remake, we can probably expect some Greek satyrs – sorry, satyrs who are in fact weregoats stuck in mid-form. Yeah. That's the spirit.

8) The cameo appearance of Bubo, the **mechanical owl** from the original movie is everything but a homage. Unless you consider cheap sarcasm as a form of homage. That being said, cheap sarcasm is probably the closest thing to finesse you can expect from a post-300 movie where a football hooligan fights a Klingon in skirts.

9) A sequel is already in the works.

Olivier Legrand

OFFICIAL ORACLE

ELEMENTARY MATTERS

Official Oracle is a semi-regular department offering answers to questions about the **Mazes & Minotaurs** game rules and how they can be interpreted in situations which are not explicitly covered in the various M&M rulebooks. As its title implies, all the answers given in this column can be treated as official rulings (if such things really matter to your gaming group.) This issue, we take a closer look at elemental magic. **O.L.**

Elementalism & Insubstantiality

Are Insubstantial beings vulnerable to Elemental magic attacks like Gale Fury or Dart of Fire?

No. As mentioned in the rules, Elementalism is a very physical form of magic; unlike a Sorcerer's *Psychic Attack* or a Priest's *Divine Wrath*, elemental effects are physical rather than psychic or mystical, which is why saving rolls against them use Danger Evasion rather than Mystic Fortitude. Insustantial beings are immune to such effects for the same reasons they are immune to a punch or sword blow: the kinetic force of such attacks simply passes through them. This extends to all Elemental powers.

Talons of the Wind

I find the use of this power extremely tedious in play: since the target must make a separate saving roll for EACH piece of equipment he is carrying, this means that a character with a sword, a shield, a breastplate and a helmet will need no less than FOUR rolls – not to mention purses, daggers and other items he may carry... or the fact that this power can actually be used on multiple targets! And I'm not talking about the 2d6 rolls you have to make after each saving roll. Some rule fix is clearly needed here...

Well, we won't deny that the way this power works in game terms is somewhat clunky. Here is a simple variant, which does change the effects of this power but makes things far easier to resolve in play.

Ignore the effects on items but extend the duration of this power to a number of battle rounds equal to the Elementalist's Mastery bonus. The rules for affecting multiple targets still apply, with the same restrictions (and the same benefits for Elementalist who have chosen Air as their primary element).

At the start of each round, each target must make a Danger Evasion roll or be unable to act for the entire round. Since being "ravaged by a whirlwind" seems hardly compatible with intense concentration, this should also extend to the use of magic (whereas the original rules only mentioned "physical action").

The Size of the target should also be taken into account: Tiny creatures do not get a saving roll, Small creatures suffer a -5 penalty to their Evasion roll, Large creatures get a +5 bonus and Gigantic creatures are completely immune to this power.

Gale Fury

The description of the Gale Fury power makes no mention of the target's Size; yet shouldn't this power be less effective against Large and Gigantic creatures, just like Torrent of Water?

You're absolutely right. The description of this power as given in the *Players Manual* was written with Medium-sized targets in mind and should be amended as follows for creatures:

Tiny creatures simply have no chance of resisting these effects; they do not get an Evasion roll and the distance they are thrown away is *quadrupled* (i.e. 3d6 x 4); the damage taken remains the same (1d6, often enough to kill them).

Small creatures suffer a -5 penalty to their saving roll and the distance they can be thrown away is *doubled* (i.e. 3d6 x 2). They take the usual damage.

Large creatures get a +5 bonus to their saving roll and the distance they can be thrown away is only rolled on 1d6; if they fail to save, however, they will suffer the usual d6 Hits of damage.

Gigantic creatures are simply too massive and heavy to be affected by this power.

Hands of Stone

Speaking of Size, what about Hands of Stone? Shouldn't bigger creatures have better chances to escape the Hands?

Well, in this case, the Danger Evasion saving roll represents not getting caught by the Hands (by getting out of their reach) rather than resisting their grip, so Size shouldn't have any incidence here, except for Gigantic creatures, which are obviously too big to be affected by this power. Once the target is caught, however, its Size should logically affect its chances of breaking free – see the next question!

Breaking free from the Hands of Stone requires a Feat of Strength – but how do we handle this for creatures (who have no Might mod)? Also, since any given Feat of Strength can only be attempted once, does this mean that you only get one chance at this?

Let's start with the last question: yes, you only get one chance at this. Remember that this Feat of

Strength is a 'last chance' roll, which only happens if you missed your saving roll in the first place.

Regarding target's size and strength, you have two options here. The simplest and neatest option is probably to shift to the rule variant suggested for Feats of Strength in this issue's *Twist in the Maze*, in which case breaking free from the Hands should be treated as a Spectacular feat.

If you don't want to use this variant, here is a quick rule fix. Once caught by the Hands, Medium and smaller beings have absolutely no chance of breaking free, Large beings will automatically manage to break free after one round and Gigantic creatures cannot be held at all, as noted above.

Can Hands of Stone be produced from any form of ground or surface – including, for instance, the wooden deck of a ship?

No. Since this is an Earth power and the Hands are made of stone, it requires some connection with the element of Earth – be it in the form of soil, earth, rock or stone (which includes the ground of almost any type of building in a world like Mythika). This excludes surfaces made of wood, such as ship decks or wooden bridges (but not stone ones).

Volcanic Eruption

Can the Fire power of Volcanic Eruption be used indoors? Or underwater?

Question 1: yes. Question 2: you gotta be kidding. Note that this underwater prohibition also extends to the lesser Fire powers - no fireworks under the sea!



Keep in mind that Fire magic is always hazardous...

Only the bravest heroes dare enter the...

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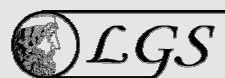
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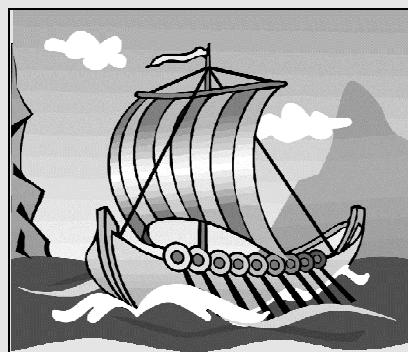
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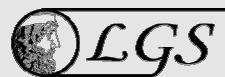
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Lilith, by John Collier (1850-1934)