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ethos magazine

issue 03, may/june 2003

I N S I D E

- the sojourner's diary: scopula—city on the edge
- a fantasy lexicon – with place names for your campaign setting
- A dragon's protection, part one - epic series of short stories
- celtos: chapter two – celtic classes
- bone runes - new magic items and spells for d&d
- combat tactics: fighter - tactics for using a fighter pc in combat
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The logo for the Dungeons & Dragons System, featuring the letters 'D&D' in a stylized font above the word 'system'.

The logo for the 3.5 edition of Dungeons & Dragons, featuring the number '3.5' in a stylized font with a dragon's head integrated into the design.

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ethos magazine

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E D I T O R I A L

my two cents by **james henley**

Hi, welcome to the third issue of Ethos Magazine. Sorry that it's been delayed and delayed, but finally it's here and ready for publication.

So, in this issue: Clayton Bunce, newly promoted Deputy Editor, brings us another edition of The Sojourner's Diary. This time with yet another great addition to your campaign. Also for the Dungeon Master, Bruce Gulke's Fantasy Lexicon is great for all those place names you can't think of.

Robert Sullivan brings us Bone Runes, a new set of magic items and spells, with a unique background. Finally, Alex Gilbey's series of short stories, A Dragon's Protection, continues in this issue.

Some Thankyous...

Right, that's my thought for today, so moving swiftly on, a few thank you's, and then we'll talk about the future.

Okay, thanks to Jeff Wheeler, on the production team at **Deep Magic**, the fantasy and sci-fi ezine, for his kind words of encouragement, and the signed copy of his book.

Also, thank you to my

staff team, especially due to the amount of delaying I've done over the last few months. And thank you to the guys at d20 zines, once again, for all their help.

Back to the future

The Future of Ethos. Well, once we get past the next few issues, hopefully we will start to expand. I have plans for a Sci-fi Ezine, and for further coverage of d20 Modern in Ethos.

Also, there is Crookhaven, a pet project of myself and Clayton, and hopefully, the Special Issue of Ethos will be out sometime in the next two months.

In case you haven't heard, from now on Ethos will be a bi-monthly ezine, as opposed to a monthly periodical. This means that there is a lot less pressure on me to deliver, and it also means that each issue of Ethos will be packed with a lot more goodness than it has been. So, look forward to our next, July / August issue, for release at the beginning of July, or the end of June. This all also means that there will be different deadlines for our forthcoming issues. The deadlines for the rest of this year are now up

on our homepage, at www.ethos.curvedspaces.com.

And finally...

Please check out our website and our web forums, as they are there for your convenience. They are also the best way to contact our staff without hassle. You can also join our mailing list.

So, enjoy this issue, and I hope you'll look forward to the next. So, whatever happens this month, enjoy your dice!

'Til next week!

James

James Henley,
Editor.

22nd May 2003
Wales, UK

The Sojourner's Diary

scopula - city on the edge

as the sojourner continues on his travels he continues to send back his findings by **clayton bunce**

Overlooking the Selva Mar, the southernmost Sea, precariously perched in and on the nearly vertical limestone cliffs, is an ancient fortress known originally as Margate. Today, Margate is called Scopula, and it is one of the most unique cities I have ever visited. The entire city is clustered in rows, or Stratas, from the top of the thousand foot cliffs down to the ocean. There, piers strut out into the choppy waves; goods are brought here and distributed along The Road- the sole pathway serving the population of 6,000. A fiercely independent people, Scopulans view outsiders with curiosity and distrust, and if you have nothing to offer the city, you are not welcome. The territory leading to the cliffs themselves is wild and dangerous, and entry to the city by land is through a single, heavily guarded gate flanked by stone walls. The Scopulans take their isolation seriously.

Upon approaching Scopula by boat, the first thing I noticed (besides the seven levels of buildings, poised above me as if about to tumble into the sea) were the strange pens scattered about the 'bay'. In the absence of arable soil for farming, much less horizontal land, Scopula's agriculture is based solely on the sea. These pens are the farms- seaweed, kelp, fish, and oyster beds. The fishing industry is the main source of food, and those that work these waters jealously protect their spawning grounds, aided by the Marscops, the equivalent of the Navy.

The lowest level, the first Strata, of the city are the

industries that maintain and distribute the products of the farms and the fishermen. Here are the fish processors, warehouses, importers, and the boatbuilders. Scopula maintains a healthy trade in these foods, plenty enough for lumber and other goods not normally found in cliffs. Also very important here is the Hydrolift, the water refiners. This is the main source of fresh water for the city, and the raw seawater is filtered and pumped through an ingenious system of gear houses built on each Strata. The naval yards and the barracks are found here too. No hostile force has ever successfully invaded Scopula.

Following The Road east in a steady incline, I reach the 'hill', where the road abruptly climbs like a staircase to the second Strata. Here I find the markets and fishmongers, peddlers and traders, spread over the road right to edge of the cliff. Taverns and shops are packed against the rock, concealing the caves that were once the Margate Stronghold. Rumors abound concerning the size and depth of these tunnel complexes- and of the possible contents of the caves. Shallow ones are still used as living space, and it is said deeper ones lead to ancient temples and other structures of a cliff-dwelling civilization.

The third Strata consists of the craftsmen and their homes. Walking carefully along The Road, the edge of which drops 75 feet to the piers below, I see the blacksmiths, tailors, leatherworkers, soapmakers, weavers, and such, in between more taverns, inns, and homes.

Laden burros, the chief transportation in Scopula, deftly move from Strata to Strata. The fourth has more houses built into the rock, and here the artisans ply their crafts- the most renown being the carvers of scrimshaw, or whale bones. The art reaches its pinnacle here in Scopula. They fashion intricate jewelry, scabbards, furniture and more in minutely detailed images of the sea, the history of the city, and lands and monsters beyond. It is beautiful work, and exorbitantly priced.

The next three levels are the residential homes- densely-packed buildings are carved deep into the cliffs. Each Strata houses more than 1500 citizens, and most of the structures venture far into the rock. At the end of the fifth Strata, dangerously jutting over the water far below, is the Plateau, the public grounds. Here orators ramble, religious men preach, and idealists pontificate. Crowds are clustered here day and evening- and the glowing lanterns on the front of every building in Scopula make an awe-inspiring picture at night from the sea. These are also a hardened people, living in a wind-blown dangerous habitat and most working the treacherous Selva Mar for a living. The tradition of isolation is ingrained, and at the top Strata this is evident, where the flatland meets the sea. With a commanding view of the ocean and a gateway to the lands of Penhasco, the Cliffwatchers are the protectorate of Scopula. Here is the Roofhouse, the home of Thelik, Governor of the City. A fair but cautious man, he leads the

Summit, where all facets of the Scopulan population are represented. Beyond the Gate is the unknown- few of these people ever venture far from the Cliff. As I pass through the Gate, heading north towards Synquist, far away, I think to myself I should like to return here when I have more time- back to the City on the Edge.

Scopula in Your Campaign

This is a city of mystery. It has ancient roots and unusual traits, and can provide an interesting backdrop for a session.

- > The caves and tunnels

'behind' the city can lead to numerous dungeon-style adventures. There may be temples of ancient sea-worshippers, suhuagin ruins (perhaps once the sea level was higher?), and pirate treasure...

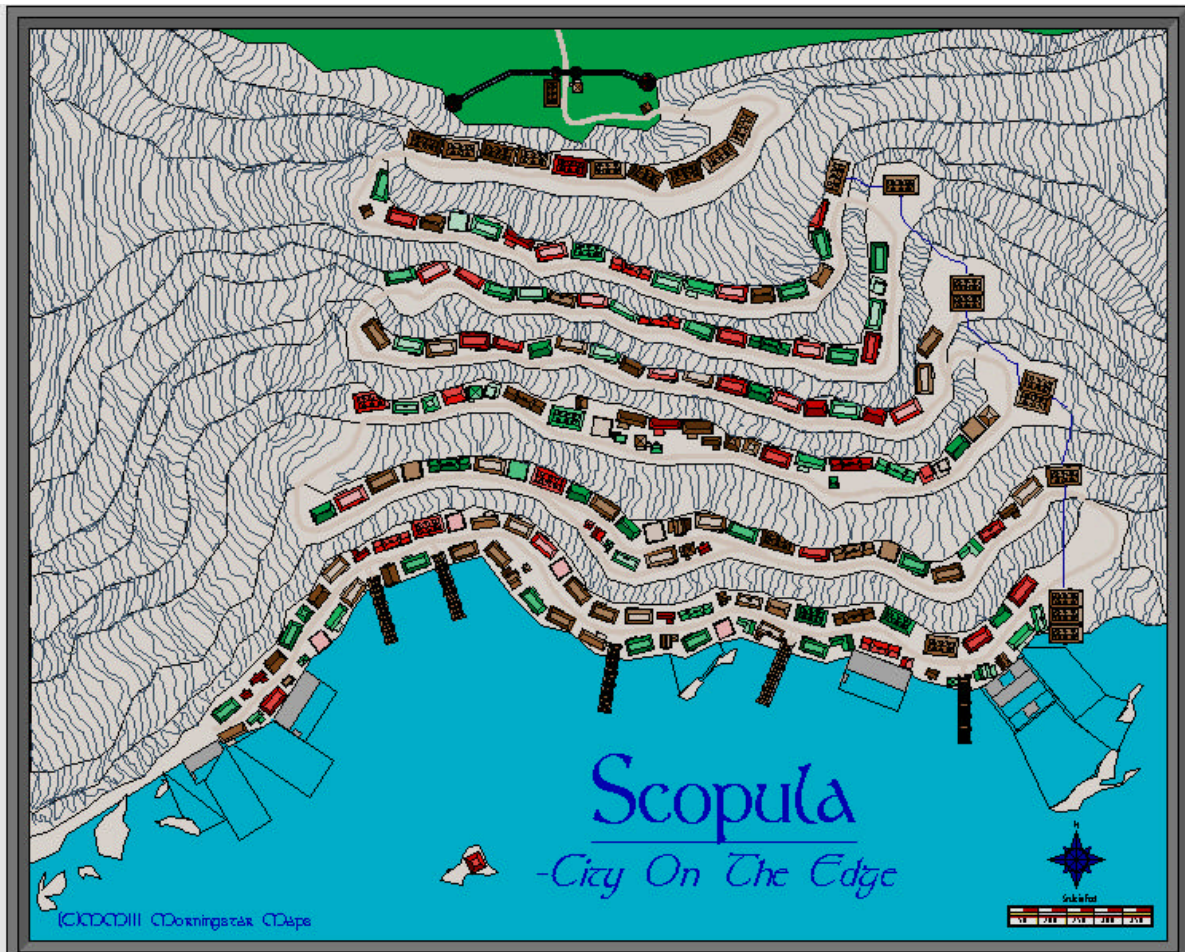
- > The ancient civilization of the Margate built a fortress here for a reason, maybe as a religious center, or to seal an evil creature inside the cliffs themselves...
- > If an ecological disaster

were to ruin the local sealife, the party might be hired to restore the lifeblood of the city.

After all, these folks don't get out much...

- > Anything resembling a streetfight would be a hair-raising event in itself!

If you have any suggestions or ideas for the Sojourner's Diary, please email them to scorpio09@go.com.



Scopula - City on the Edge. Copyright 2003, Morningstar Maps.

CELTOS

chapter ii: classes

the second section of a series of articles on adapting a d20 celtic setting by **dominique crouzet**

This is the second of several articles dealing with Celts in a d20 setting. These articles won't be on historical Celts, but options to create a Celtic-flavored campaign setting with typical d20 rules. If you have comments, suggestions, or wishes concerning these Celtos articles, I would be glad to hear about it. Just send me an email at dominique.crouzet@libertysurf.fr.

As far as character races are concerned, Celtic legends essentially revolve around warriors (barbarians, and fighters), bards, and druids. Classes like monks, paladins, or wizards are never encountered. Nonetheless, in a "Celtic flavor" campaign we can find ways to include all the SRD classes, even if with some adjustments.

The Core Classes in a Celtic Setting

This chapter details how the SRD core character classes best fit in a typical Celtic campaign setting. The following guidelines were primarily intended for campaigns set in Old-Europe-like campaign worlds, which can be much more restrictive on character classes than a typical fantasy world. Note that such campaign settings can emulate ancient Ireland or medieval Scotland ("Highlands") as well.

Barbarian

The Barbarian class applies fairly well in a Celtic campaign. In fact, a good number of warriors will be of that class, rather than fighter

(who will be found mostly among nobles). This is especially true in an authentic Celtic setting as inspired by ancient Ireland. However, during a medieval (as featured in *Braveheart* film) or early Renaissance era (as featured in *Highlander I* film), this class will be rare, coming always from remote clans of the Highlands. In any case, the name "barbarian" is relatively inappropriate, and this class should rather be called "Clan's Warrior". As such, Clan's Warriors are rugged individuals from rural communities, used to a boisterous and physical life.

Bard

Bards also apply fairly well in a Celtic campaign, as the concept for this class derives from the ancient Celts. However, Celtic bards are not roguish troubadours or mere jacks-of-all-trades, as in regular fantasy settings. In fact, their function and status is closer to that of priest, in that they are the keepers of the oral traditions and history of the Celtic culture, which is exclusively oral. As such, bards are very important in the Celtic society, and each clan will have its own bard to act as the recorder and guardian of its collective memory. Then, kings and chieftains will greet and honor travelling bards, so the fame of their clan may be propagated among the other clans. In fact, bards are never taken lightly, as in Celtic society their satirical verses could defame and dishonor an individual, with terrible results in a culture where personal reputation so much influences most

relationships and social interactions. The preferred musical instrument of Celtic bards is usually the harp, but a bard from the Highlands will of course rather play the Scottish bagpipes!

Cleric

Clerics are appropriate to a Celtic campaign setting allowing only SRD classes. They should just choose a Celtic god as their patron deity, and not be given proficiency in heavy armors (which are unknown in a Celtic setting).

However, we suggest that the cleric class be rather kept for other religions, for non-Celtic cultures and societies. In fact, the "cleric" name itself suggests some kind of organized church with curates, bishops, and abbots. Then, the cleric doesn't personify well the priesthood of the Celts, and should be replaced with the new Fili class presented in this chapter. Nonetheless, there are some cases where the cleric class may fit better than the fili, especially where deities of war or of death are concerned. Only the following gods and goddesses should have priests of the cleric class: Arawn, Goibhniu, Morigann, Nuada, and Oghma. Such Celtic clerics conform to the SRD cleric, except on the following point: they are not proficient with heavy armors (for cultural reasons), but get proficiency in the favored weapon of their deity in addition to all simple weapons.

Druid

Druids are THE archetypal Celtic

character, a central figure of Celtic societies, and are mentioned in most of their legends. However, the SRD druid shares little in common with the historical Celtic priesthood. This class is described as a sort of nature-priest, friend with animals and protector of the woodlands, who abhors cities and prefer to live as an hermit in the deep of forests. Then, there is no evidence that the class advocates any religion, only some kind of secret order about which nothing is said. Clearly, such a druid doesn't fit in a Celtic campaign world. Yet, the SRD druid's game mechanics may be kept as they are, while the class description should be as follows:

Celtic Druids are the most honored members of their society. They form the druidic branch who are in charge of the religion and the rites (where filidh are more of mentors and guardians of knowledge, techniques, and traditions, rather than priests in the usual sense). Druids are thus sages and mystics who devote their time to studying the universe's mysteries, and act as intermediaries between the mortal world and the spiritual realms. Their power comes from their thorough knowledge of nature, from the simplest grass twig to the movement of stars in the sky (unlike filidh whose more limited understanding makes them dependant on the gods for their magic). Druids hold that spirits (of humans and everything that exist, including animals, plants, mountains, the sun, and the moon) are immortal, but that all forms perpetually change and are subject to cycles. They exemplify it by their sacred ability to change their own shape into that of animals, or even the elements.

A few druids may live as hermits in the wilderness, but they are not "protectors of trees and forests". In fact, most druids will have an active social life among the Celts. At lower levels, they will travel across the land, learning more about the world, and acting as emissaries, diplomats, or informants. Then, at higher levels druids will be appointed as advisers to nobles and kings, as well as spiritual leaders of the

Celtic society. As such they are highly respected and listened to. In fact, druids are the most important people of the Celtic society, but do not govern themselves, only helping (with their knowledge and magic) those whose traditional function is to rule.

Fighter

The fighter class is perfectly appropriate, yet will remain uncommon in a Celtic campaign. In fact, fighters are found mainly among nobles who can devote all their time to weapon practice, and do not need to work in the fields to make a living. Common tribal warriors will have to spend a fair amount of time farming, hunting, etc, thus will rather be of the barbarian, ranger, and other similar classes (if any). Fighter on the other hand, becomes the choice profession of nobles, and often valorous fighters will acquire noble status as this class will somewhat represent the counterpart of the medieval knight.

Monk

Monks are clearly an oriental type of character class, and have nothing to do in the Celtic world. As such, the monk class should not be allowed. Nevertheless, some GMs do not care about historical consistency in their games, or do not want to restrict their players' choices. In this case, we may find ways to keep the monk class, and turn it into a character fitting with the Celtic legends. However the Shaolin archetype of monk honing mind and body in the monastery, definitely cannot apply. Instead, we propose two characters who may use the monk's game mechanics in a Celtic society. But remember: while the game mechanics are still those of monks, the theme of the class (and the names of its abilities) is new. This shouldn't be considered a monk anymore!

Laoch Taibhse ("ghost warrior"): Always operating in the dark of the night, this evil character (typically a part-fomorian – i.e.: half-orc) works as an assassin for some otherworldly

entity. He gets his unnatural fighting skills and other abilities from the demon he serves, during ritual trances carried out in the deep of foggy nights... And so, his hands and feet turn to talons when he fights, reverting back to normal thereafter; while his legs seem to lengthen and change to that of an animal when he runs, reverting back to normal afterwards. However, all of this usually yields a price, as the more he gains of such powers, the more he becomes enslaved to his supernatural mentor's will.

Witches of Kaer Lloyw: These legendary witches are known to train young men who were promised to a heroic destiny by fate (like Cuchulainn trained by the witch Scatach), not only in the arts of war, but also in love and magic. However, they are witches, not muscled warriors wielding great axes and shields. As such, they owe their mysterious art of combat to magic and other secrets only known to their kind. These women are thus rumored to strike their opponents with their bare hands better than with many weapons, a thing of witchcraft indeed. Others tell of these witches being able to dismiss arrows shoot at them with a gesture of the hand. So, they are often called *Gaisge Buitseach Maighdeann*, which roughly means: "maiden able to perform incredible feat of arms through witchcraft".

Paladin

The paladin is another class ill-suited to a Celtic campaign setting. Even if the Celts hold in high esteem courage, honor, and integrity, their heroes definitely aren't of the paladin sort. Such champions of law and goodness wielding healing abilities do not belong to the Celtic culture. They could nonetheless be included in the campaign, but always as the occasional stranger from a neighboring or distant land. Examples of such foreigners paladins include:

Arthurian Knights: Note first, that before being a medieval mythology, Arthurian legends were Celtic (and much different

<p>from <i>La Morte d'Arthur</i>). In any case, the typical Arthurian kingdom would make a perfect neighbor for many Celtic settings. And the typical Arthurian knight is often a paladin.</p>	<p>Psionic / Psychic Power Sortilege</p> <p>Psionic Discipline Group of Sortileges</p> <p>Psionic Power Points Mystic Power</p> <p>Clairsentience Sortileges of Insight</p> <p>Psychokinesis Sortileges of Elements</p> <p>Psychometabolism Sortileges of Health</p> <p>Psychoportation Sortileges of Movement</p> <p>Telepathy Sortileges of Thought</p>	<p>ranks). The second reason is that the Celts will usually scorn rogues for their devious ways, valuing honor and bravery much more than cunning and trickery.</p>
<p>Exiled Paladins: Historically, during the 13th century, when their order was dismantled and its members persecuted, many Knight Templars fled to Scotland. Then, it is said that a battalion of Knight Templars helped the Scots at the battle of Banockburn. Therefore, it wouldn't be ridiculous (at least from a historical point of view) to find a few castles of paladins in a Celtic land. These paladins would be ready to rally the clans to repel invaders when the need arises. But note that they would be refugees from a foreign country, not natives.</p>	<p>be even more common than fighters. In a pure Celtic age, rangers would learn their magic from the druids (or filidh). Then, in a medieval or Renaissance era, they would have to be followers of the "Old Religion". This is their interest in the old faiths and traditions of their culture that would enable them to get magic at higher levels. (As such, and from a roleplay perspective, rangers should not automatically gain spells for reaching the relevant level. They should instead get magic from appropriate circumstances. For instance, rangers who belong to the old religion and serve it well, or have performed some quest for nature, could be instructed in the ways of magic by some elder druid or witch, or even fairies and nature spirits. Nonetheless, where rules are concerned it still only happens at the relevant levels.)</p>	<p>Sorcerer</p> <p>Sorcerers are perfectly appropriate to a Celtic campaign setting, and will happen every now and then (unlike wizards who should remain very rare). Nonetheless, a sorcerer's innate ability for magic shouldn't be considered a natural, though rare, trait. Instead, sorcerers will normally be half-breeds (such as half-Sidhe, part-Sidhe, or part-Fomorian), or non humans (such as Sidhe or Small Folk – i.e.: gnomes and halflings). Or they may be fully human characters who made pacts with some otherworldly (and probably evil) entity to get magical powers. In any case, being a sorcerer in a Celtic setting should not be just another type of spellcaster. Sorcerers will typically attract the attention of supernatural powers who will try to tempt them, convert them to their cause, etc. As such, unnatural events will often happen in the vicinity of sorcerers, and they will be viewed with suspicion among the Celts. Then, in medieval /Renaissance Highlands, sorcerers are feared if not reviled.</p>
<p>Psionicists</p> <p>The problem with psionic classes, is that they seem to be more appropriate to a science-fiction setting than a Celtic one. Yet, these powers of the mind could still fit in a Celtic campaign. After all, the well known power of "second sight" displayed by a few gifted Norse people, had more to do with psychic abilities than spells. The same idea apply to many a wisewoman all over Old Europe who would display a natural talent for clairvoyance or healing, without belonging to any cult nor practicing magic. Nonetheless, if you decide to allow psions and psychic warriors in a Celtic campaign, we suggest to change what the class is supposed to represent. As such, psionics should be seen as a natural flair for magic or witchcraft (thus using the <i>Psionics-Magic Transparency</i> default option). Terminology would be modified accordingly, with psionic classes being called "witches" or at least being mistaken for sorcerers. There are likewise no terms of psy-something, nor such words as "egoist" or "telepath". We rather suggest the changes in the table below.</p>	<p>Rogue</p> <p>Rogues are fine in a Celtic setting, but will be less frequent than in more traditional fantasy worlds. The first reason is that the rogue is typically an urban character, while Celts are essentially rural. Yet, this aspect may be easily adapted: just replace the crossbow and rapier proficiencies with sling and longsword, and discard such skills as Decipher script, Forgery, Open Locks, or Pickpockets, until you travel to more civilized lands and get a chance to learn them (get a few</p>	<p>Witch</p> <p>Celtic legends are in fact full of stories about witches. Hence, such characters, although not being common, will be widespread. However, the GM should first determine who the witches really are in his campaign setting. Here are a few suggestions:</p> <p>Use the Witch class as described in the "Netbook of Witches" (Liber Mysterium), available for free on the Internet (see www.fancc.net for information).</p> <p>Use the Psion and Psychic Warrior classes, as outlined above, that is: with an appropriate change to all the relevant terminology to get a more witchcraft feel.</p> <p>Use the Sorcerer class in conjunction with the new feat</p>
<p>Ranger</p> <p>Rangers perfectly fit in a Celtic or Highlands setting. In fact they will</p>		

"Sorcerous Coven" described in the *Characters' Abilities* chapter. Such witches are sorcerers who associate themselves in covens, and having a supernatural patron get access to a cleric domain. Note that these cults' patrons are most of the time demons or Fomorian gods, although this is not necessarily the case.

Witches are in fact the last remnants of the "old religion", which disappeared after the medieval civilization expanded into the Celtic lands, and the righteous "True Faith" persecuted all pagan cults. As such, druids (and filidh) will be held for evil witches and satanic worshipers by the intolerant Holy Church. Then, a superstitious and fearful populace will be prone to see a witch in any character who displays magical abilities without being a priest of the official religion.

Wizard

Wizards may occasionally appear in a Celtic setting, but seldom as natives. Celts are a rural people and their culture is almost exclusively oral, which is incompatible with the books, libraries, universities, etc., necessary to practice wizardry. Then, in the medieval / renaissance era, the Highlands are a very poor region where most people are also illiterate. These economic conditions cannot permit the development of wizardry in such disinherited regions, as the wizard class requires a high level of education and a lot of money. Henceforth, the rare wizard who may appear in the campaign, will normally be a stranger from a neighboring or distant land. On the other hand, many Sidhe will be knowledgeable in arcane magic, but will carefully keep it for themselves. Even half-Sidhe will have a hard time learning it from them, even if they could have a natural talent for it.

New Celtic Races

Below are detailed some new Celtic races for use in a Celtic setting.

The Clansman (NPC Class)

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1 st	+1	+2	+0	+0	Bonus feat ; Call upon kinsmen ; Laborer livelihood ; Illiteracy
2 nd	+2	+3	+0	+0	Rural born (+1)
3 rd	+3	+3	+1	+1	—
4 th	+4	+4	+1	+1	Bonus feat ; Endure hardship (+1) ; Laborer (+1)
5 th	+5	+4	+1	+1	—
6 th	+6 / +1	+5	+2	+2	Rural born (+2)
7 th	+7 / +2	+5	+2	+2	—
8 th	+8 / +3	+6	+2	+2	Bonus feat
9 th	+9 / +4	+6	+3	+3	Endure hardship (+2) ; Laborer (+2)
10 th	+10 / +5	+7	+3	+3	Rural born (+3)
11 th	+11 / +6 / +1	+7	+3	+3	—
12 th	+12 / +7 / +2	+8	+4	+4	Bonus feat
13 th	+13 / +8 / +3	+8	+4	+4	—
14 th	+14 / +9 / +4	+9	+4	+4	Endure hardship (+3) ; Laborer (+3) ; Rural born (+4)
15 th	+15 / +10 / +5	+9	+5	+5	—
16 th	+16 / +11 / +6 / +1	+10	+5	+5	Bonus feat
17 th	+17 / +12 / +7 / +2	+10	+5	+5	—
18 th	+18 / +13 / +8 / +3	+11	+6	+6	Rural born (+5)
19 th	+19 / +14 / +9 / +4	+11	+6	+6	Endure hardship (+4) ; Laborer (+4)
20 th	+20 / +15 / +10 / +5	+12	+6	+6	Bonus feat

Clansmen are sturdy peasants and warriors who belongs to a Celtic clan, a community of blood-related kinsmen used to help each others in times of need. In fact they are before all farmers and craftsmen. However, the Celts tend to be warlike and quarrelsome people always at odds with other clans for reasons of cattle raiding or blood feuds. As such, clansmen must be tough and ready to fight at any time, to defend themselves and their clan. But of course, they would initiate a fight as much often as they would defend themselves from an aggression.

Adventures: Clansmen will be drawn to an adventuring life usually to complement a meager income and scarce opportunities in their native unforgiving environment.

Characteristics: Clansmen are skilled in combat and in professional and nature-oriented skills. Being rural people they

are at ease in the wilderness, and for having to make a living are skilled in crafts and professions. Now, as a peasant, the clansman would have been a simple commoner in more quiet societies. Nevertheless, the usually dangerous life of Celts requires that clansmen also be a warriors, so they are much practiced with weapons.

Alignment: Clansmen could be of any alignment, yet they tend to be neutral. Where good and evil is concerned, clansmen will care for and help their own kinsmen, but will have few qualms about raiding or killing people from other clans. Then, as most Celts clansmen want to retain their independence and freedom (which would have them chaotic), while at the same time being attached to their clan's laws and custom, and being likewise attached to their Celtic cultural traditions (which would have them lawful). Thus, clansmen also tend to remain neutral in this regard.

Religion: Clansmen, as independent folk, typically stick to old pagan faiths, and tend to reject the new religions brought by the civilization. As such, in a Shadow-Earth or Gothic-Earth setting, they will be of the old Celtic religions, or the Celtic church. Otherwise, in generic settings, clansmen typically abide by druidic worship.

Background: Clansmen are rural people who often live in the backcountry and mountains of poor regions. They are rude peasants toughened by a hard life in an unforgiving environment. They favor their independence above all, but have a tradition of kinship. As such, clansmen rely on their clan for support and protection. In any case, clansmen are easily recognizable by their dress: the plaid. This parti-colored outfit consists of twelve yards of *tartan*, worn around the waist, obliquely across the breast and over the left shoulder, and partly depending backwards. (By this arrangement there is nothing to impede the free use of the sword-arm.) The design of the tartan is meant to indicate the clan of its wearer. The custom is to have one color in the dress of a slave, two for a peasant, three for a soldier or young lord, four for a *brughaidh* (land-holder), five for a noble (or district chief), six for an *ollamh* (druid), and seven for the King and Queen.

Races: The Clansman is typically a human Celt (and Pict if you use this race), but will rarely appear among other races and cultures. In more generic settings, dwarves, elves (sylvan, wild), half-elves, and half-orcs may also apply, but elves, gnomes, and halflings do not fit much with this class.

Other classes: Clansmen hold barbarians, fighters, and rangers, of their own clan in high esteem, but will be wary of those from other clans. They will respect all druids (i.e.: Celtic priests) and bards, while seeing rogues as scoundrels of low honor. On the other hand, clansmen will usually shun most other spellcasters, and will especially revile sorcerers.

Characteristics

Abilities: Clansmen should preferably have a high constitution score to better survive the harsh conditions of their lives. Then, with great strength they can be more efficient warriors, as for fighters and barbarians.

Alignment: any.

Class Skills

The Clansman's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are:

Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Handle animals (Cha), Hide (Dex), Intuit direction (Wis), Jump (Str), Knowledge (Local: clans) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Profession (Wis), Ride (Dex), Spot (Wis), Swim (Str), Use Rope (Dex), and Wilderness lore (Wis).

Skill Points at 1st Level: (4 + INT modifier) x 4.

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: 4 + INT modifier.

Class Features

All the following are class features of the Clansman class:

Hit Die: d8 (eight).

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Clansmen are proficient with all simple weapons, plus the battleaxe, greatclub, longsword, and longsword. They are proficient with light and medium armors, and with all shields.

Bonus Feats: At 1st, 4th, 8th, 12th, 16th, and 20th levels clansmen gain a bonus feat. This feat must be chosen from the following list: SRD: Alertness, Endurance, Great fortitude, Improved unarmed strike, Iron will, Lightning reflexes, Run, Toughness, Track, and Weapon focus. *New Feats:*

Call upon kinsmen: Clansmen can call upon their kinsmen for help and support. That is, in time of need they may find shelter, food, and help among their own clan. They could thus be provided a hiding place from non-Celtic authorities, be supplied with food and equipment, or get the help of a number of clansmen (of 1st to 4th level as GM's discretion) equal to 1d4 per two experience levels. However there is a practical limit to the help which may be given: Kinsmen

won't do something that may appear really dangerous, or hopeless.

Kinsmen are near always poor peoples, thus won't feed a clansman for days, nor give him costly equipment they don't have or that they need in their daily lives.

Such kind of help is two ways: for as much a clansman has got help, he will be called for help by other clansmen. If he makes a habit of not giving his help, people from within his clan will quickly cease to help him. And of course, none will help a character who is known to have hurt his brethren. In fact this ability can be really useful for the GM to introduce plots and adventures, and enhance role-playing. Note that a clansman PC may be called upon much more frequently than himself calls his kinsmen for help. If he is true to his role, the PC should make a point of honor answering the call to his best.

Laborer Livelihood: Clansmen aren't professional warriors, but make a living as farmers or artisans. As such, at first level a clansman gains 4 ranks in one Craft or Profession skill chosen among the following. *Crafts:* basket-weaving, bow-making, blacksmithing, carpentry, cobbling, leatherworking, pottery, stonemasonry, trapmaking, or weaving. *Professions:* brewer (ale, beer, or whiskey), driver, farmer, guide, herbalist, herdsman, lumberjack, miller, miner, tanner, or woodcutter. Then, at 4th level the clansman gains a +1 competence bonus to this craft or profession skill. This bonus increases to +2 at 9th level, +3 at 14th level, and +4 at 19th level.

Rural Born: Clansmen don't spend all their time training with weapons like fighter. Instead, they spend much of it farming in the fields and hunting or trapping in the wilderness. As such, at 2^d level they gain a +1 bonus to their Hide, Intuit direction, Listen, Move silently, Spot, and Wilderness lore checks when outdoors in natural surroundings. This bonus increases to +2 at 6th level, +3 at 10th level, +4 at 14th level, and +5 at 18th level.

Endure Hardship: Unlike the upper classes and successful adventurers who can afford ample food and better equipment, clansmen often live in rude conditions. Nonetheless, the strongest clansmen eventually become inured to such a ruthless lot. As such, they get increased resistance to cold, disease, and starvation. This results in a +1 bonus at 4th level, which increases to +2 at 9th level, +3 at 14th level, and +4 at 19th level, and that can be applied as a:

Bonus to Fortitude saves to resist the effect of cold temperatures. Furthermore, clansmen only suffer 1d4 of subdual damage from cold, rather than the usual 1d6.

Bonus to saving throws against natural diseases and natural poisons.

Number of days they can survive without food (but not without drink), before the normal effects of food deprivation take effect. Note however, that they should eat an equal amount of days before again benefit from this ability.

Illiteracy: Clansmen, do not automatically know how to read and write. They must spend 2 skill-points to gain the ability to read and write any language they are able to speak.

Author's note

The Clansman is before all intended to fill the ranks of NPCs Celts. The SRD commoner and warrior were seen too weak, so this class was created (note that GMs may allow PCs who would take it to get d10 hit-dice rather than d8). In any case, the Clansman was checked with both the *D20 CCE* and the *ClassCalc*, with the following results:

It gets 230 points with the d20-CCE, where the ranger gets 237, the barbarian 245, the fighter 250, and the monk (the highest rated) gets 287 points.

It gets 263 points with the ClassCalc, where the ranger gets 292, the barbarian 294, the fighter 299, and the cleric (the highest rated) gets 308 points.

The Fili (Core Class)

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1 st	0	+0	+0	+2	Awe aura ; Savant
2 nd	+1	+0	+0	+3	Salmon of Knowledge
3 rd	+1	+1	+1	+3	Diviner (+1)
4 th	+2	+1	+1	+4	Savant (+1)
5 th	+3	+1	+1	+4	Bonus feat
6 th	+3	+2	+2	+5	—
7 th	+4	+2	+2	+5	Diviner (+2)
8 th	+5	+2	+2	+6	Savant (+2)
9 th	+5	+3	+3	+6	—
10 th	+6 / +1	+3	+3	+7	Bonus feat
11 th	+7 / +2	+3	+3	+7	—
12 th	+7 / +2	+4	+4	+8	Diviner (+3)
13 th	+8 / +3	+4	+4	+8	Savant (+3)
14 th	+9 / +4	+4	+4	+9	—
15 th	+9 / +4	+5	+5	+9	Bonus feat
16 th	+10 / +5	+5	+5	+10	—
17 th	+11 / +6 / +1	+5	+5	+10	Diviner (+4)
18 th	+11 / +6 / +1	+6	+6	+11	Savant (+4)
19 th	+12 / +7 / +2	+6	+6	+11	—
20 th	+13 / +8 / +3	+6	+6	+12	Bonus feat

The Fili (plural Filidh) belongs to the branch of druids who perform as seers, healers, lawyers, and teachers, among the Celts. They are the guardians of knowledge and laws, where bards are the guardians of memory and history. Nonetheless, the fili is not only a scholar, but also a skilled poet like bards. As such, when a fili comes to condemn an unjust noble or king, he will do it through magical verses known as "satires".

Adventures: Filidh typically adventure to help their communities or further their understanding of the world. Many will also travel the land to ply their trade where they are needed, thus leading a wandering life which more often than not lead them into adventures. Then, at times, filidh will go on quests as inspired by their patron deity so they can perform the often obscure will of the gods.

Characteristics: Filidh are masters of divine magic, much like clerics. A fili's spells are granted by the deity who emphasizes his domain of specialization (like medicine, law, craft, etc.). Filidh

are also great scholars and diviners, and also function as ethical judges, cursing with satire spells those who deserve it. Filidh are in fact given much respect in their society, and it is considered anathema to harm them. On the other hand, filidh are less effective in combat than other type of priests, even if they still are able to defend themselves should the need arise, or they would accompany the clan's warriors to war.

Alignment: As filidh are the guardians of Celtic traditions and lawyers (the Brehon law), and given the importance of truth in their society, most of them are of lawful alignments, while the archetypal filidh is lawful neutral. Conversely, chaotic filidh are very rare.

Religion: Filidh are in fact more sages than priests, which is the province of Druids. Yet, the Celts do not make a clear distinction between science and spirituality, and their path to knowledge delves into both. Thus, while filidh are bound to show the normal rever-

ence to all the Celtic gods, they nonetheless must choose one as their patron deity. That is, the god or goddess who exemplifies their field of study. For example, a fili specializing in medicine will choose Diancecht as her patron deity; while one specializing in magic will choose Math Mathonwy (See Druidism chapter for a list and description of Celtic deities).

Background: Filidh may come from all walks of life, provided someone would pay for their studies. In any case, many would become filidh for its high social status among the Celts. However, druidic studies tend to be long, and often require several years to learn the basics. In fact, to become an accomplished fili will typically take twenty years. A fili could learn from only one mentor, but will generally be instructed in druidic colleges, learning under several masters. There, filidh also learn to read and write (in Ogham and Common). Nevertheless, since writing is considered unsuited to keep knowledge, all of their science is memorized, never written down. As such, filidh students will spend much time learning by heart, often teaching younger students, as in the process they can strengthen their knowledge. A low level fili adventurer could thus teach a companion who may consequently multiclass as a fili. However, it should not be possible to take the class on a whim when having enough XP to get a new level. Becoming a fili can only result from long and thorough studies.

Races: Filidh may be of any race, but will typically be found among the Celts, and thus will be mainly humans. Of course, half-breeds (part-Sidhe, etc.) raised in a Celtic society will proportionally become filidh as much often as humans.

Other Classes: Filidh get along best with Celtic warriors, especially rangers who usually have some basic knowledge of druidism, thus are more able to understand them than the others. They are of course on excellent terms with bards and druids. On the other hand, filidh rather dislike those who tend to act in devious ways (like many rogues), for they revile lies. Then, filidh are highly suspicious of those not of the druidic priesthood who wield magic,

especially sorcerers.

GAME RULE INFORMATION

Filidh have the following game statistics.

Abilities: Wisdom determines how powerful a spell a fili can cast, how many spells the fili can cast per day, and how hard those spells are to resist. To cast a spell, a fili must have a Wisdom score of 10 + the spell's level. A fili gets bonus spells based on Wisdom. The Difficulty Class of a saving throw against a fili's spell is 10 + the spell's level + the fili's Wisdom modifier. A high Intelligence is also important so filidh can have more skills.

Alignment: Varies by deity. A fili's alignment must be within one step of his deity's, and it may not be chaotic unless the deity's alignment is chaotic.

Class Skills

The fili's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are: Bluff (Cha), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Heal (Wis), Knowledge (any) (Int), Perform (Cha), Profession (Wis), Scry (Int, exclusive skill), and Spellcraft (Int). See *Skills Overview and further* of the SRD for skill descriptions.

Skill Points at 1st Level: (4 + Int modifier) x 4.

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: 4 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the fili.

Hit Die: d6 (six).

Weapon and Armor Proficiency:

Filidh are proficient with the following weapons: club, dagger, darts, halfspear, longspear, quarterstaff, sickle, shortspear, and sling. Their spiritual oaths prohibit them from using weapons other than these. They are proficient with light armors only, and are prohibited from wearing metal armor (should they acquire a medium or heavy armor proficiency).

Spells: A fili casts divine spells. A fili may prepare and cast any spell on the cleric spell list, provided he can cast spells of that level. The Difficulty Class for a saving throw against a fili's spell is 10 + the spell's level + the fili's Wis modifier. Each fili must choose a time

at which he must spend an hour each day in quiet contemplation or supplication to regain his daily allotment of spells. Time spent resting has no effect on whether a fili can prepare spells. In addition to his standard spells, a fili gets one domain spell of each spell level, starting at 1st. When a fili prepares a domain spell, it must come from one of his two domains.

Domain spells: At 1st level, the fili chooses two domains from those granted by his deity. These domains cannot be changed thereafter.

Chaotic, Evil, Good, and Lawful Spells: A fili cannot cast spells of an alignment opposed to his own or to his deity's.

Spontaneous casting: Much like the clerical power described in the SRD, filidh can channel stored spell energy into divination spells that they haven't prepared ahead of time. The fili can "lose" a prepared spell in order to cast any divination spell of the same level or lower. A fili can't use spontaneous casting to convert domain spells into divination spells. These spells arise from the particular powers of the fili's deity, not divine energy in general. This ability comes as a result of filidh being expert seers and prophets; they can convert divine energy into an act of divination at any time.

[Exception: filidh whose patron deity is Diancecht – the god of healing – get the normal spontaneous casting ability of clerics instead, and convert prepared spells to cure spells – but not inflict spells –]

Bonus Languages: A fili may substitute Sidhe for one of the bonus languages available to him. In addition, a fili knows the Druidic language (as per the SRD druid class). This secret language is known only to druids and filidh, and they are forbidden from teaching it to non-druids. Druidic has its own alphabet: the Ogham script. Ogham is highly versatile: a fili (or druid) can create a coded message to another, hidden in a piece of art or arrangement of twigs. There are even several ways of communicating in a highly subtle Ogham sign language that can be used without non-proficient observers having any idea what is being said.

Awe Aura: Filidh are protected at all time by an aura of taboo affecting humanoid. Provided that the fili doesn't perform any obviously offensive action against them or their allies, humanoids cannot attack him unless they succeed a Will saving throw. The DC for this saving throw is 10 + half the fili's level + his Cha modifier for Celts; and 5 + half the fili's level + his Cha modifier for non-Celts (i.e.: any humanoid not raised in a Celtic culture). Once a save is failed, an humanoid cannot attempt a new save until the next day.

Savant: Filidh are scholars as well as priests, and spend much time memorizing knowledge. As such, at first level a fili gains 8 ranks in two knowledge skills (4 ranks each) chosen among the following: Arcana, Brehon law, Geography, History, Local, Nature, Nobility and royalty, The Planes, and Religion. Then, at 4th level the fili gains a +1 competence bonus to these two knowledge skill. This bonus increases to +2 at 8th level, +3 at 13th level, and +4 at 18th level.

Salmon of Knowledge: At 2nd level, filidh get the *Bardic Knowledge* ability (as per the SRD bard class). A fili may make a special knowledge check with a bonus equal to his level + his Intelligence modifier to see whether he knows some relevant information about local notable people, legendary items, or noteworthy places. This check will not reveal the powers of a magic item but may give a hint as to its general function. The fili may not take 10 or take 20 on this check; this sort of knowledge is essentially random. The DM will determine the Difficulty Class of the check by referring to the table below.

Diviner: At 3rd level, the fili gets a +1 circumstance bonus to his Scry skill checks; as well as to all Spot, Search, or Sense motive checks made to detect any kind of falsehood (i.e.: lies, forgery) or concealment (i.e.: secret doors, hidden treasures). He also gets a +1 bonus to her Will saving throws against Illusion spells and effects. These bonuses increase to +2 at 7th level, +3 at 12th level, and +4 at 17th level.

Bonus Feats: At 5th, 10th, 15th,

DC	Type of Knowledge
10	Common, known by at least a substantial minority of the local population.
20	Uncommon but available, known by only a few people in the area.
25	Obscure, known by few, hard to come by.
30	Extremely obscure, known by very few, possibly forgotten by most who once knew it, possibly known only by those who don't understand the significance of the knowledge.

and 20th levels, the fili gains a bonus feat from the following list: Craft standing stones,

Ex-Filidh

A fili who grossly violates the code of conduct expected by his god (generally acting in ways opposed to the god's alignment or purposes) loses all spells and class features and cannot gain levels as a fili of that god until he atones. Multiclass: if a fili multiclasses with the cleric class (and provided he still worships the same god), the level of fili and cleric stacks to determine the spellcasting level (both the fili and cleric classes

have the same spellcasting progression, domain spells, and spontaneous casting ability). The priests of Celtic deities are normally filidh. Only the following gods and goddesses have priests of the cleric class: Arawn, Goibhniu, Morigann, Nuada, and Oghma.

Author's note

The Fili is before all intended to represent a priest closer to the historical Celtic priesthood than the SRD cleric. As such, the Fili is heavily inspired by the AD&D 2nd edition Celt Campaign Sourcebook's druid, bard, and manteis, as well as by the D20 Slaine RPG's druid. The name "Vate" would have been probably more accurate, but the word seems to come from Latin, or at least Gallo-Latin. As such, I opted for the term Fili, as filidh were the counterpart of vates, even if they are mistaken for Irish bards. In any case, the Fili class was checked with both the *D20 CCE* and the *ClassCalc*, with the following results:

It gets 245 points with the d20-CCE, where the cleric gets 240, the druid 250, and the monk (the highest rated) gets 287 points.

It gets 305 points with the *ClassCalc*, where the druid gets 293, and the cleric (the highest rated) gets 308 points.

Level	Spells per Day									
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	3	1+1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
2	4	2+1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
3	4	2+1	1+1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
4	5	3+1	2+1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
5	5	3+1	2+1	1+1	—	—	—	—	—	—
6	5	3+1	3+1	2+1	—	—	—	—	—	—
7	6	4+1	3+1	2+1	1+1	—	—	—	—	—
8	6	4+1	3+1	3+1	2+1	—	—	—	—	—
9	6	4+1	4+1	3+1	2+1	1+1	—	—	—	—
10	6	4+1	4+1	3+1	3+1	2+1	—	—	—	—
11	6	5+1	4+1	4+1	3+1	2+1	1+1	—	—	—
12	6	5+1	4+1	4+1	3+1	3+1	2+1	—	—	—
13	6	5+1	5+1	4+1	4+1	3+1	2+1	1+1	—	—
14	6	5+1	5+1	4+1	4+1	3+1	3+1	2+1	—	—
15	6	5+1	5+1	5+1	4+1	4+1	3+1	2+1	1+1	—
16	6	5+1	5+1	5+1	4+1	4+1	3+1	3+1	2+1	—
17	6	5+1	5+1	5+1	5+1	4+1	4+1	3+1	2+1	1+1
18	6	5+1	5+1	5+1	5+1	4+1	4+1	3+1	3+1	2+1
19	6	5+1	5+1	5+1	5+1	5+1	4+1	4+1	3+1	3+1
20	6	5+1	5+1	5+1	5+1	5+1	4+1	4+1	4+1	4+1

A Dragon's Protection

part one

the first part of a series of short, epic fiction. Continuing from last issue's prelude by alex gilbey

In the northern realms of the world known to the race of men, many secrets have remained undiscovered these past centuries. The superstitious tribes that live there are often blind to them, but the folklores of these nomadic tribes hold many a tale for the wise listener. Many years after the events of which I speak took place, this poem was to be heard around campfires all over the Northlands.

In the northern lands where fell
beasts roam
Be ever on your guard,
For from the north, the old men
come
Who seeks what lies in cards,
They ever are a roaming
Those men who know no death,
But through them it will come to
you
To steal your very breath

Like all good legends, this rhyme is half myth and superstition. As to the other half, you'll have to read on to find out.

* * *

In his dark fortress, whose spires reared above the mountains of the north, Lord Hrathti, the leader of the conclave of the blood, turned from the window of his workshop, situated in the highest tower. A chill wind blew in and, though his body had long ceased to be aware of such things, his mind told him that it was cold.

On the desk before him lay the note that had reached him from the Dragon Rider not an hour before. Re-reading it he was surer than that the prize he had sought so long was within his grasp.

Turning to his surviving brethren, the more powerful of the original mages, he prepared to speak.

"Each of you knows by now the exact contents of this letter?"

There was a vague murmur of acknowledgement.

"Then we must do it is we have been set by fate to do. The world of men needs a leader, and I WILL be that leader. Go now. Take your own guards and servants as you see fit. However you do it, bring me the amulet. You know my rewards and also my wrath. Go!"

As they left the chamber, none saw the cruel smile that lit the mage's face.

COMING SOON TO
ETHOS MAGAZINE...

Next month will see the start of EM's coverage of the d20 Modern RPG. Our first regular column on the game will begin in our July / August issue by Robert Sullivan, and from then we will be bringing many more d20 Modern articles.

bone runes

some new magic items and related spells with an interesting background by **robert sullivan**

"There is no more lively sensation than that of pain; its impressions are certain and dependable..."
—*Justine*, Marquis de Sade.

Marks of Iniquity

Dwarves and giants of many worlds lay claim to traditions of magical runes and rune carving. The clerics among the dwarfs and giants receive this holy magic — a magic that is unavailable to arcane spell casters.

However, many arcane spell casters wish to have access to the power of runes. Even in worlds where true rune carving is rare — or even unknown — there are always those who hunger for the ability to invest symbols, images and the written word with real and tangible power. There will always be an individual to fulfil desire — for personal gain — wherever it exists.

Ages ago a clever pit fiend fashioned a malevolent parody of rune carving and offered it to arcane magic users whose hungers outstripped their judgment or sense of right and wrong. These "bone runes" were and remain foul and evil.

Background

There are legends about the "Pit of Burning Bones," a place of horror reputed to be the lowest circle of the Hells. Here are located great hills of bones. All the bones possess power runes in infernal script that burn but never consume the bone.

Ages ago, the devil master of this place — a servant of Asmodeus itself — offered the secret of how to make "runes upon bones" to mortals he judged wretched.

Namely, the wicked, sick, depraved and gullible.

On an ominous note, sages, wizards and lore masters in the know about the goings-on in the Hells indicate that the master of the Burning Bones has been absent for a few years. Presumably, it is actively creating much sorrow on some mortal world.

For millennia, various infernal societies have practiced the dark tradition of bone rune magic and kept all the known skulls (see below). Recently, a group of mages dedicated to an evil deity acquired most of the skulls that had been in the possession of the infernalists. Some rumours suggest that the mages got the skulls by force. Other — more disturbing — rumours say the two groups have to come some kind of association of convenience and are sharing sinister lore. Servants of both the cult and the mages bearing the runes have begun appearing. Those runes make the servants at once more tormented and dangerous. Most disturbing of all is the possibility of *geas* runes (see below) placed on carefully chosen lords and ladies, king and queens.

Normal bones that have these evil runes carved into them turn an ugly purple—red colour. Interestingly enough, this is the same colour as many of the stones — "carved" to resemble many skeletons fused together — used in an infamous temple dedicated to a power of evil.

The Skulls

Carved into the skulls' of long—dead astral divae are the secrets

to mastering bone rune magic. The secrets to not appear any spell book. The alphabet and language used are both internal.

The skulls are slightly larger than a normal human skull. However, they are well proportioned and — aside from the runes — are flawless. A detect magic will show the skulls and the devil names to be both magical. It requires separate *identify* spells to determine that the skulls are not from the prime material plane and that the symbols carved into the skulls are devil runes of power. Reading the infernal runes themselves and understanding the directions for creating runes requires a *read magic* spell and if the character does not already know how to read infernal a *comprehend languages* as well.

A careful and detailed examination (DC 20) will reveal that each skull has carved into it a *geas*. Further study (DC 30) will reveal that carved into each skull is a total of 10-spell levels. These other spells were runes with constant spell effects (see below) and no longer function. Finally, the most careful examination possible (40) will reveal someone carved the runes into the skull while the outsiders lived.

The skulls also possess a secret ability placed on them by their pit fiend creator. Arcane spell casters who read the runes — with *read magic*, *comprehend languages* or some similar magic or spell-like effect — must make a successful will save or fall under a *geas* spell-like ability of the skull. A game master should make this roll secretly for player character bards, sorcerers

or wizards. The DC is 18. The character falls under a *geas* compulsion to spread the bone rune magic to the best of their ability if the save fails. They learn and cast — justifying it as “a necessary evil” — if they are of sufficient level and ability to perform the spells. They turn the skull over to a wizard who can learn the spells and ask him to place a rune on them if they do not have enough personal power to fashion the devil runes themselves. The character will at all times operate under the *geas* effect and behave as described unless the *geas* is somehow removed. A game master should take the player who runs this character aside and explain the situation to them.

Any bard, sorcerer or wizard who reads the infernal runes — with *read magic*, *comprehend languages* or some similar magic — must make a successful will save or fall under another *geas* spell-like ability of the skulls if four or more of the skulls are one place. The DC is 20. They fall under a *geas* compulsion to open a gate to the Pit if they fail this save. The engravings detail how to open a *gate* specifically to Pit. The character behaves as described barring the removal of the *geas*. The game master should take the player aside and explain the situation to them if this happens to a player character.

At least seven skulls once existed. How many still exist and their locations are a mystery, e.g. the game masters should determine if any of the skulls remain and their locations.

Using the Runes in a Campaign

Player characters should never willingly have bone runes placed on themselves or put them on another. Such actions are incompatible with a player character calling himself a “hero.” This is addition to being breath—takeningly stupid.

Anyone who does carry these infernal runes has on himself or herself written “property of the something vile from the lowest circle of Hell.”

This is not to say the runes cannot appear in a campaign. Perhaps the player characters

investigate the matter by a wizard or cleric of a god of light. Alternatively, perhaps they encounter what would normally only be a lesser servant of evil but that now wields strange powers. Alternatively, perhaps the lord of their city — or a powerful ally — begins acting in strange ways and complaining of chronic pain.

This eventually leads the player characters to discover the existence of bone runes, the skull of an astral diva and the current evil entities that are using the runes on people.

Games masters should not abuse their authority and have the runes placed on a player character against the player’s will.

Metamagics of Bone Runes

Normally the bone runes only use arcane magic spells. However, they can use divine spells. Use of clerical spells inevitably attracts the attention of the gods. Only at the gods’ discretion are the spells granted. Deities that allow — or even encourage — their worshipers to have and use bone runes are always and only evil.

Bone runes are incompatible with certain spells. Many of these forbidden spells revolve around controlling outsiders because the magic of these runes comes from devils. These include: *dimensional anchor*, *dismissal*, *lesser planar binding*, *magic jar*, *antimagic field*, *planar binding*, *banishment*, *instant summons*, *demand*, *binding*, *power word: bind*, *great planar binding*, *wish*, *summon monster* and *summon nature’s ally*. Further, healing and curative spells are incompatible with bone runes.

All acceptable spells fall into one of two categories. The first are spells that provide a constant effect for the person carrying the infernal rune. The second category is spells with an invoked effect as a partial action at the will of the person carrying the rune. The rune then slowly recharges — at a rate of one spell level per week — afterwards. This second category allows the bearer of the rune to use the spell as a spell—like ability.

Spells that may be placed in a rune that provides a constant effect are: *resistance*, *detect poison*, *detect magic*, *read magic*,

endure elements, *protection from law/chaos/good*, *mage armour*, *obscuring mist*, *comprehend languages*, *detect secret doors*, *detect undead*, *cause fear*, *protection from arrows*, *resist elements*, *detect thoughts*, *bull’s strength*, *cat’s grace*, *endurance*, *non—detection*, *protection from elements*, *tongues*, *displacement*, *water breathing*, *detect scrying*, *fear*, *mnemonic enhancer*, *repulsion*, *true seeing*, *contingency*, *control water*, *spell having*, *iron body*, *foresight*. A rune that has invoked spell effects can use these spells. However, these are the only spells that compatible with devil runes to provide a constant effect. All other spells only functions as runes with invoked spell effects.

*Bone Runes cannot provide protection from evil as they are evil and it would be impossible for them to provide protection from themselves.

Devils, liches and other eldritch horrors use these infernal runes on their subjects and pawns. A favourite of such creatures is *geas*. This magic they use on kings, lords, high priests, powerful merchants, archwizards and the like. *Geas* are a special case for a rune. This is because they only inflict the “pain penalty” (see below) when the terms of the *geas* are violated. This is in addition to the penalties the *geas* normally inflicts if the person carrying the rune violates the *geas*. Further, an open-ended *geas* placed in this manner has no duration. Any effect that would normally remove this magical compulsion has no effect on the rune *geas*. The *geas* continue operating until the removal of the rune. The *geas* would only then start having duration or become susceptible to normal removal methods.

The Pain Penalty: The devil runes cause a chronic and debilitating burning pain, which spreads out from the runes themselves. Due to this “pain penalty,” individuals with bone runes suffer a handicap of one to all rolls for every two spell—levels inscribed as infernal runes. This means the individual carrying the runes will have a -1 penalty applied to their base attack, save rolls and skill rolls for every two spells levels of

bone rune magic. Each time a spell is carved counts as a permanent +1 spell to the total spell level for purposes of calculating the pain penalty imposed upon the person carrying the devil runes. This applies for each spell so inscribed.

This also means that spell casters must concentrate to cast any spell and the pain penalty applies to the DC, as is the spell level.

It is worth noting that these infernal runes do not cause the pain penalty to the undead.

Only bones with decent sized surface area, such as ribs, vertebra, femurs and the like, may receive the runes. The best location to carve the devil runes is the skull. It is required that the subject is an intelligent creature or sentient corporal undead before placing the runes is possible.

Subjects with runes that are target spells — such as *disintegrate* — can have the spell turned against them at will by whoever carved the rune and as a partial action. To do this the individual who created the rune must have line of sight with the person carrying the rune, it must be a fully charged invoked spell effect rune.

All bones with infernal runes are subject to read magic (if the runes are visible to the caster), identify and detect magic. If identified, it will be apparent they are profane lawful evil outsider writing. When the bones with invoked spell effects are fully recharged and at any time for runes that provide constant spell effects, these devil runes themselves have a black “glow” that can be seen through the skin, but not through clothing, armor or similar obstacles. A *dispel magic* will temporarily deactivate the infernal runes — and stop them from causing pain — with constant effects, while the runes with invoked effects will be drained as though their effect had been triggered and they will start recharging again.

Bones with devil function as magic item after death of the person to whom they belong, or upon removal. Such bones function as wands for the purposes of targeting. The bones make their saying throws with a +10 bonus. As such,

individuals with bone runes may find others trying to remove their bones to get at the “magic items.” This only counts for infernal runes with invoked spell effects. Runes with constant spell effects no longer function after death or upon removal. Where appropriate, roll the invoked spell effects at the same level as the individual who carved the devil rune on the bone. In addition, all such invoked spell effects have all the limitations of range and duration that the normal spell possesses.

An individual is +1 their challenge rating for every six total spell levels upon them in the form of bone runes. An individual may only have half (rounded up) their total experience levels in spell levels of runes placed upon them selves.

Lastly, because they are rare, bones with rune are also quite valuable on the black market. They generally sell for 1,000 g.p. +1,000 g.p. per spell level inscribed.

Spells

There are certain prerequisites before an arcane spell caster may create bone runes; Spell casting: arcane or divine spells of sixth level; Feats: craft wondrous item, scribe scroll; skills: craft 10 ranks, knowledge (plains) 10 ranks, spellcraft 10 ranks.

Engrave a rune on another

Conjuration, Evil, Magic, Transmutation

Level: Sor/Wiz 6, Cleric 6

Components: VSM

Casting Time: 20 minuets per level of spell engraved

Range: Touch

Area: 1 person

Duration: Permanent

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: Special/No

The subject must be kept awake for the entire agonizing and humiliating procedure — if they fall asleep, pass out, the attempt to engrave the infernal rune automatically fails. The subject does not take any damage from spell. However, exposing the bone — so that the placing the rune is possible — likely will causes damage to the subject.

SOME EXAMPLES

Example 01: A fifth-level fighter has *read magic* and *detect poison* placed on himself at one time in the form of devil runes. (*read magic* 0 + *detect poison* 1 + 1 spell levels for each of the two separate spells = 3 spell levels). This means the fighter has a -1 penalty to their base attack, save modifiers and the DC and all skill rolls. He now has a base attack roll of +4, fortitude save of +3 and his reflex and will save are now zero.

Example 02: A 20th level fighter has *shapechange* placed on him. It is also a charging spell, which means once triggered, it slowly recharges at a rate of one week per spell level. *Shapechange* requires two weeks to fully recharge for the person carrying the infernal rune to be able to invoke it again. (*shapechange* 9 + 1 spell level for the spell = 10 spell levels). Thus, when the rune is charged, the fighter has a -5 penalty to their base attacks and saves and the DC of all Skill rolls raised by five. He would have a base attack toll of +9/4/4, fortitude save of +2 and his reflex and will save are now -4. As the infernal rune recharges, in the second week after using its power the individual has a penalty of -2, the fourth week a penalty of -3, the sixth week a penalty of -4 and from the eighth week on the full penalty of -5.

Example 03: A third-level sorcerer has both *read magic* and *detects poison* placed on him at one time (*read magic* 0 + *detect poison* 1 + 1 spell levels for each of the two separate spells). Thus, the sorcerer has a penalty of one. This individual has a base attack of +1, a fortitude and reflex save of 0 and a Will save of +3. If he tries to cast *alterself*, he must make a concentration skill roll with a DC of 18 (Base DC of 15 +1 for pain penalty +2 for spell level.)

Example 04: A 20th level sorcerer has *shapechange* placed on him. It is also a charging spell — it slowly recharges at a rate of one spell level per week. *Shapechange* takes nine weeks to fully recharge for the person carrying the infernal rune to be able to use it again. (*shapechange* 9 + 1 spell level for each of the two

<p>spell = 10 spell levels). When the rune is fully recharged, this individual has a base attack of 0/-5, fortitude and reflex save of -4 and a will save of +2. If the sorcerer tries to cast <i>alterself</i>, he must make a concentration roll against a DC 22 (Base DC of 15 + 5 for the pain penalty +2 for the spell level). As the rune recharges, in the second week after the casting the individual has a penalty of -2, the fourth week a penalty of -3, the sixth week a penalty of -4 and from the eighth week on the full penalty of -5.</p> <p>Example 05: A fibula with <i>magic missile</i> creates a <i>magic missile</i> that does 5d4 damage and has a range of 260 feet, for the fifth level wizard who carved the rune.</p> <p>Example 06: A 20th level fighter would be able to have 10 total spell levels in devil runes. A fifth level mage would be able to have three total spell levels in runes.</p> <p>Example 07: A femur with <i>shapechange</i> inscribed upon it would sell for 10,000 g.p. A rib with <i>alterself</i> would sell for 3,000 g.p.</p>	<p>The material components, consumed in the casting, are a flask full of devil blood. In addition, spell costs 250 xp from the caster and recipient per level of the spell for the rune.</p> <p>Remove a lesser rune Conjuration, Evil, Magic, Transmutation Level: Sor/Wiz 7, Cleric 7 Components: V,S,M. Casting Time: 20 minuets x level of spell being removed Range: Self or Touch Area: One person Duration: Permanent Saving Throw: None Spell Resistance: Special/No</p> <p>Removal of Bone Rune is complicated. Simply casting <i>disjunction</i> causes, the entire bone goes away – an action that causes death in the case of the skull or spine.</p> <p>This spell allows the removal of infernal runes without causing harm to the person carrying the rune. At the end of the ritual, the runes vanish, the bone returns to a normal colour and the person is now free of the taint of runes.</p> <p>The magic that first placed the runes is both complicated and infernal — as is this spell. The result is that this spell is limited in scope; it will only remove spells of levels zero to third placed as a rune upon a person.</p> <p>The material component, consumed in the casting, is a flask of blood from a celestial.</p> <p>Engrave oneself with rune</p>	<p>Conjuration, Evil, Magic, Transmutation Level: Sor/Wiz 8, Cleric 8 Components: V,S,M. Casting Time: 20 minuets x level of spell being engraved Range: Self Area: One person Duration: Permanent. Saving Throw: None Spell Resistance: Special/No</p> <p>This spell is a more powerful version of <i>engrave rune on another</i>, allowing the caster to place runes upon themselves. It finds much use among the intelligent undead. It costs 500 xp per level of the spell engraved.</p> <p>Remove intermediate a rune Conjuration, Evil, Magic, Transmutation Level: Sor/Wiz 9, Cleric 9 Components: V,S,M. Casting Time: 20 minuets x level of spell being removed Range: Self or Touch Area: One person Duration: Permanent Saving Throw: None Spell Resistance: No</p> <p>This functions the same as <i>remove lesser rune</i>, however this version allows the removal of devil runes carrying levels spells 4th to 6th.</p> <p>The removal of more powerful runes requires a <i>miracle</i> or a <i>wish</i>.</p>
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<p>d20 Modern and the Skulls</p> <p>The Skulls are compatible with d20 modern with a few modifications. Consider this scenario. Two of the skulls are on display, courtesy of Gotterdammerung Magnum Inc., at a museum. The curator says the skulls are simply mysterious relics. During the confusion caused by protesters, who allege that the skulls were looted illegally during a recent war, unknown forces steal the skulls. The Foundation is apathetic, even uncooperative, about their recovery. Then members of the criminal underground begin showing up with bone runes. Further investigation will eventually reveal a mystically inclined member of a crime family is using the skulls. This individual, who was always ruthless but has descended into psychosis due to study of the skulls, has only been able to access the weakest spell on the skulls and is using them to facilitate the creation of bone runes.</p> <p>It is possible to use <i>engrave a rune on another</i>, but only with-in 60 feet on one of the skulls. The ability to cast the sixth level spell, which is above the standard cap of fifth level, is a unique ability of the skulls. The DC to read the spell off the skull in this setting is double the standard, as is detailed under "Mage Spells and Magical Writing" in chapter 10 of d20 Modern, or 42 (15 + 6 spell level x 2 = 42). The other rules for the placement and function of bone runes function as described under "Metamagics of Bone Runes," above.</p>
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a fantasy lexicon

a quick dictionary for all your fantasy place names by **bruce gulke**

<p>Language can be a useful tool in setting the tone for a fantasy campaign, but coming up with appropriate words can be a difficult process. Often the same terms are re-used, or such widely varying words are coined that similar cultural areas display little or no linguistic consistency. To that end, the lexicon below is provided for those GMs who are looking for a “quick-and-dirty” language to drop into their game.</p> <p>To create your own words, simply string roots together in whatever manner you see fit. Roots ending with a dash are intended to be prefixes, those starting with a dash are meant to be suffixes, and those with a dash on either side should be used only in the middle of a word. These are just guidelines, however; if a combination works for you that doesn't follow these rules, don't hesitate to use it. Also, if you feel that there are too many accents (some people like them, others don't), simply drop them and use the accented letters as standard ones.</p> <p>A note on vowels: The pronunciation guide is not meant to reflect how the various accented and non-accented vowels sound in the real world; they are for use with this fictional <i>fantasy</i> language.</p> <p>Vowel Pronunciation</p> <p>a As English á a as in call à a as in rather é short e (fed, bled) è long e (feel, bleed) í short i (witch)</p>	<p>ì long i (line) o As English ó o as in row ò o as in door u As English ú u as in urn ù ewe as in brewed æ 'ay' as in 'aid' or 'bathe'</p> <p>Word Roots</p> <p>æg ancient, old ærèl throne ágés tower arén bounty athà peace ára end ædà assistance æł- place of æłf mystical æry shiny annà beauty ánor north -atr- of áyth peace</p> <p>ban/bæn bad, evil bèl beauty, beautiful bræ hidden byr/bærbuiding búc mischevious bin cloud burr rock, stone</p> <p>cars- coast, coastal càl/cæl travel cær grave crys/crís pure cáne/cæen monster cirr wind cor body</p> <p>dæm evil, damned dalé forest dalí time damar iron dòr gate draga dragon duàn/dían nature</p>	<p>dàgh hunt</p> <p>-éth of that place -è' to which érlas ship èlæ gold èdda story érad cold és opposed to éta wild</p> <p>forét forest fæ magic fómar water futhà rune, glyph fæna animal</p> <p>gæ- wealthy gan/gann red gáth,gíth thief gróm mountain gràv plains grè/grèd large</p> <p>hannock hill hagàl rain hàdra wall hísa serpent hæs conflict, battle hù eye</p> <p>ígà west ír/ar stronghold íras green íppa- road ígní fire invér destroy, destruction</p> <p>kèlsh fish kyrà foreign kèll shrine, temple kæ man, male kos bird</p> <p>lan realm lòr knowledge loss black</p>
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lòt	small	orr	air	-us,ís	suffix signifying a city or town
láur	flower	pad/pæd	grassy	úla	white
lùm	justice	palà-	seeker, searcher	urr/urà	weapon
læh	hot	pèn/pènn	prison	un/unn	single
lyr	home	pyr	brave	úsæ	ruins, ruined
lùsa	sex	plæn	armour	van	head, leader
mar/marr/maar	truth, purity	pérd	disease, plague	vidhr	south
mæl	fallen	pasa	dance	væl	good
maràn	great	raan	river	væn	wolf
myr/mir	middle	radim	strong	vàr/vàr	long
mòr/mòrr/moor	mystery	rya	leader	vyra	healing
mæs	tree	radàs	blue	ward	guard
mátr	mind, mental	rowà/rowàh	create, creation	wyr/wær	magical
mèr/mær	sea, ocean	roth/rothé	holy	wùgh	troll
nóc-	night	rai	journey	wocà	woman, female
næ	no, negative	sòl	light, sun	yar	deceit
nal	short	stal	knowledge	yapha/yaphæ	spirit
-nos	one who is negative	sarthà	terror, horror	ys	silver
nyr	lake	-sil	grow, cultivate	yan	young
næré	death, dying	shádr	dark, darkness	yæra	army
odih	deity, god	tær	earth	zar/zarr	swamp
óras	azure	tális	island	záy/sáy	east
-os	suffix signifying a city or town	taras	storm	zèl/sèl	commerce
oláf	grey	tás	sword		
		tir	warrior		

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