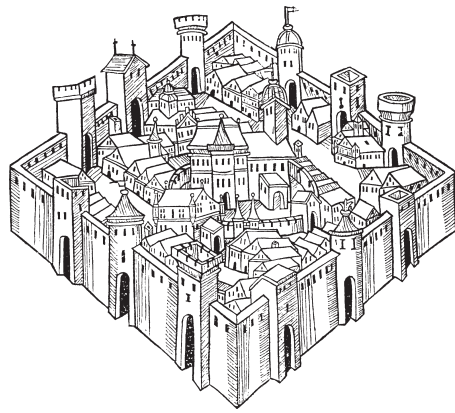


City Builder Volume 1:  
**COMMUNITIES**



*By Michael J. Varhola, Jim Clunie,  
and the Skirmisher Game Development Group*

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# City Builder Volume 1: COMMUNITIES

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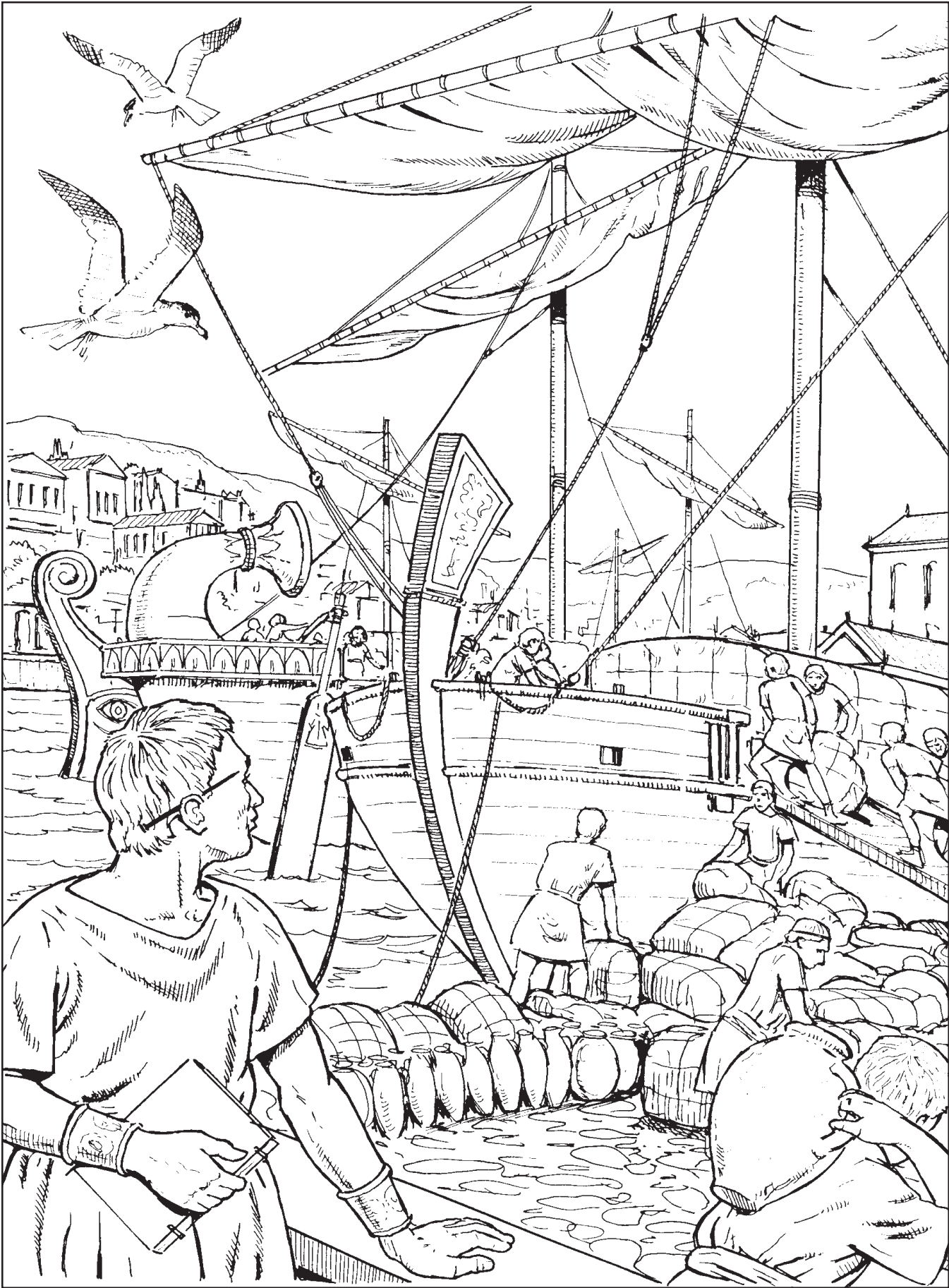
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# Introduction

Characters in a typical fantasy role-playing game setting spend much of their time trudging through teeming wilderness, exploring forgotten ruins, and risking the hazards of subterranean dungeon complexes. Before and after such adventures, however — and sometimes even during them — characters often visit a wide variety of places to buy and sell weapons, armor, and other equipment; consult with or hire mercenaries, tradesmen, scholars, and various sorts of specialists; and participate in training and other activities related to their vocations.

The various types of communities where adventurers perform these and other functions is the subject of this book and the series of which it is part. It has not been written with any particular game system in mind and is intended to be useful for Game Masters building a wide variety of ancient, medieval, and fantasy communities.

In many game campaigns, visits to such communities and the essential places within them are often given short shrift, and dispensed with in the most perfunctory way. Not every visit to such non-adventuring venues needs to be played out, of course, and it is perfectly appropriate that many not be. Periodically role-playing visits to various essential places, however, can serve a number of useful functions.

Communities of various sorts often serve as the starting and ending points for all sorts of ventures, and uncounted parties of adventurers have begun and ended their quests in the marketplaces and taverns of the villages, towns, and cities of the game world. Communities themselves can also serve as locales for exploits of all sorts, especially those involving skill use and role-playing rather than battle, with encounters and characters much different than those typical of the usually more dangerous wilderness and dungeon environments. Even campaigns encompassing long overland travels or voyages at sea will likely involve occasional stops at settlements or ports to obtain supplies and services beyond what characters in a party can carry or provide for themselves.

Indeed, one of the things that distinguishes a campaign from an unrelated series of dungeon crawls can be the downtime between adventures. Many parties will return again and again to a well-established base of operations, a place where the adventurers can heal up, resupply, and train. Providing a detailed community in which to perform these tasks establishes a sense of continuity, provides a stronger rationale for player characters' progression in competence and ability, and helps tie together adventures into a cohesive whole. Game-world communities are, unfortunately, often not

as interesting or unique as they could be, and the intent behind this book is to provide Game Masters with a resource for making the communities in their worlds more plausible, memorable, and exciting.

Visits to places that have been given interesting details and added dimensions can reinforce the feeling that the characters live in a real, vital, interconnected world. This will seem especially true if various fundamental places and the people associated with them are affected by the same sorts of factors present in the milieu as the player characters are.

Finally, Game Masters can often use communities and the relevant places within them both as locales where player characters might meet non-player characters who might be useful to them or otherwise influence their fates, and as opportunities to insert adventure hooks of various sorts.

## About This Series

Each of the 11 volumes in this series begins with a brief overview of the sorts of places discussed in it and then details a number of such places, as described below.

**Volume 1: Communities** discusses villages, towns, cities, and other locales and covers such things as types of communities, regional and racial influences on them, and the sorts of calamities that can affect them and their inhabitants.

**Volume 2: Craftsman Places** explores the locations associated with people who make things and to which characters must frequently go when they need to purchase or commission armor, weapons, clothing, and any other kinds of custom-made or special items. Places it covers in detail include Armories, Arsenal, Blacksmithies, Clothiers, and Jewelry Shops.

**Volume 3: Entertainment Places** visits the locales to which people in the game milieu may go for leisure and recreation. Specific places of this sort that it covers include Carnivals, Menageries, Museums, Parks, and Theaters.

# City Builder Volume 1

**Volume 4: Professional Places** discusses institutions that characters might need to visit in order to advance in their vocations, or to which others might need to go for information or various services. Specific places of this sort described in this chapter include Guildhouses, Hospitals, and Training Halls.

**Volume 5: Tradesman Places** examines places occupied by various sorts of specialized individuals that player characters might periodically need to visit. Specific places described in it include Apothecary Shops, Breweries, and Mills.

**Volume 6: Mercantile Places** deal with wealth in its various forms and are the locales where characters go to liquidate, spend, and safeguard the loot they acquire in the course of their adventures. They are, naturally, among some of the most visited places in many campaign settings. Places of this sort described in this chapter include Banks, Brokerages, General Stores, Marketplaces, Pawnbrokerages, Trading Posts, and Warehouses.

**Volume 7: Service Places** are locales that characters can visit to fulfill their needs for things like food, drink, sleep, and personal hygiene and include some of the most quintessential places associated with fantasy role-playing games. Such places described in this book include Inns, Taverns, Barbershops, Bathhouses, Hostels, Kitchens, Livery Stables, Restaurants, and Rooming Houses.

**Volume 8: Scholarly Places** looks at places characters go to ask questions of their knowledgeable inhabitants or purchase goods and services from them. Places of this sort described here include Academies and Colleges, Alchemists' Workshops, Fortune Tellers, Libraries, Mages' Guilds, Scriptoriums and Scrollshops, and Wizards' Towers.

**Volume 9: Religious Places** are locations characters can visit to fulfill various spiritual needs, meet with the people associated with them, or try to commune with the gods or their agents. Such places described in this book include Cemeteries, Monasteries and Convents, Shrines, and Temples.

**Volume 10: Governmental Places** examines venues associated with and controlled by the ruling powers of a community or state. Characters might decide to visit such places for any number of reasons, but might also find themselves summoned or unwillingly taken to some of them. Specific places of this sort described in this book include Audience Chambers, Barracks,

Guardhouses, Harbors and Harbormasters' Offices, Jails, Manors, Manor Houses, Municipal Courthouses, Palaces, Prisons, and Workhouses.

**Volume 11: Underworld Places** are those associated with criminals and the seamy underside of society. Places of this sort that adventurers might visit for business or pleasure include Brothels, Pit-Fighting Rings, and Thieves' Guilds.

This volume's section on "Physical Characteristics of Cities" contains a significant amount of material derived from *Wizards of the Coast's v.3.5 System Reference Document*, which is used under the terms of the Open Gaming License. Content in each of the other 10 volumes of this series is completely new and original.

Overall, the intent of this book and the others in this series is to provide Game Masters with concrete information about how to create communities and places within them for use in their own fantasy roleplaying campaigns and to inspire them to develop places that are believable, colorful, and exciting for their players' characters to visit.

This book and the entire *City Builder* series have also been written so as to be fully compatible with the various existing Skirmisher Publishing LLC d20 publications, including *Experts v.3.5*, *Warriors*, and *Tests of Skill*.

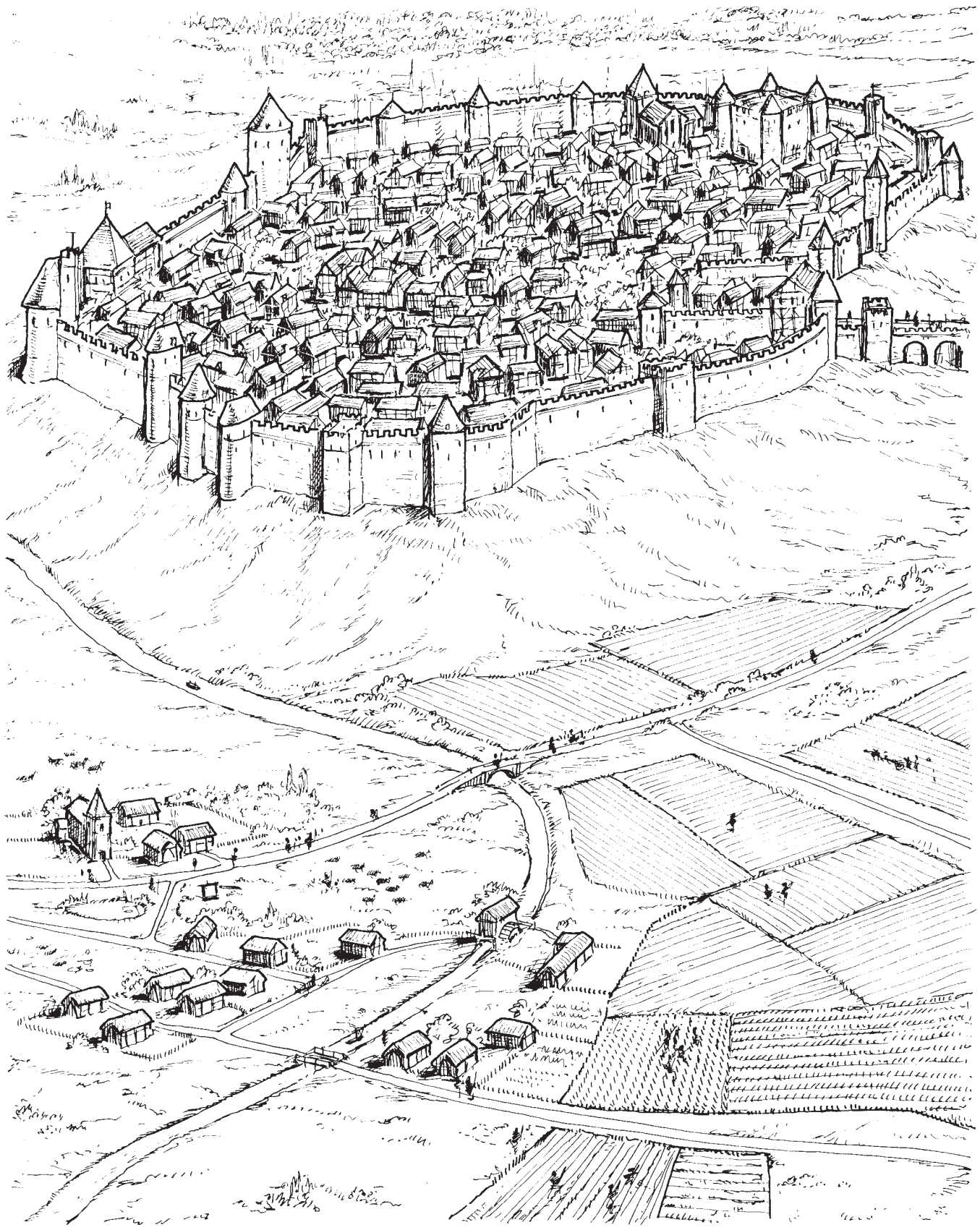
## Viewing This Book

This book has been designed to be as user-friendly as possible from both the perspectives of printing out for use in hard copy and viewing on a computer screen. It has been laid out like a traditional print book with the idea that each even-numbered page complements the odd-numbered page that it should face (e.g., the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse on page 24 are intended to face and illustrate the beginning of the section on "Disasters" on page 25).

With the above in mind, the optimal way to view and enjoy this book would be to print it out and organize it in a binder so that the pages are arranged as described above. This is by no means necessary, however, for using and fully benefiting from *City Builder Volume 1: Communities* and its contents.

# Introduction





# Features of Communities

**M**ost communities in the game world are inhabited by a populace with similar or overlapping backgrounds, goals, interests, and concerns (there can, of course, be marked exceptions to this rule, as with communities in the throes of division and crisis, or those in which there has been historic isolation and oppression of a weaker group).

Populations in smaller communities tend to be racially homogenous; generally have a relatively narrow gap between their richest and poorest members; are often comparatively egalitarian or democratic in nature; generally enjoy limited privacy, probably no anonymity, and tend to know everyone else; and generally suffer or benefit fairly equally from conditions affecting the community overall.

Populations in larger communities are much more likely to be racially diverse; to have a distinct economic gap between their richest and poorest members; to have power concentrated in the hands of a few individuals or families, to have a politically disenfranchised underclass, and to have the bulk of the residents fall somewhere between these two extremes; tend to value their privacy, to have many individuals about whom little is widely known, and who generally mind their own business as much as possible; and to enjoy benefits or suffer detriments that are often not distributed equally.

A single major community — anywhere between a large town and very large city in size — might compose a small nation-state. In addition to its main community, such a small state might also include a number of nearby villages or smaller towns, mostly dedicated to producing food for the capital. Despite their relatively small size, such countries that evolve from single cities can often become quite influential and powerful. Small states of this sort will likely be the norm in ancient, medieval, or fantasy game milieus.

A large nation-state might comprise many communities — including scores of cities, hundreds of towns, and thousands of villages and smaller communities. Such larger countries may be divided into several major regions, each containing perhaps one to three cities and numerous smaller communities. Although such states will likely have some form of central government and a unified foreign policy, individual communities might have significant control over the administration of local and regional affairs.

Even subject communities might operate with a great degree of independence, especially if they have suffi-

cient political clout or distance from their suzerain to insist upon it, or if such semi-autonomy is to the advantage of their ultimate overlords. Indeed, in certain looser forms of government — such as confederations, leagues, and weak feudal states — the overall ruler may hold power only by the cooperation of a number of lords or electors, or the central government body might only convene yearly or at longer intervals, or in times of crisis.

In any event, communities tend to value whatever independence they can obtain and many will engage in protracted negotiations or even military action to obtain charters granting them the rights they desire. Lords are often willing to grant such charters to mercantile and manufacturing communities, which can generate income far beyond that possible for rural estates, in exchange for cash payments (such cash-hungry aristocrats, of course, might seek to replace city governments that do not adequately serve their needs).

One way or another, individual community governments might operate and be constituted much differently than the national governments to which they are ultimately subject. Local governments might be influenced by such things as a desire to preserve traditions from the community's history, a drive to experiment with model forms of government proposed by various philosophers, and a need to adhere to unique local circumstances.

## Regional Influences

Where a particular community is located is one of the most critical factors in how it will develop. Indeed, major terrain features like rivers, lakes, seas, mountains, valleys, forests, hills, swamps, islands, and deserts can be some of the most significant determining factors in why a particular community was established, the form it takes, its economic basis, and how large and successful it does or does not become.

Communities established in areas of rich farmland, for example, may be able to produce food in surplus of their needs, allowing them to both maintain a well-fed populace and engage in trade with communities less

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fortunate. Communities without access to much or any superior farmland, on the other hand, very well may not be able to support large populations and may never grow into more than villages or small towns. In the absence of resources like mineral wealth or various service industries, the peoples of such communities likely become the political dependants of more powerful neighbors.

One of the things that distinguishes some communities from others and can provide them with immeasurable political and mercantile benefits is their situation at some intrinsically valuable location, such as a land bridge between continents, the delta of a key river system, a deep-water harbor, or a strait connecting major bodies of water. In a fantasy campaign setting, exploitable natural phenomena might include volcanoes, areas of high or low magical power, or gateways to other worlds or planes of existence.

Just as a strategic location can make a community the envy of its neighbors, however, so, too can it become a liability by making it a perpetual target for subjugation. A city that has something worth taking con-

stantly has to protect it, and nation-states that fail to do so will lose vital portions of their lands, become occupied by foreign powers, or be annihilated.

Major terrain features like those noted above can also limit how far a particular community has naturally expanded and determine any major lines of defense against foreign invaders, such as a major river beyond which the community's troops do not venture, or a strategic pass controlled by a vital fortress that may have changed hands many times. Areas that are beyond the control of any of the surrounding civilized states will likely remain debatable in legal status and a haven to whatever outlaws, monsters, and highly-skilled adventurers choose to make their home there.

## Racial Influences

Another factor that can affect the form or organization of a community is the various peoples who live within it. The presence of non-Human races and cultures, for example, adds to the exotic nature of most fantasy campaign settings and influences the location, structure, appearance, and other key elements of communities. Indeed, communities in a fantasy milieu may consist partly or entirely of such non-Human populations, which might range in size from individual aliens, to pockets within large, predominantly Human communities, to nation-states consisting almost entirely of non-Humans. The possibilities are only limited by the Game Master's imagination and concept for the fantasy milieu that he wishes to create for the enjoyment of his players.

In many ways, the influence of the non-Human community is likely to resemble, in a somewhat modified fashion, the different relationships that foreign-derived Human communities have historically held with their neighbors. Its members may be considered equal citizens of the parent community. On the other hand, the non-Humans may be politically independent or semi-autonomous to some extent, perhaps governing themselves differently than Humans, or the non-Human community could be disenfranchised, either ignored by the community's rulers or viewed as a threat to be stamped out. Its members may contribute unique benefits to the parent community, possibly in the form of monetary, magical, or military aid. An interchange of technology, beliefs, and customs may alter both societies, perhaps with one culture introducing sweeping improvements

# Features of Communities

in one or more areas.

It is also possible that the populations of two or more sentient communities could be largely unaware of each other's existence. A sequestered community of submarine Elves in the great bay adjoining a major city might be invisible to its Human inhabitants, and might themselves be largely ignorant of the fact that other people have settled the lands beyond their holdings, possibly centuries before, gaining some inkling of this only when violence or the elements drive vessels and their contents beneath the waves and into the watery realm below.

## Types of Communities

Most communities can be broadly classified as villages, towns, or cities. There are also various sorts of special-purpose communities that can play a role in the game, such as communes, prisons, plantations, and military bases, and these are all described either in this chapter or elsewhere in this book. The size of a particular community will play a big role in determining what sorts of essential places are present within it. In general, the larger the community, the more sorts of specialized craftsmen, goods, and services it can support.

Size of most communities is also closely linked to their proximity to natural resources or trade routes, so the GM should have some plausible reason for why a particular community has attained the size that it has. Communities with little to offer new residents will remain at their current size, or possibly even shrink if the pickings are scarce — perhaps leaving amenities intended for a much larger population to fall into disuse or to be adapted for different purposes. On the other hand, events like establishment of a new trade route or discovery of a previously unexploited resource might cause a period of expansion. Being based in such a “boom town” can make for many exciting adventure hooks, as well as providing adventurers with a familiar base of operations that could plausibly grow to meet some of the more complex needs of higher-level characters.

## Small Communities

Many sorts of communities smaller than true towns exist, and the vast majority of communities in worlds that function largely like our own will likely be agricul-

tural in nature. Such communities will be the norm in the relatively unorganized borderlands, marches, and wildernesses along the frontiers of many nations in which many adventures take place.

**Thorps** are the smallest sort of communities and are typically home to just 20 to 80 inhabitants. Any particular thorp is 50% likely to be non-permanent in nature and dedicated to seasonal activities — like hunting, fishing, or logging — or to governmental projects. It is 30% likely that all the inhabitants of a permanent settlement will be somehow related; a thorp might have one or several family heads, although such de facto community leaders are unlikely to have any formal titles and typically hold an ill-defined equality of status. If not dedicated to some specific activity, the resident of thorps often subsist as beggars, bandits, hunter-gatherers, scavengers, or the like, or are migrants or refugees from a neighboring nation. It is only 40% likely that any particular permanent thorp will have a name. Buildings generally consist only of temporary or semi-permanent structures like lean-tos, tents, shanties, and huts.



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**Hamlets** are larger than thorps and are typically home to as many as 400 residents, but depend on larger communities for amenities important to everyday life, such as purchase of necessary tools and supplies, religious worship, or local government. It is 30% likely that such a community is only temporary and occupied either seasonally or until completion of a specific project, such as a section of road, a castle, or a temple. If permanent, a hamlet generally has no firm economic base or organized government, and its inhabitants typically work as subsistence farmers, hunter-gatherers, or craftsmen. Residents of non-permanent hamlets are typically laborers engaged in governmental projects; people engaged in exploiting some resource, such as seasonal harvesting of wild plants, hunting of saleable fur or meat animals, prospecting for precious metals or gems, or scavenging from ruins; or even bandits or equivalent lawless groups, including irregular military forces like rebels or unemployed mercenaries. Prominent residents of a hamlet might hold some sort of outside authority — such as bosses of a work group, priests, or rebel officers — although typically no particular post of leadership exists for the hamlet itself, which is more often recognized as a locality than a community. Buildings in a hamlet might include permanent longhouses or huts, along with those found in thorps.

**Villages** are communities of up to about 1,000-or-so residents that have some sort of organized government and a particular economic basis (e.g., farming). A typical village might have up to a half-dozen industries, three of which will almost always be a blacksmith's workshop, a mill, and a brewery in a farming community (i.e., a miller to grind grain and a blacksmith to forge and repair agricultural tools, and a brewer to convert grain into beer).

Buildings in a village are mostly permanent in nature and consist largely of such things as longhouses and sunken huts. If constantly threatened, a village might also include some sort of simple defenseworks, such as a palisade, a fence of sturdy thorn bushes, a watchtower into which people can flee if the community is attacked, or even a fortified temple. The residents of any particular village might also be organized into some sort of militia, especially in areas perpetually menaced by various threats.

**Communes** are inhabited by people who share a similar ethos and follow the same spiritual beliefs. Such communities generally look and function much like

regular villages, albeit often with the addition of one or more religious structures. A commune might be established for any number of reasons, such as devotion to an agricultural or wilderness deity, proximity to some holy site, or religious beliefs that differ enough from those of the general population enough that its worshippers need or prefer to live separately.

About half of all communes are led by priests of some sort, while the other half are led by non-ordained prophets of religious movements branded eccentric, heretical, or forbidden by the outside world. A very small commune might consist of a leader and his extended family or immediate followers, numbering up to a couple of dozen people; a large one might include a high priest, a clerical staff, and 500 or more members total, many of which would likely be common folk (e.g., farmers and possibly their families on an agricultural commune).

Many buildings on a commune will be substantial and permanent in nature, and might include a temple or other devotional structure; housing for clergy and other members, possibly segregated by gender; various huts, barns, granaries, and storage buildings on a farming commune; and appropriate workshops if it is devoted to some sort of craftwork.

**Other sorts of small communities** might also exist in the game world. Non-permanent communities consisting of tents, wagons, or boats might be used by nomadic bands of various sorts and resemble thorps or hamlets in their numbers of inhabitants and organization. Boom towns might spring up in formerly isolated or unsettled areas where a particularly rich resource has been discovered or a region of desirable land has been opened for acquisition; a rush of fortune-seekers may flood in, erecting temporary structures on land that they may or may not own legally. Such places might have organization and facilities comparable to a thorp, a hamlet, or even a village, but have a population in the thousands. Such unstable conditions very often breed disease, hardship, exploitation, crime, and violence.

## Towns

Towns are substantial, permanent communities that often feature a wide variety of industries, quite possibly have some racial diversity, and are typically home to at least 2,000 inhabitants and as many as 5,000.

Towns often have several recognized districts and

# Features of Communities

even suburbs. They also generally require a more complex and organized system of governance than villages and are often run by a permanent body, such as a citizens' council headed by a mayor. In addition, towns almost always have central markets that are used by people from surrounding villages and other small communities to sell and trade the produce of field and forest, and as an outlet for local craftsmen and tradesmen to provide their various goods and services. Unlike villages, towns are typically not self-sufficient in food, making their populations dependent on the markets that have allowed their communities to prosper.

Industries associated with towns include fundamental ones required by their inhabitants on a daily basis — such as greengrocers, bakeries, butcheries, fishmarkets, mills, blacksmith shops, and breweries — and about a third will also be noted for some other craft or activity in particular, making them a destination for people hoping to either participate in those pursuits or acquire the products associated with them.

Structures associated with towns are generally substantial, permanent, and diverse, and might include a

variety of public or governmental structures, such as town halls. Towns might also — depending on their resources, configuration, and prevailing threats — have defensive walls or fortifications large enough to hold all of the local residents for short periods of time, the latter often situated on the highest point within the community. Such defenseworks will typically be built and maintained by a town's civic government or feudal ruler.

## Cities

Cities are large, complex, diverse communities that are almost always located along the banks of navigable rivers, or on the shores of deep water bays, or major trade routes, and which have ample access to resources like food and fresh water for their populations. In a typical ancient, medieval, or fantasy game milieu, small cities are home to as many as 12,000 residents (one modern definition of a city, in fact, is a settlement of at least 10,000 residents); large cities as many as 25,000 residents; and metropolises as many resident as can be supported by the economic basis of the campaign set-



# City Builder Volume 1

ting, possibly hundreds of thousands or even millions. Many cities have some sort of significant commodity exchange or industry associated with them (50% and 25% likely, respectively).

A city's head of government usually has at least the title of Lord Mayor (though often this personage will instead be a high noble of the realm or the ruler of an independent state, holding such titles as Duke, Prince, Doge, or Sultan) and presides over a council of representatives who each have a considerable constituency in the city and without whose organizational skills the administration of such a vast and complex system could not function.

Cities are often divided into multiple sections — often referred to as districts, precincts, quarters, or wards — that are sometimes separated by walls or even with movement between them controlled or interdicted by fortified gates. Each of these precincts typically has a different, specialized purpose and each might actually be similar in size to an independent town; possibilities include craft, trade, mercantile, academic, profession-

al, service, temple, entertainment, underworld, government, residential, and military quarters, each of which might be further subdivided. Another common pattern is to allot one or more quarters primarily to particular nationalities or races, or to foreigners and visitors generally (both for purposes of providing them with suitable amenities and segregating them from the indigenous population).

Various sections of a city might be set off with distinctive boundary stones marked with specific sorts of symbols or sculptures. Respect for such official markers and adherence to them is generally taken very seriously by the community that has expended the time and effort to erect them. Such markers might also have some sort of reputed or actual magical properties.

Cities will almost always have substantial defenseworks and, whether independent communities or those that serve as strategic strongpoints for kingdoms or great nobles, will generally be walled and include towers and fortified gates (see Fortifications, below, for more information). Such defenseworks are frequently elaborate and imposing, are sometimes unique, distinctive, or aesthetically striking, and are often intended to intimidate and impress as much as to defend.

Another feature common to cities — and to many towns as well — is the presence of public fountains, which are often erected in prominent areas by civic leaders and organizations, both as public works intended to impress and as practical sites for residents or travelers to obtain water. Edifices of this sort are often reputed to have various magical properties, whether innately as a function of the spring water that flows from them or somehow deliberately imbued through the actions of some being or agency.

## Special-Purpose Communities

Various sorts of special-purpose communities — including plantations and military bases, both of which are described here — can play a role in the game and provide an interesting change of venue from more traditional sites of habitation.

**Plantations** are substantial commercial farms worked by gangs of hired labor or slaves. Many communities of this sort have all of the characteristics of a village and are frequently nearly or wholly self-sufficient. At least half and as much as three-quarters of the population of a plantation will consist of laborers, and to the extent that such a community exhibits any



# Features of Communities

demographic diversity the members of different racial or ethnic group may variously own, run, or work the place.

Structures on a plantation typically include a home for the owner and his family if they reside at the site, barracks for overseers or guards, and quarters for laborers, along with the workshops, granaries, and other buildings associated with villages. Conditions on plantations typically range from comfortable for the owners, to adequate for the overseers, to often execrable for the laborers.

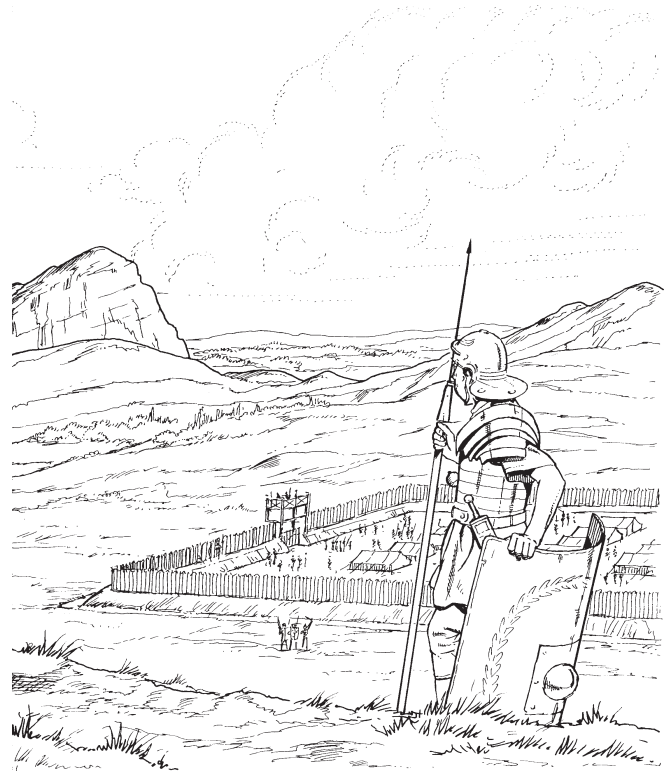
Communities like “company towns,” where the sole local industry (e.g., a mine) and all associated resources are controlled by a single entity, generally conform to the characteristics of plantations.

**Military bases** are fortified communities owned and operated by standing armies, typically the armed forces of a state (although in a medieval setting other armed groups such as knightly orders or pirate brotherhoods might support equivalent facilities). Such places generally house one or more units of military personnel, store equipment, and facilitate activities like training, equipment testing, and field operations. Military bases can range from small outposts to military cities containing thousands of people. Most are dedicated to supporting a single military or paramilitary organization, such as an army, navy, marine corps, constabulary, militia, watch, or guard force.

Some military bases may belong to nations or states other than those in which they are located, and such facilities are characteristic of imperial powers in particular. Regardless of where they are located, military facilities are often extra-legal jurisdictions not subject to the prevailing civil laws of the land.

Names applied to particular sorts of military bases generally indicate their sizes, functions, or degrees of fortification. Such terms might include armory, arsenal, barracks, camp, depot, dock, facility, field, fort, fortress, garrison, installation, magazine, post, proving ground, reservation, station, or yard. A strategic defensive line might contain numerous interconnected bases, or effectively constitute a single large military base along its entire length (e.g., 70-mile-long Hadrian’s Wall in northern England).

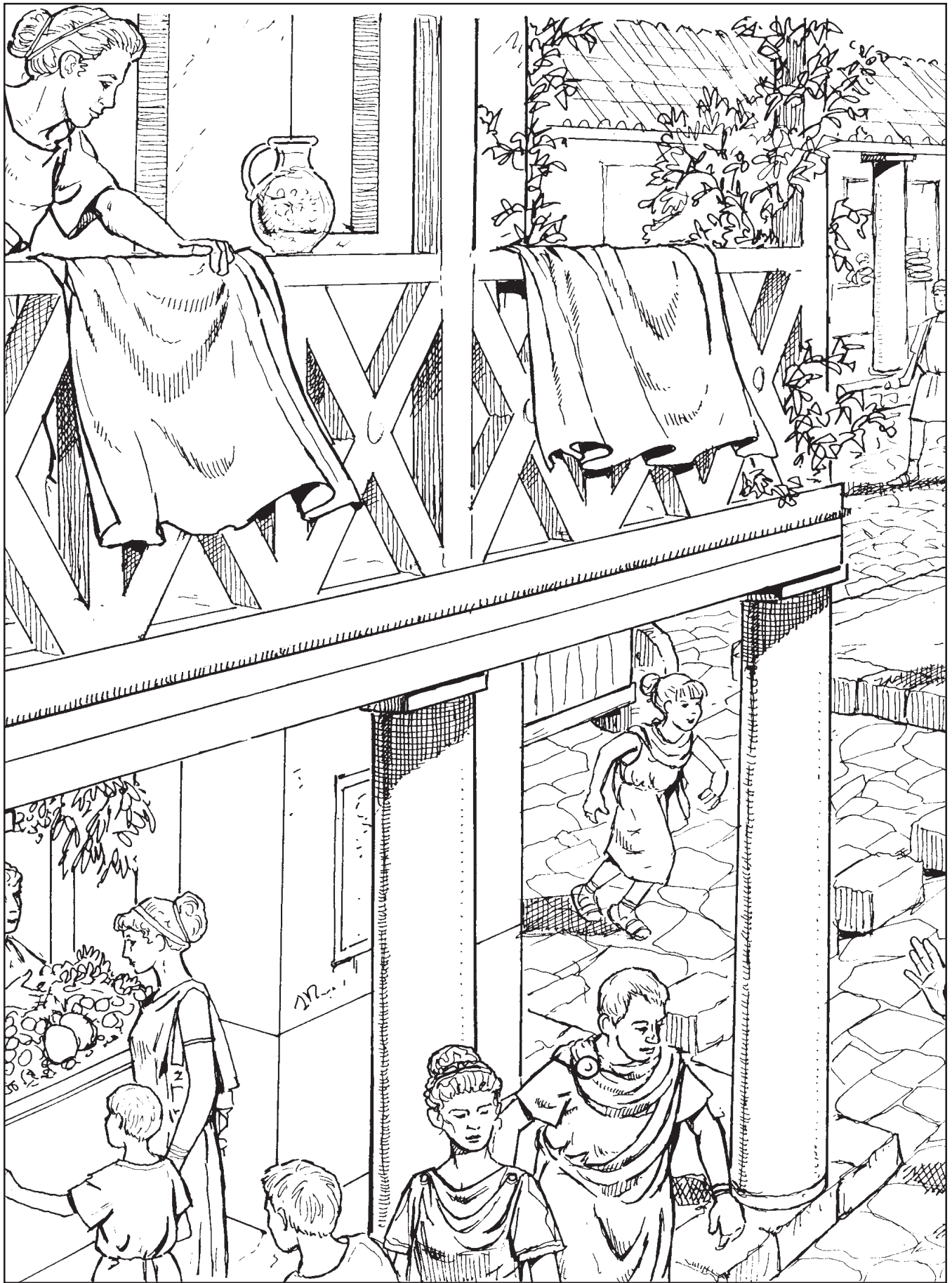
Whatever they are called or used for, military bases will generally employ stringent security measures, which might include walls, towers, fences, moats, buffer zones (e.g., marches), free-fire zones, and armed



patrols. In campaign settings where magic is prolific, spellcasters might even serve as members of military garrisons and apply their abilities to securing military bases or specific areas within them.

Other facilities within military bases may include command posts, barracks, armories, arsenals, workshops, supply depots, training areas, dining facilities, and stables. Depending on the purpose of a base or the ethos of its owners, such places might also include chapels, academies, gymnasiums, athletic fields, parks, baths, libraries, hospitals, and amenity vendors (e.g., sutlers). While bases in friendly areas might depend on nearby communities for support, those in frontier areas will likely have adequate stocks of food, water, and other supplies to function indefinitely on their own under hostile conditions or siege.

Not all societies will have military bases, and such special-purpose communities are likely to be maintained only by nation-states that are fairly large, well organized, and have standing military forces. Independent communities like bandit redoubts and some monasteries, however, might essentially conform to the characteristics of military bases.



# Buildings

In a traditional ancient, medieval, Renaissance, or fantasy campaign setting, many of the places characters need to visit before, during, and after their adventures will be located in the sorts of structures described here.

In rural areas, villages, and other small communities, many businesses and other commercial venues will be located in one of two types of buildings: roundhouses and longhouses. Roundhouses, often also known as sunken huts, are generally square or round, built on top of a three-foot-deep excavated area, tend to be about 10 to 15 feet across, and consist of a single room that is used as a living area, a workshop, or both. Longhouses are generally rectangular and typically made of plaster-covered wood, with a living space at one end, a workshop in the middle, and an area for livestock or storage at the other, and might be anywhere from 10 to 30 feet wide and three or more times as long.

In towns, cities, and other urban areas, many of the venues adventurers need to visit are located in townhouses that are two to five stories in height, built side-by-side to form long rows separated by streets. Typically, the ground level of such a structure is used as a workshop and to conduct any necessary sales or business. A basement or back room, if present, might be used for storage or as additional work space. A first floor usually consists of a large dining area toward the front and a kitchen toward the rear of the house. A second floor is typically devoted to the master's bed chambers and perhaps rooms for other family members or guests. A third floor is generally used for servant and apprentice living quarters and a fourth floor or attic, if present, is typically used either for storage or extra living space.

Materials used for the construction of townhouses and other urban structures might include stone, brick, or plaster-covered timbers (with perhaps the former, heavier materials being used for the first few stories of a building and the latter, lighter materials being used for the upper stories, interior walls, and floors). Roofing for such buildings might consist of thatch, wood boards or shingles, ceramic tiles, slate tiles, or even lead sheeting, any of which might be sealed with pitch or similar substances. Doors tend to be simple but sturdy wooden portals with adequate locks and bars on their insides, although main entry doors are often larger and more decorative. What materials are used for a particular building will depend on the use for which it was constructed or adapted, the financial resources of

its owner, and local availability of various building resources.

In some quarters of a city, especially industrial or poorer residential districts, smaller, simpler, one-story buildings — perhaps similar to those described as being typical of rural areas and small communities — might be used variously for workshops, businesses, residences, or storage areas.

Likewise, many bigger and more substantial buildings will also be present in urban areas, including large inns and taverns, businesses that require extra space for machinery and equipment (e.g., mills, tanneries, shipyards), and the like. Many such buildings will simply be larger, free-standing versions of the other sorts of buildings described here, up to five-or-so stories in height, and constructed of the same sorts of materials. Others will be voluminous sheds framed in heavy timbers, or substantial vaulted or columned halls made of stone.

Communities in any particular milieu might also include any number of unique, specialized, or purpose-built craft, trade, mercantile, scholarly, professional, service, religious, entertainment, underworld, or government places.





# Physical Characteristics of Cities

Cities are in many ways similar to dungeons, made up of buildings, alleys, and courtyards rather than walls, doors, rooms, and corridors. Adventures that take place in urban areas differ from dungeon delves in a number of significant ways, however, including much greater access to resources, restrictions on the use of weapons and spells, and the presence of law-enforcement personnel.

**Access to Resources:** Adventurers have relatively easy access to a wide variety of resources in cities (assuming, of course, that they can afford them). Among other things, they can usually purchase and liquidate gear and other goods quickly; can consult various specialists or experts in obscure fields of knowledge for advice or assistance; can retreat to the comfort of inns, taverns, public baths, and other service places when exhausted; can avail themselves of hospitals or temples when injured or suffering from disease or other conditions; have ready access to marketplaces and the workshops of craftsmen and tradesmen; and can easily hire mercenaries or other sorts of non-player characters.

**Weapon and Spell Restrictions:** Laws regarding such things as carrying weapons in public and what sort of restrictions apply to spellcasting vary from community-to-community and include specific restrictions based on their individual experiences, ethos, and concerns. Such laws may not affect all characters equally. A priest, for example, might be severely affected — or forced to undignified and illegal efforts to get around local restrictions — if holy symbols of foreign or forbidden gods are confiscated at the city's gates, while a specialist in unarmed combat would not be hampered by laws prohibiting or calling for the peace-bonding of weapons.

**Law Enforcement:** Another key distinction between adventuring in an urban area and delving into a dungeon is that the latter is, almost by definition, a place where the only law is “kill or be killed.” A community, on the other hand, is held together by a code of laws, many of which are explicitly designed to prevent killing, looting, and the others sorts of behavior that adventurers typically engage in on a routine basis.

Evil humanoid like Orcs and Goblinoids, while unpopular with many adventurers, are typically protected by the same laws that protect all the citizens of a city (unless they are prohibited from entering a particular community in the first place). Simply being of evil alignment is quite probably not against the law — except, perhaps, in some severely theocratic societies that have the magical power to back up their laws — and it

is only actual evil deeds — or, just as often, chaotic ones — that can be treated as crimes. Even when adventurers encounter an evildoer in the act of perpetrating some heinous crime upon the populace of the city, the law tends to frown on the sort of vigilante justice that leaves the evildoer dead or otherwise unable to answer for his crimes to the officials. Most municipal laws nonetheless recognize aberrations, demonic beings, and similar creatures as a threat to the stability of the community, and prohibitions against murder do not generally extend to killing such marauding monsters.

Laws are generally enforced in cities by a municipal guard composed of professional soldiers or policemen (equal to as much as 1% of the population if this also serves as the standing army), a city watch consisting of citizens who have other fulltime occupations (equal to as much as 5% of the population if this also serves as a military reserve force), or both. In conjunction with a standing army — or instead of one, in many cases — such forces may also be responsible for protecting a city from outside attack.

Most of the troops in a guard force will be warriors by profession, with officers of the same background who generally have specialized or better training or are more experienced, or members of the local ruling elite who have other occupations appropriate to the community (e.g., priests in a theocracy).

Most of the personnel in a watch force, on the other hand, will be craftsmen, tradesmen, and the like. These part-time soldiers will possibly be led by non-commissioned-officers (i.e., corporals and sergeants) and commissioned officers (e.g., lieutenants and captains) who might be part-timers drawn from the same range of classes as their troops, “player character” types who serve in times of crises, or professional leaders of the same sorts that lead full-time municipal troops.

A typical city guard force works on three eight-hour shifts, with a third of the force on a day shift (e.g., 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.), a third on an evening shift (e.g., 4 p.m. to midnight), and a third on a night shift (e.g., midnight to 8 a.m.). A city watch may keep a similar round-the-clock schedule or focus its efforts on evening patrols when it is most needed to deter crime.

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At any given time, 80% of the guards or watchmen on duty are on the streets patrolling, while the remaining 20% are stationed at various posts throughout the city, where they can respond to nearby alarms. At least one such guard post is generally present within each precinct or ward of a city.

## Fortifications

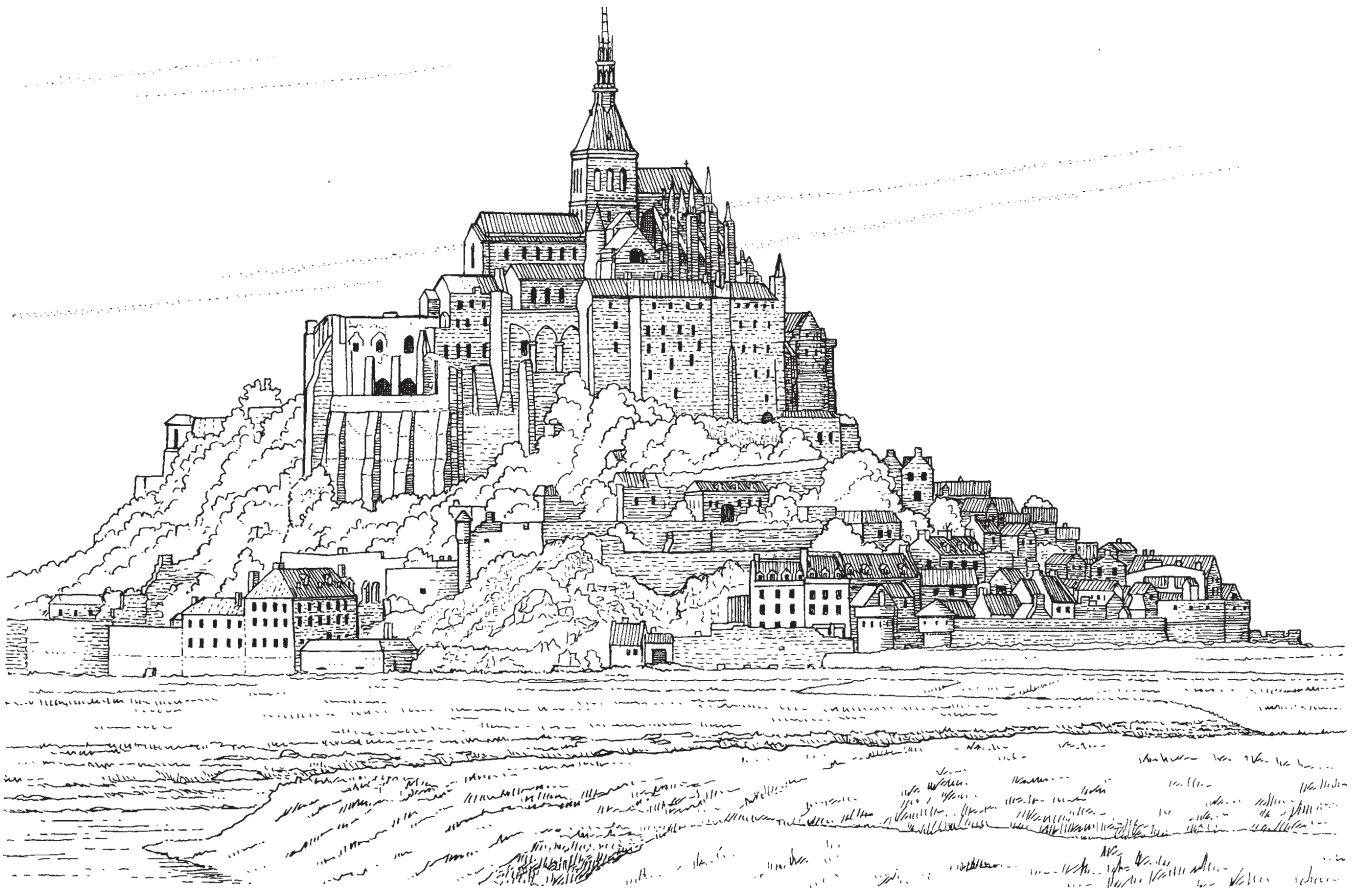
In a traditional ancient, medieval, or fantasy milieu, most cities — and many smaller communities — will be defended by structures like walls, gates, towers, and moats. Factors that determine to what extent a community might be protected in this way include what the local economy can support, the sorts of threats which they are intended to counter, whether those threats are recognized by community leaders, and the degree to which various sorts of defenseworks would inhibit such threats. Rulers who distrust the populace of a city (perhaps because of recent conflicts, whatever

the outcome) also may forbid the local council to erect or extend its walls, or might even raze the defenses that it previously had.

A city's defenseworks might be as unique and distinctive as the community itself, and its imposing gates, towers, and walls are often the first thing resident see upon returning home from their travels, the last thing unfortunate enemies see when attacking them, and elements in innumerable travelers' tales.

Urban defenseworks are typically manned by forces of professional soldiers, which might be augmented — especially in times of crisis — by both the city guard and members of the citizenry organized into reserve units, militias, and watches that are led by officers drawn from among their numbers.

**Walls:** Typical fortified city defensive walls are fairly smooth and difficult to climb, crenellated on one side to provide protection against missiles for the troops standing on them, and just wide enough for troops to



# Physical Characteristics of Cities

walk along their tops.

A typical small city wall is a fortified stone wall five feet thick and 20 feet high.

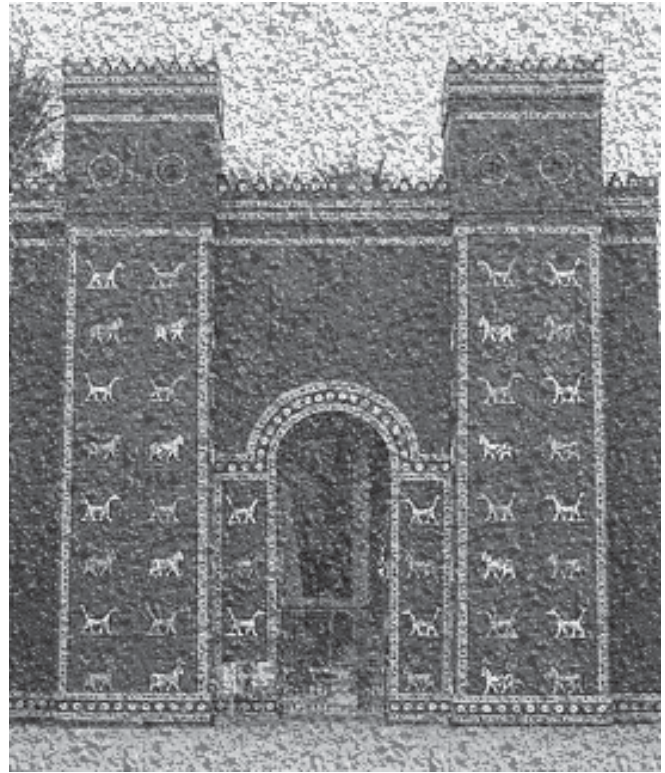
A typical large city wall is 10 feet thick and 30 feet high. A large city might have one or several dividing features, such as a natural cliff or waterway, suburbs built outside the defensive wall, or interior walls up to the extent of those of a small city that enclose precincts reserved for particularly well-off citizens of some dominant class or another, or isolate a section of the population from which particular trouble is expected.

A typical metropolis wall is 15 feet thick and 40 feet tall, and often has a tunnel and small rooms running through its interior. Unlike those of smaller cities, interior walls that divide metropolises — either old walls that the city has outgrown, or walls dividing individual districts from each other — can be as large and thick as the outer walls, but more often they have the characteristics of a large city's or small city's walls.

**Watch Towers:** Some city walls are adorned with watch towers set at regular intervals. These towers provide an enhanced view of the surrounding countryside, serve as redoubts against attackers, and sometimes house heavy weapons like catapults or alarm devices such as beacons, horns, or gongs.

Few cities have enough guards to keep someone constantly stationed at every tower, unless the city is expecting attack from outside. More common practice, where the wall is guarded diligently, is for roving patrols of guards to pass periodically over all parts of the walls and for ready-response forces to await any alarm in well-spaced guardhouses or barracks. Attitudes of the guards and their officers, weather conditions, and events such as festivals taking place within the city can markedly vary the frequency of patrols and likelihood of a guardhouse garrison responding to any signs of possible intrusion.

Watch towers are usually at least 10 feet higher than the walls they adjoin, jut out at least 10 feet from the face of the wall on one side so that troops in them can fire down on the flanks of enemies attempting to climb the walls, and have a diameter five times the thickness of the walls on average (e.g., a 25-foot-diameter tower adjoining a five-foot-thick wall). Particularly long walls, such as those of a large city or metropolis, fulfill some of the functions of watchtowers by including projecting bastions or right-angled returns in the line of the wall instead, spaced at an easy bowshot or spear-throw



from each other. Arrow slits generally line the outer sides of the upper stories of towers, and their tops are crenellated like the surrounding walls. In small towers, simple ladders typically connect the various stories and the roof. In larger towers, stairs generally serve that purpose.

Heavy wooden doors, reinforced with iron and outfitted with good locks, usually secure entry to towers from inside the city, unless they are in regular use. As a rule, a designated officer of the guard or watch keeps the keys to a particular tower secured on his person, with duplicate copies being kept in the city's inner fortress or barracks.

**Gates:** A typical city gate consists of a gatehouse equipped with a series of portcullises and murder holes above the space between them. Gates leading into and out of large communities and dedicated military facilities are generally designed to be impressive, and such portals are quite often dedicated to and named for things such as kings, gods, battles, the directions or destinations they face, and the districts of the cities they guard (e.g., the Port Gate of Kos). In towns and some small

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cities, however, gates are often less impressive and the primary entryways are simply through reinforced double-doors set right into the municipal walls.

Gates are usually open during the day and locked or barred at night. Usually, a door sized for a single person set into one gate lets in travelers after sunset and is staffed by guards who might open it for someone who seems honest, presents proper papers, gives a password or countersign, or offers a large enough bribe (depending on the ethos of the community in general and the guards in particular).

## On, Above, and Below City Streets

The majority of streets in a typical city are narrow and twisting. Most streets average 15 to 20 feet wide, while alleys range from five to 10 feet wide. Those flagged with cobblestones or other material in good condition allow normal movement, but ones in poor repair, as well as heavily-rutted dirt streets, should be treated as areas full of light rubble.

Some municipalities, particularly those that gradually grew from small settlements to larger cities, have no larger thoroughfares. Cities that are planned, or perhaps have suffered major fires, sackings, or periods of abandonment that allowed authorities to construct new roads through formerly inhabited areas, might have a few larger straight streets through town, known as avenues or boulevards. These main roads are often 25 feet wide or more — allowing room for wagons to pass each other and perhaps for central rows of trees, statuary, or other embellishments by the local rulers who laid out the street plan — and often have five-foot-wide sidewalks on one or both sides. Because the majority of the city's residents pass along them, rulers typically choose such main roads as the locations for large monuments to the state's prestige, such as triumphal arches and grand squares — and for reminders of the state's capacity to punish, such as execution-places and gibbets.

**Rooftops:** Getting to a roof usually requires ascending to it from a building's interior, climbing a wall, or



# Physical Characteristics of Cities

jumping down from a higher location such as a window, balcony, or bridge. Flat roofs, common only in warm climates (i.e., accumulated snow can cause flat roofs to collapse), are easy to move across. Getting from one roof to another or down to the ground typically requires a jump across or downward. Distance to the next closest roof is usually from five to 15 feet horizontally — slightly less than the width of the alley below — but the roof across the gap — even among buildings of a more-or-less uniform number of stories — is equally likely to be five feet higher, five feet lower, or the same height due to differences in construction.

**Subterranean Areas:** Many sorts of subterranean areas exist below typical cities, including storm drains, sewers, quarries, and natural caves, and many are variously employed as public works infrastructure, military access routes, criminal thoroughfares, and storage.

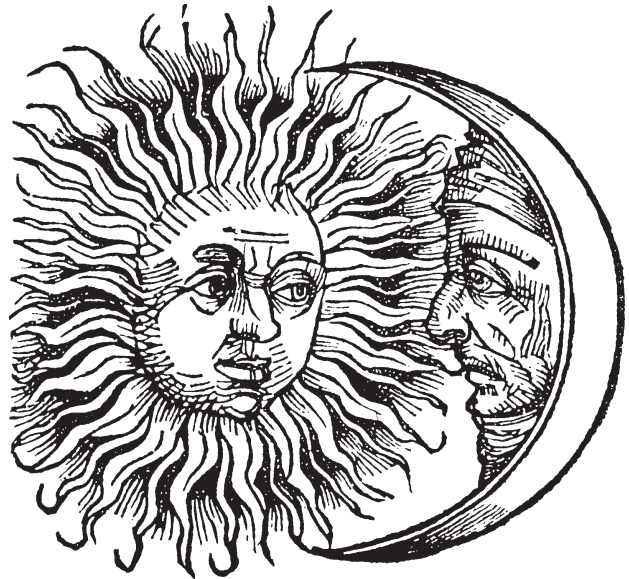
Main flow routes of sewers and storm drains are built much like dungeons (for purposes of inspection and repair), except that there is a greater chance that floors are slippery, covered with water, or both; that tunnels and chambers join in an open network or with grilles, rather than at doors, which if encountered will be firmly closing iron or stone hatches rather than wood; and that tunnels drop off into high outfalls or deep pits. Long-neglected subterranean areas are also similar to dungeons in terms of creatures liable to be encountered in them. Some cities are built atop the ruins of older civilizations, so their subterranean areas might sometimes lead to unknown treasures and dangers from bygone ages.

Accessing such areas might be possible from the basements of some buildings, secret entrances built for such purposes, or, in the case of many sewers and storm drains, by opening a grate or hatch in the street and descending at least 10 feet (either by jumping, with a rope, or by a ladder if available).

## Lighting

Communities may or may not light their streets at night, and whether they do or not depends on factors like their ethos, needs, and financial means. Whatever the case, municipal lighting will generally be much less reliable than in an industrialized milieu, and residents venturing out after dark will have to address this in some way (e.g., hiring lantern-bearers).

Cities that do provide street lighting will typically



line main streets with lanterns spaced at intervals of about 60 feet (in order to provide continuous illumination), hanging at a height greater than head level from building awnings or posts, and serviced at dusk variously by building owners or a corps of lamplighters (through the requirements of local ordinances in either case). Even communities that light main thoroughfares, however, almost never bother to illuminate secondary streets and alleys, except perhaps directly at the entrances to occupied buildings; such areas, surrounded by tall surrounding buildings, might remain darkened even in daytime (while such areas might not provide full concealment during hours of daylight, they might make it easier for those attempting to hide in the shadows).

Most hamlets, villages, smaller towns, and even some cities cannot or will not provide nighttime lighting at all. Cities where most residents can see in the dark, where the prevailing ethos maintains that decent people should not to be out at night anyway, or which do not have the organization or economic resources to keep hundreds or thousands of lanterns burning throughout the night are unlikely to provide such a luxury.

Communities of any size that have a pressing need to keep the darkness at bay or can easily afford to do so are likely to keep many of their public areas well illuminated. Those with access to sufficient magical resources, for example, might draw upon them for these purposes.



# Disasters

**F**ire, flood, famine, plague, and war are among the major disasters that perpetually menaced historic ancient and medieval communities of all sizes, and to these can be added the threat of monsters in a fantasy milieu. Indeed, most of the misfortunes likely to befall a community as a whole are likely to be covered by one of these broad categories. And all of them might both manifest themselves and be battled in unique and fascinating ways in a fantasy campaign setting.

**Fire** is a major threat in ancient and medieval communities, and is made much worse by conditions that typically include closely packed buildings; features like wooden party walls between houses; widespread use of flammable materials like wood, wattle, and thatch; narrow, irregular streets; and a lack of effective fire-fighting equipment and infrastructure.

Measures for combating fire in traditional ancient or medieval urban areas tend to be limited both in scope and effect, and quite often consist of no more than bucket brigades. Some municipalities might have public or private fire departments, but the latter type might negotiate rates before actually fighting any fires.

**Flood** is a constant problem for many communities — especially those situated in low-lying areas or along rivers or coasts — and often occurs during specific seasons, especially spring, when snow and ice begins to melt and overflow waterways. Calamities of this sort might also be the result of storms at any time of the year. Small communities, such as thorps, hamlet, or villages, might be completely swept away by a heavy inundation, and even those that survive are likely to suffer a heavy toll in death and damage. Towns, cities, and other communities with relatively sturdy structures are less likely to be completely destroyed but might still suffer immense damage and be paralyzed, with people trapped on rooftops or forced to employ makeshift watercraft to get from one place to another.

The easiest way to prevent flooding, of course, is simply to build communities on high ground. Communities are situated in places prone to flooding for many reasons, however (e.g., trade is made facilitated in cities located along rivers or coasts, agricultural settlements thrive on flood plains with rich soil). Effective drainage systems can also be a means of dealing with flooding but, with some notable exceptions, were rare in most ancient and medieval communities.

**Famine** occurs when events like crop failure, destruction of crops as the result of warfare, or depletion of food stocks through sieges reduces the amount of food that can be distributed or sold within communities. While intensive agriculture can allow communities to

grow and become populous and powerful, it also makes them especially vulnerable to this sort of calamity.

One remedy for short-term famine is the storage of adequate food supplies, but communities do not always have enough surplus foodstuffs to do this; historically, it was rare for ancient or medieval communities to be able to acquire surpluses adequate to support their citizenry over extended periods of time, a problem that was exacerbated by a lack of effective food-preservation methods. Magical or divine abilities to create large amounts of food also might stave off famine if available, and if spellcasters who command such abilities agree to exercise their magic in this way.

**Monsters** of various kinds can threaten communities, and the danger they pose is affected by factors like their motivations, how dangerous they are, and how vulnerable a particular community is to them. Regardless of their size, most communities will be prepared to one extent or another for monstrous threats like wild animals and bands of raiding humanoids, and it is threats that are unique, new, or difficult or impossible to anticipate or counter that can be truly disastrous. At one extreme are solitary, very dangerous, possibly gargantuan monsters, like the Balrog that slaughtered the Dwarves in the Mines of Moria, or creatures like Godzilla, which can ravage even modern cities. At the other end of the spectrum are great hordes of tiny creatures, such as locust swarms or infestations of spiders or giant insects, which by their very numbers could be just as dangerous as colossal threats and overwhelm belated or inadequate efforts to oppose them.

**Plague** is one of the most devastating disasters that can afflict communities and, unless countered, can potentially kill every single person in particular areas and as many as half the people on entire continents. Factors like closely-packed populations, poor waste disposal systems, and lack of understanding about disease transmission can make some communities even more vulnerable to pestilence.

Measures like effective disposal of waste and refuse, quarantine, certain medicines and medical procedures, extermination of disease-bearing vermin, and various

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forms of magical protection are among the ways that plague and other epidemic diseases can be combated. Such actions cannot necessarily be arrived at intuitively, however, and typically require a relatively high level of medical knowledge and organization to successfully implement.

**War** is one of the most extreme and potentially fatal calamities that can befall a community, which might end up being the target of anything from a raid-in-force by marauding brigands to a prolonged siege by a complete enemy army.

Small communities, especially those of village size or smaller, might not actually be the objectives of military operations but might instead get incidentally overrun in the course of invasions, major battles, disasters triggered by magical means, or foraging sweeps by one or more opponents, despite the residents having no affiliation with any of the combatant sides and — beyond the effects on their own fates — quite possibly being indifferent to the outcome of the hostilities.

Larger communities, those of town size or larger, might constitute military objectives in and of themselves (e.g., for annexation, pillage, oversight of a strategic location, or a desire to harm or incite the nation they are part of). Attacks on towns and cities that are not independent but are instead subjects of larger states, of course, are considered equivalent to assaults on those nations overall.

Fortifications are one of the best and most basic measures a community in a traditional milieu, if it can afford them, can employ for deterring or resisting conventional attacks. Various improvements can make sim-

ple city walls even more effective, and these might include moats, towers, and strong gates — many of which might be constructed, repaired, or improved upon by the threatened populace in response to an impending crisis. Various sorts of military forces — including a militia, a standing army, mercenaries, or a *levee en masse* of the entire able-bodied population — are also critical factors in whether a community will be able to withstand or even frighten off attackers. Likewise, good military intelligence — which can range from well-manned watchtowers and patrols along a community's borders, to maintaining spies in potential aggressor states, to magical divinations — can also play a big role in preparing to deal with the vicissitudes of warfare.

House-to-house fighting against a foe who intends to contest or to hide within a settlement is a prospect that most military commanders do not relish, bearing many of the difficulties of storming a dungeon complex (see “Physical Characteristics,” above).

Conflict can also place particular stress on the political allegiances of local residents, forcing them to choose where their loyalties lie, and perhaps dividing communities into factions. Foreign agents, or the suspicion of them, can sow divisions within a community. Requisitions and harsh measures can even bring civilians into conflict with military forces nominally on the same side, breeding resentment, hatred, and possibly revolt. On the other hand, formation of defensive militias and community efforts to withstand a siege might build cohesion and loyalty to a community that residents may have been ambivalent toward, or bring together previously conflicting groups in a community. In these ways, wars can give rise to unexpected reorganizations in local politics.



## Dealing with Disasters

Historically, there were many more-or-less effective ways of preventing, combating, or remediating the various sorts of major disasters that could affect communities; whether these were employed, and how effectively, were a factor of the information and resources available to those afflicted by a particular calamity.

In a fantasy campaign setting, the various sorts of major disasters could all potentially be addressed or even prevented through the use of adequate magic. Fire, for example, might be combated in some commu-

# Disasters

nities by spellcasters empowered to call rain, create water, or summon water elementals, epidemics might be stopped cold by priests capable of detecting and treating or curing disease, and famine might be forestalled by divinely-provided food (e.g., “manna from heaven”).

Any of these kinds of calamities could also be created or made much worse by the presence of magic. Flooding is only more dangerous if it is encouraged by a vengeful druid capable of speeding the rise of waters or prolonging seasonal rains, magical fire could be much more lethal than normal flames to structures, areas otherwise free of plague might be contaminated by a depraved spellcaster capable of creating pestilence, and warfare becomes more difficult to respond to when enemy forces might include things like giants, elementals, and supernatural beings.

It is also certainly possible for two or more of these disasters to strike a community at the same time, or for one calamity to trigger or make another worse. Famine diminishes people’s immune systems and makes them more prone to disease, for example, and fire might break out in a city even while it was being assaulted by enemy forces, whether in some connection with the attack or by coincidence.

There are quite often also secondary problems associated with calamities that can provide the worst elements in any particular community the chance to perpetrate crimes like looting, robbery, and murder, and Game Masters can customize such peripheral hazards for their fantasy campaign settings. Floods, for example, are only more unpleasant if they have washed out the interred remains of local graveyards, dumping soggy undead creatures throughout a community, famine can be even more horrific if some elements in the population start resorting to cannibalism, and fire is only more unmanageable if it attracts elemental beings with an affinity to it.

## Impact of Disasters on Communities

A concerted relief effort by a number of neighbors can often alleviate or overcome relatively small-scale calamities, and this is much more likely to occur when the people concerned know each other well and share a certain degree of common interest and trust — characteristics of small towns, villages, or well-established old neighborhoods in a city. Individuals may rise to the



occasion and display unexpected talents, strengths, or leadership that will be remembered for many years to come. The reverse can also be true, of course, and a previously well-respected neighbor’s weakness, breakdown, or corruption can lead to lasting rifts and feuds in a community.

In the anonymity of a big city or a recently-founded town with little sense of community, it is more likely that people will simply look out for themselves and may descend into exploitation of the weak or fighting over scarce resources.

Major disasters can stress and break civic governments that are already weak or internally divided, deadlocking relief efforts in jurisdictional disputes or settling of scores. If well forewarned, however, or during the aftermath of a disaster, city and regional governments can typically bring to bear significant resources and skilled management for large-scale preventive or cleanup tasks.

Panic buying and hoarding is likely to exhaust the stocks of many items, as residents seek to buy supplies

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to last through a crisis — quite likely in much larger than accustomed amounts, or of particular items and commodities that are not in common use — from those stores that have not yet closed so that their proprietors themselves can escape. The last available supplies might sell for grossly increased amounts — perhaps from profiteering individuals who have already bought in bulk for speculative purposes — or lead to anguished or even violent scenes. Even if the chain of supply is adequate over the following days or weeks for the ongoing basic need, luxuries may run out, and even simple items of other sorts may remain scarce and sell for inflated prices.

Entrepreneurs (whether those who already work as shopkeepers or other individuals who see an opportunity) may set up numerous ad-hoc points of sale for particular goods, caches of supplies, or pre-packaged convenience items for people in transit that are in demand due to the current emergency.

Any efforts undertaken by local government figures to carry out necessary relief works and control the social effects of a calamity are likely to lead to some form of emergency measures, such as decrees, requisitions, and on-the-spot or swift punishments to keep from adding to the burdens that the governing power bears by incarcerating arrested troublemakers.

It is also possible that local leaders who are incapable of dealing with the problems — or are out of touch with their people — will behave badly, leaving for safety elsewhere or shutting themselves away and perhaps throwing decadent revels, leading to a breakdown of government. If such behavior brings long-simmering

resentment to a head, the people could even attack or depose the present rulers in a revolution.

In response to a calamity approaching or in progress that threatens the lives of ordinary people or makes their homes unlivable, their last resort is to flee their settlements for places where they expect or hope to find greater safety.

The more fortunate, wealthy, or forewarned might be able to reach alternate homes they own or relatives who have room available, or to rent or purchase accommodations in distant communities. Up to a point, a community might have also have traditional or prepared safe havens available, such as a nearby larger town, higher ground, or a fortified place. Many other escapees, however, must simply set up unstructured camps wherever they can find space, or fall upon the charity of the places where they end up. Eventually, if the disaster is large and long-lasting enough, such displaced populations might fill or overwhelm the resources of temples, civic authorities, and helpful local businesses at their destinations.

Columns of such refugees slow traffic on roads to a crawl with heavily-loaded carts, beasts of burden, people on foot, and straggling, sick, or wounded dependents. Such exoduses can come to a standstill — for many hours or even days — when routes are blocked by broken-down conveyances or obstacles like damaged bridges, narrow sections of road, or problems like fire or flooding along the route. Refugees escaping by boat pose similar problems to ports and waterways along their routes.

Organization of refugee camps, such as it is, often depends on the relationship between the majority of refugees and those who were leaders of the communities that they have departed (e.g., with individuals associated with regimes from which they may have fled or which they blame for a failure to secure their livelihoods and property).

Refugees might also not have the understanding or inclination to place themselves under local authority or to follow established procedures for entry, potentially causing substantial political problems. On the other hand, if immigrants have desirable skills, one or several local rulers might wish to bring them without delay into feudal service or under the local regime of taxation. Local religious organizations might also combine with charity work among refugees the no-less important task — in the clerics' minds, anyway — of secur-

# Disasters

ing their devotion to local deities.

Small communities with significant differences from their neighbors may not be able to rely on any outside help or local refuge and may descend into ruin, misery, and desperate compromises alone, perhaps little-known to the outside world.

Breakdown of normal law and order in partially-abandoned settlements likely will lead to formation of ad-hoc gangs by those who have no role in combating the calamity but have motives of their own not to leave, contributing to looting, victimization of vulnerable individuals, and fires started by accident or arson that proceed to spread unchecked.

Long after a disaster has passed, memory of it and decisions made in haste during the bad times will affect the community. Examples might include homes abandoned or sold to speculators, individuals or groups who retain disgrace or honor in a community stemming from their actions in the crisis, depressed trade, and widespread emigration. Evacuated thorps and hamlets might not be rebuilt, or might be re-sited. Elsewhere, a wave of expatriates from a beleaguered city could become well-known influences — for better or worse — on one or many neighboring lands.

## Effects of Disasters on Places

Within any particular community beset by one or more calamities, the various places upon which residents and adventurers alike depend will like be affected in different ways.

**Craftsmen and tradesmen** will probably have to close and secure their shops — unless they stay open to sell goods for emergency use, as noted above. It is very likely that such people will be involved in efforts to deal with the calamity, such as work parties or militias, as skilled artisans typically have a great deal invested in a community and are unwilling to abandon it lightly.

**Entertainers** are likely to close their establishments — or perhaps move them to better prospects if they are mobile in nature — unless they choose to continue with scheduled productions in a spirit of defiance. Performances that do go ahead will probably be very popular and most likely will contain oblique references to the surrounding events.

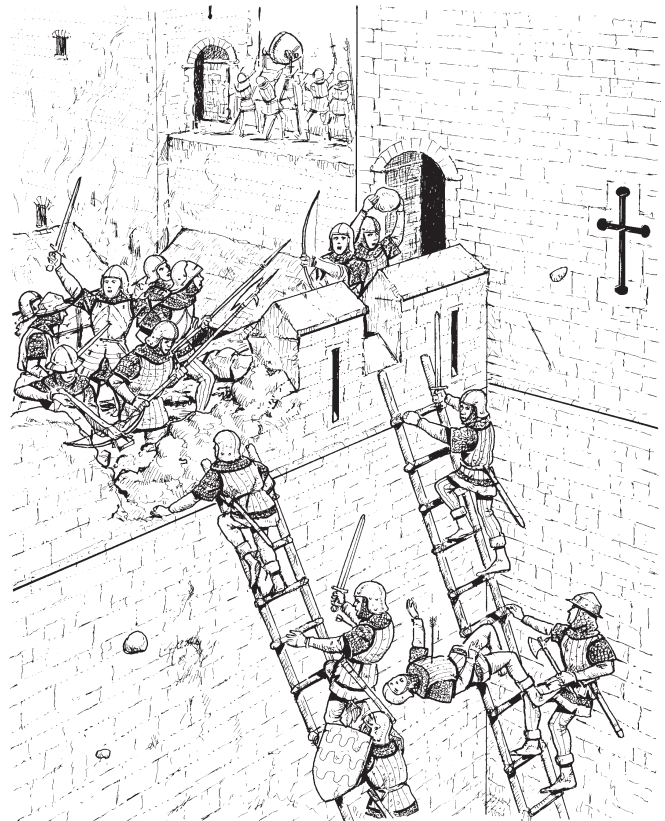
**Professional organizations and guilds** might postpone events or hold extraordinary meetings if the ca-

lamity directly affects their business. Guild leadership might also be involved in trying to resolve the crisis as part of the civic leadership.

**Merchants** will likely close their establishments and retreat to secure locations if they can, perhaps in command of significant private armed forces. Experienced merchants may be well-used to crisis situations and respond in a calculated and planned fashion — although such plans might not enhance the welfare of anyone other than themselves.

**Service** places very likely will be needed to provide shelter and food to displaced people, perhaps in a different volume and quality than they usually provide to their guests. The proprietors of such places are generally experienced in organizing supplies, accommodations, and work groups, and may hold significant respect in the local community, so they can be very effective as leaders of efforts to cope with disasters. Taverns may do a roaring trade, especially with an influx of soldiers.

**Scholars** will probably be primarily concerned about



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keeping their books, collections, and fragile items safe and may undertake considerable efforts or risks to do so. Civic leaders may call upon those scholars who have relevant knowledge or abilities to help find solutions to the crisis.

**Religions** may feel the need to offer comfort to their adherents with special services or to arrange practical help, such as shelter, food and medical assistance. Nonetheless, their establishments could be targeted by those who blame a particular deity or sect for a calamity, or attacked by looters or others seeking to take advantage of the situation.

Doomsday cults may also arise or reveal their presence, occasionally proving helpful by stocking up and benefiting from organization beforehand as a consequence of survivalist beliefs. Ultimately, however, such groups will largely prove to be a menace in various

unpredictable ways, such as instigating acts that promote and fuel the disaster, refusing to obey civil authorities, or inciting generalized panic.

**Governmental** office-holders are likely to be either the busiest people in a calamity or the first to flee from it.

The first parts of an effective response are likely to include declaring or signaling a formal state of emergency in some pre-arranged way (e.g., making a decree, ringing temple bells), convening an emergency meeting of community leaders, setting up a command center for the duration of the crisis, mandating the call-up of emergency reserves such as local militia, and making appeals for specific forms of help that might variously be answered by adventurers, mercenaries, and the like.

The municipal government might have to enter diplomatic negotiations with the community's neighbors (or with a threatening army or intelligent monster), whether for help, a suspension of hostilities or financial demands, or the formation of a league or alliance against a common threat. These might be achieved by concessions that the city would normally be unwilling to make. The government — or rulers personally — might have to borrow money or sell treasured items to fund response to, and reconstruction after, the calamity.

This is likely to invoke, whether formally or informally, more wide-reaching and centralized powers than the civic government and particularly its leader normally would exercise. Such measures may even involve setting aside of constitutional or relatively liberal government and the investiture of a supreme leader with a formal position such as Tyrant, Lord Protector, or Warlord.

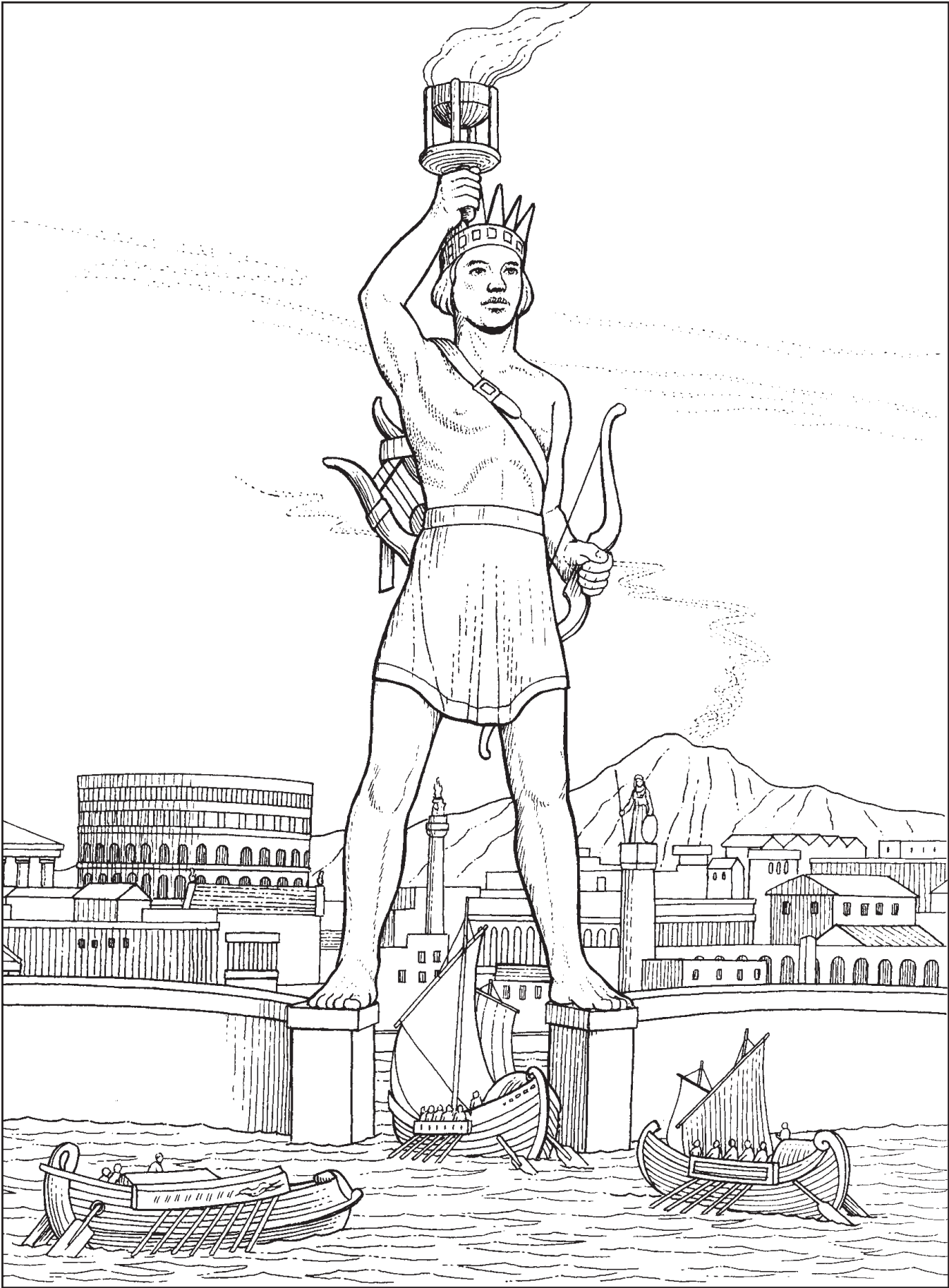
Prisoners of the local regime at the time of the calamity might be neglected or even abandoned — and perhaps even be offered an opportunity to escape — but might also be protected to a great extent by their sturdy enclosure from events going on around them.

**Underworld** figures are likely to do better than average or even well in unsettled times. Brothels and gambling dens, like taverns, are likely to prosper with the presence of soldiers and may even spring up in response to their arrival. Underworld figures can sometimes also show a surprising level of patriotism at times, just as craftsmen, tradesmen, and the proprietors of service places do, but perhaps with greater and unexpected effect.



# Disasters





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