

G U R P S[®]

CONAN[®]

The World of Robert E. Howard's Barbarian Hero



BY CURTIS M. SCOTT

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY L. SPRAGUE DE CAMP

REINERT

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

THE GREATEST HERO OF THE HYBORIAN AGE WAS A BARBARIAN:

CONAN OF CIMMERIA!

Black-haired and sullen-eyed was Conan, a thief, a reaver, a slayer, with gigantic melancholies and gigantic mirth. Cycles of legend revolve around his name, glimpses of a world before history, where evil wizards performed dark sorcery, and where the fate of an empire turned on the strength and skill of a single sword.

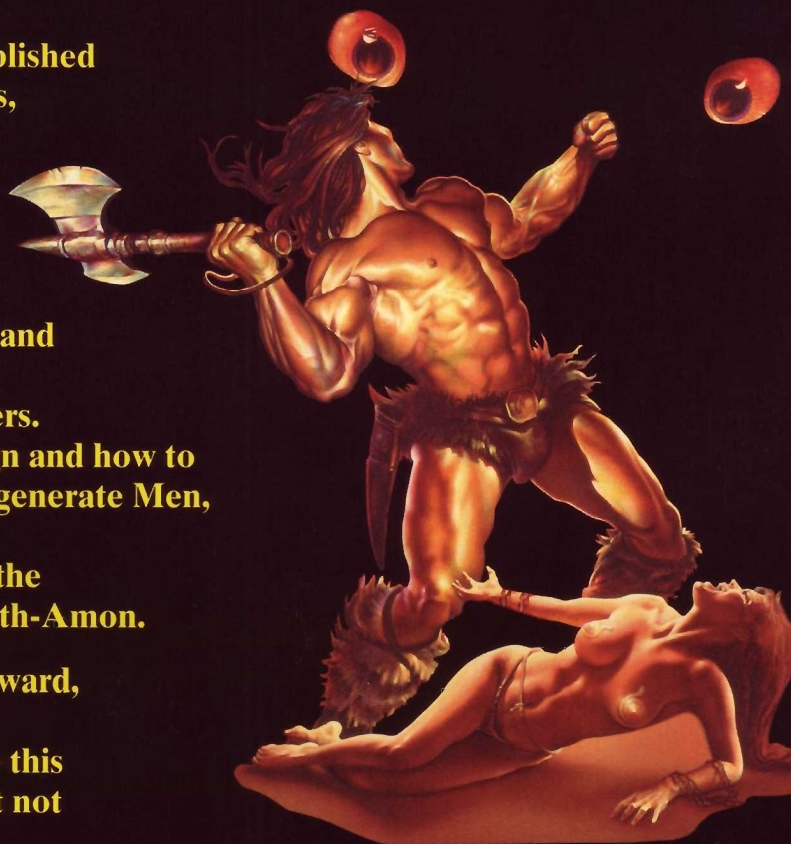
GURPS Conan, a worldbook for Steve Jackson's *Generic Universal RolePlaying System*, lets you enter the Hyborian Age, when shining kingdoms lay spread across the world like blue mantles across the stars . . . Zamora, with its dark-haired women and towers of spider-haunted mystery; Zingara with its chivalry; Stygia with its shadow-guarded tombs; Hyrkania whose riders wore steel, silk and gold; and powerful Aquilonia, the proudest kingdom of the world.

GURPS Conan includes:

- A gazetteer describing the people, customs, laws, religion and mysteries of 34 lands of the world of Conan.
- A complete bibliography of 73 currently-published Conan stories: names, races and nationalities, places and more.
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- Spells of the Hyborian Age, including the enchantments of the mysterious Black Ring and the potent sorceries of the Book of Skelos.
- Rules for generating Hyborian Age characters.
- Advice on running a Hyborian Age campaign and how to roleplay the non-human races, including Degenerate Men, Serpent People and Satyrs.
- Complete *GURPS* stats for characters from the Conan saga, including Conan, Bêlit and Thoth-Amon.

Based on the Conan stories by Robert E. Howard, L. Sprague de Camp and others.

Note: You need the *GURPS Basic Set* to use this supplement. *GURPS Magic* is also helpful, but not required.



Written by Curtis M. Scott
Introduction by L. Sprague de Camp
Edited By Michael Hurst
Cover by Kirk Reinhart
Illustrated by Butch Burcham



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STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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HYBORIA

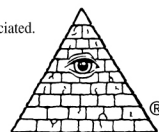
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INTRODUCTION: CONAN THE MIGHTY

Robert Ervin Howard (1906-36), a gifted but ill-starred Texas writer of the 1920s and '30s, created the Hyborian Age, a fantastic fictional setting to rank with Baum's Oz, Carroll's Wonderland and Burroughs' Barsoom. In Howard's *Conan* stories, before recorded history, ". . . shining kingdoms lay spread across the world like blue mantles beneath the stars — Nemedra, Ophir, Brythunia, Hyperborea, Zamora with its dark-haired women and towers of spider-haunted mystery, Zingara with its chivalry, Koth that bordered on the pastoral lands of Shem, Stygia with its shadow-guarded tombs, Hyrkania whose riders wore steel and silk and gold . . ."

Conan, the greatest Hyborian hero, was born in the barbaric northern land of Cimmeria. After an adventurous life as a thief, pirate and mercenary, he literally crowned his career. He became King of Aquilonia, the richest and most powerful nation in the West.

Howard proposed that this age had glittered between the sinking of Atlantis, around 18,000 B.C., and the dawn of known history. A catastrophe wiped out Atlantis and Lemuria, whose survivors reverted to savagery. In time these peoples built new civilizations. By 15,000 B.C., the powerful empires of Acheron and Stygia, rife with sinister sorceries, had arisen in the western part of the main continent.

Northern barbarians, the Hyborians, overran Acheron. On its ruins, the conquerors raised Howard's "shining kingdoms." Another natural catastrophe later ended the Hyborian Age, whose history survives only in fragmentary form in myths and legends. Howard assured his readers that this was pure fiction, not a serious theory of human prehistory.



About GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of the *GURPS* system. Our address is Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! Resources now available include:

Roleplayer. This bimonthly magazine includes new rules, variants, new races, beasts, news on upcoming releases, scenario ideas and more. Ask your game retailer, or write for subscription information.

New supplements and adventures. We're always working on new material, and we'll be happy to let you know what's available. Write us for our current catalog.

Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us — but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata sheets for all *GURPS* releases, including this book, are always available from SJ Games; be sure to include an SASE with your request.

Q&A. We do our best to answer any game question accompanied by an SASE.

Gamer input. We value your comments. We will consider them, not only for new products, but also when we update this book on later printings!

BBS. For those who have computers, SJ Games operates a multi-line BBS with discussion areas for several games, including *GURPS*. Much of the playtest feedback for new products comes from the BBS. It's up 24 hours a day at 512-447-4449, at 300, 1200 or 2400 baud. Give us a call!

Page References

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set*, Third Edition. Any page reference that begins with a B refers to the *GURPS Basic Set* — e.g., p. B102 means p. 102 of the *Basic Set*, Third Edition. An M reference means *GURPS Magic*; BY is *GURPS Bestiary*; SW refers to *GURPS Swashbucklers*.

About Curtis M. Scott

Curtis Scott, author of *GURPS Conan*, *GURPS Humanx*, and several other books for various game companies, was a software engineer and dedicated gamer. He was perhaps best known in the gaming community for his devotion to M.A.R. Barker's *Empire of the Petal Throne*. As editor of one huge *EPT* sourcebook, he added all the Tsolyáni diacritical marks to the final typescript . . . by hand!

Tragically, Curtis was killed in a traffic accident on his way to Origins/GenCon 1992. He will be missed.

About L. Sprague de Camp

L. Sprague de Camp is a major figure in modern American fantasy and science fiction. He began publishing in the Golden Age of John Campbell's *Astounding* and *Unknown* and has been at it since. He has written science fiction, fantasy, historical fiction and non-fiction (including biographies of H. P. Lovecraft and Robert E. Howard).



Map of Hyboria

On pp. 36-37 is a map of the world of Hyboria. This map is based, first and foremost, on the sketches drawn by Robert E. Howard himself. Before the first Conan story was published, he obviously had a clear idea of the "lay of the land" over much of Hyboria.

Other areas, however, were left vague (perhaps purposely) by Howard, and it has fallen to his students to fill them in. For those areas, the present maps are based on a variety of sources, but most of all on the text descriptions in the tales themselves.

Robert Howard, alas, achieved no Conanian triumph. Howard lived most of his life in Cross Plains, a town of 1,500 in central Texas. This was as unpropitious a setting for a writing career as could be found. Save for a couple of helpful English teachers in high school, he was entirely self-taught.

Howard resolved upon a writing career while still a boy and plunged into it as soon as he finished high school. His first sale came in 1924 to the magazine *Weird Tales* which, of the many publications he contributed to, remained his best single outlet.

By 1928, he had mastered his craft and thereafter sold regularly to the pulp magazines. He sold boxing stories, detective stories, horror stories, tales of historical and oriental adventure, Westerns, science fiction, fantasy and verse. He earned around \$2,000 a year from his writing, which by the standards of the 1930s was quite a fair living — though the townsfolk wondered when he was going to give up writing silly stories and settle down to a proper job in a local shop or in the oil fields.

A great natural storyteller, Howard developed a distinctive prose style, using such poetic elements as rhythm, alliteration and personification. In the late 1920s, he specialized in boxing stories, in the early '30s in fantasy, and in the middle '30s in Westerns, although he wrote stories of all these types throughout his career.

Howard began the Conan stories, upon which his posthumous revival is based, in 1932. Conan is an idealization of what Howard thought he would like to have been: a footloose, lawless, hell-raising, irresponsible adventurer devoted to wine, women and violence. But, save for a big, powerful physique, a hot temper, and a chivalrous attitude toward women, Howard and Conan had nothing in common. Howard was shy, sensitive, upright, law-abiding, courteous, compassionate, reclusive, introverted, bookish and (though he denied it) intellectual. He did not attribute such qualities to Conan.

Howard suffered from isolation, minimal worldly experience, limited travel outside of Texas and a lack of access to big-city and university libraries. An even greater handicap was his family situation. Howard was excessively attached to his mother, who encouraged his slavish devotion. As a boy he resolved not to outlive her. In June 1936, after a long illness, his mother lay unconscious, dying of tuberculosis. Howard, aged thirty, with a growing circle of admirers, an adequate if not lavish income, and a promising career before him, shot himself.

In his lifetime, Robert Howard sold over 160 stories and left 100-odd unfinished or unsold. For 20 years after his death, his Conan tales remained the private enthusiasm of a small circle of connoisseurs. In the 1950s, an obscure publisher began publishing the Conan stories in small hard-cover editions; but it was their appearance in a unified paperback series, beginning in 1966, that set in motion Conan's current popularity.

Indeed, this paperback series, together with the simultaneous paperback publication of J.R.R. Tolkien's three-volume *The Lord of the Rings*, touched off today's enormous revival of fantasy. The present writer, who was mainly responsible for the paperback Conans, also with the help of collaborators, added numerous stories to the saga, following Howard's original plan, style and spirit as closely as possible.

For over a decade, Conan Properties, Inc., has controlled all rights to the giant barbarian and divides the profits from the use of the character among the Howard heirs and the living writers. Conan has appeared in countless collections and anthologies, comic books and motion pictures — although, ironically, Howard's literary rights were given no value at all in appraising his estate. Conan Properties chooses experienced contemporary writers to continue the adventures of the mighty barbarian.

— L. Sprague de Camp

The Calendar

The Hyborian calendar is cyclic. Each year is named, and every eight years the year names repeat. Years are named as follows:

- 1) Year of the Lion
- 2) Year of the Sun
- 3) Year of the Wolf
- 4) Year of the Spider
- 5) Year of the Serpent
- 6) Year of the Eagle
- 7) Year of the Dragon
- 8) Year of the Horse

Three of the eight years have 13 lunar months; the other five years have 12 lunar months. Each year begins on the first full moon after the summer solstice. Days within each month are numbered. The months are named as follows:

- 1) Month of the Griffin
- 2) Month of Fire
- 3) The Golden Month
- 4) Month of the Maiden
- 5) Month of the Scorpion
- 6) Month of the Bear
- 7) Month of the Snow Ape
- 8) Month of the Fish
- 9) Month of the Rat
- 10) Month of the Sparrow
- 11) Month of the Hawk
- 12) Month of the Ram
- 13) Month of the Dragon (*)

(*) This month only occurs in the years of the Lion, the Spider and the Dragon.

For easier dating, years in this book are numbered from the year Aquilonia was founded. Conan was born in 1248 A.A. (Aquilonian Age): the Year of the Lion.

the continental civilizations. Strange beasts and savages, previously isolated from the Atlanteans by natural barriers, began to attack in force. Forced to manage without the metals of Atlantis, the continental Atlanteans were thrown back to wood and flint.

Even worse, the Picts, whose colonies in western Valusia had only been slightly shaken, invaded the Atlantean territories. The war was sanguinary. The Picts outnumbered the Atlanteans, but the settlers still had powerful weaponry. Five hundred years later, the two cultures had all but vanished, becoming "a nation of savages — the Picts — carrying on continual warfare with tribes of savages — the Atlanteans." ("The Hyborian Age," by Robert E. Howard.)

The Lemurian Isles also sank, and many Lemurians fled to the Thurian continent. The Khari (who had been comparatively untouched by the Cataclysm) enslaved the refugees. Over the centuries, all vestiges of the Lemurian culture were crushed, transforming the survivors into near-beasts. Those who dared rise against their masters were sacrificed to the Khari demon-gods; most preferred a quiet life of slavery to eternal torment.

The Khari

For 1,500 years, the Lemurians toiled for the Khari in brutish slavery. But eventually the Khari declined, as all civilizations do. Approximately 2,500 years before Conan, the Lemurians rose up and destroyed them. Those few Khari who survived fled west, eventually founding the kingdom of Stygia (p. 80).

The slaves quickly fell to bickering over the remains of Khari civilization, but without their masters, they were left to puzzle over their artifacts and try to unravel their mysteries.

Acheron, Hyperborea the Elder and Stygia

The Khari were forgotten, but not gone. They traveled west, stopping for a time by the shores of the Vilayet Sea before bursting on the primitive West and claiming it for their own.

The Khari found the West without a civilization. The Picts and Atlanteans had battled themselves into mutual near-extinction and stone-age technology. The serpent people, who had once been mankind's greatest foe, had faded into

their jungles, leaving only a remnant of their former glory in human-inhabited lands. Only in a few areas, such as the Valley of Zingg and the tribal lands of the Zhemri, did any human-ruled civilization remain. In this power vacuum, the Khari established their leadership.

The Khari kingdoms are known by every child of the West. They are the nightmare realms of the children's stories. Acheron dominated the north, covering much of modern Nemedias and Corinthia. Ruled from purple-towered Python, Acheron was the most cosmopolitan of the Khari kingdoms. Although the Acheroneans were cruel masters, they encouraged the primitive peoples to come and join their kingdom, and thereby become part of their new slave races.



many westerners (particularly in Poitain) also speak Zingaran or Argossean.

Names

Most Aquilonian names are Latin in style: Attalus, Balthus, Baraccus, Dexitheus, Dion, Emilius, Epeus, Flavius, Hadrathus, Junia, Lucian, Publius, Tuscelan, Servius, Vilerus. Poitainian names carry some external influences, both from the Zingarans and from the long period of isolation before conquest by Aquilonia, and are Italian in style: Gonzalvio, Prospero, Trocero, etc. Surnames are rare, but occasionally people will append a sobriquet (Dion the Fat) or the father's name, if his father is important (Emilius, son of Flavius).

The Bossonians and Gundermen have Germanic names, and these have carried over into their settlements in the southern Westemarck. Here, a man's name is incomplete without the name of his father: Jon Galter's son (i.e. Jon, son of Galter), Gault Hagar's son, Otho Gorm's son.

Aquilonian Adventure

Bounty Hunt. Ascalante, Count of Thune, was one of the last remaining nobles loyal to Numedides. He fled from Conan's army during the march on Tarantia, and has not been seen since. Count Trocero of Poitain has offered a \$5,000 reward for his capture. There are rumors he is hidden in a secret cave-fortress in northern Thune, guarded by his loyal household troops and by a few trinkets he received from the sorcerer Thulandra Thuu. Dare the heroes try to capture Ascalante in his den?

Argos

Argos is the southernmost sphere of Hyborian influence, and the Hyborian drift's only contact with the Western Ocean. Surrounded on three sides by more powerful countries, political machinations are Argos' forte.

Argos is not featured in the saga, although there is an excellent short piece about Argossean justice meeting barbarian logic in "Queen of the Black Coast," and the King of Argos helps Conan in *Conan the Liberator* and *Conan of the Isles*.

History

Argos was founded during the early years of the Hyborian drift (ca. 117 A.A.) by frontier Hyborians, who took the land from Shem in a series of swift invasions from the Poitain.

Argos also thrust into Zingara, but was stopped both by the organized army of that older nation and the ghoulish forests which now mark Argos' western border.

The original intent of the Argossean campaign had been to secure the Khorotas River for shipping by the Poitainians. However, once the land had been taken, the Argosseans began using Argos' oaks to build ships of their own, plying the ancient trades of merchant and freebooter.

Argossean shipbuilding plus the Hyborian drive to expand earned Argosseans a reputation as the finest sailors on the Western Ocean — much to the irritation of the Zingarans. The two countries have repeatedly gone to war over the last thousand years each trying to destroy the other's fleet and become the undisputed naval power of the Western Ocean. The fragmented nature of both nations' navies combined with the inhospitable terrain between them has kept these wars ineffective for both.

Argos has also battled Ophir, Shem and even Stygia. These conflicts have been quickly resolved, often at high cost to Argos and leaving Argosseans with a reputation for being easily angered.

Nevertheless, Argos maintains good relations with Aquilonia, particularly with the Poitain. When politics in Aquilonia become too heated, the Argosseans quietly remove themselves from Aquilonian activities until the dust settles. "Tugging the Zingarans' beards is one thing," King Milo has been heard to say, "but only a fool angers the Aquilonian Lion."



Current Affairs

King Milo is currently concerned with the increased hostility and unrest brought on by the ascension of Conan. (Argos supports his claim, more in deference to Count Trocero than to real belief in Conan's right to rule.) In addition to the Zingarans, the Kothians have made exploratory probes, and the Pelishti of western Shem are stirring to reclaim their "ancestral" lands.

Friends and Foes

Argos' primary ally is Aquilonia, particularly the Poitain. Ophir and the city-states of western Shem also support Argos, whose river barges provide those landlocked kingdoms with valuable access to the sea.

Her single most determined enemy is Zingara. Years of rivalry have made the Zingarans implacable enemies, whose hand is restrained more by internal struggle than any magnanimous sentiment.

The most serious single contention between the two nations, besides their mutual antagonism, is the thin strip of seacoast southeast of the ghoulish forests. This "Argossean panhandle," as it is called, provides many useful seaports for Argossean traders and privateers. Zingara has raided the panhandle ports several times, but Zingaran naval forces have been unable to dislodge fortified troops.

Geography

Argos' borders are defined by the Western Ocean, the ghoulish forests of eastern Zingara, the Alimane River to the Poitain, and the Kothian hills. On its western side, a thin finger of land extends westward along the Zingaran coast to encompass the

Conan the Thief

ST 15 (60 points) IQ 13 (30 points) Speed: 7
DX 14 (45 points) HT 14 (45 points) Move: 8
Dodge: 7 Parry: 7 (bonus for Running)
Block: 7

Advantages:

Absolute Direction (5 points)
Alertness +3 (15 points)
Danger Sense (15 points)
High Pain Threshold (10 points)
Immunity to Disease (10 points)
Luck (15 points)
Night Vision (10 points)
Peripheral Vision (15 points)
Rapid Healing (5 points)
Strong Will +5 (20 points)
Toughness DR1 (10 points)

Disadvantages:

Bad Temper (-10 points)
Bloodlust (-10 points)
Greed (-15 points)
Impulsiveness (-10 points)
Overconfidence (-10 points)
Phobia: Magic (manaphobia) — mild (-10 points)
Sense of Duty: To all women (-10 points)
Social Stigma: Barbarian (-15 points)
Stubbornness (-5 points)
Truthfulness (-5 points)
Wealth: Poor (-15 points)
Youth (-4 points)

Skills:

Area Knowledge (Cimmeria)-13 (1 point); Axe/Mace-14 (2 points); Blacksmith/TL2-12 (1 point); Brawling-13 (1/2 point); Broadsword-15 (4 points); Climbing-15 (4 points); Fishing-12 (1/2 point); Knife-14 (1 point); Running-12 (1 point); Shield-15 (2 points); Spear-13 (1 point); Stealth-14 (2 points); Streetwise-12 (1 point); Survival (Mountain)-12 (1 point); Swimming-14 (1 point); Tactics-12 (2 points); Throwing-14 (4 points); Tracking-12 (1 point)

Languages:

Cimmerian-13 (0 points); Hyperborean-11 (1/2 point); Nordheimr-11 (1/2 point); Zamoran-11 (1/2 point)

Quirks:

Says what he thinks (-1 point)
Dislikes being called a liar (-1 point)
Sensitive about his age (-1 point)
Always speaks with a Cimmerian accent (-1 point)
Contemptuous of civilization (-1 point)

Conan was born on a battlefield in Cimmeria. This isolated northern land is a legend to most of the peoples of the Hyborian age. Of civilized lands, only the Aquilonians have any regular contact with Cimmerians, and that is almost exclusively hostile. Conan's father, a blacksmith, was an exile from his own tribe. Even though he was a valuable asset to his adopted tribesmen, he remained an outsider.

As the son of a stranger Conan grew up fast, tough and lonely. At 15 his strength, skill at arms and moody temper



already made him a respected warrior. In that year the savage tribes of Cimmeria united to destroy the Gundermen intruders at Venarium. Conan was in the forefront of the battle, and Venarium was levelled.

Perhaps it was the sight of southern luxury, or perhaps the big youth was just outgrowing his home. After Venarium, he could not settle down to the life of hunting and herding appropriate to a young Cimmerian. He went adventuring north with the raiding band of Njal of Asgard. He gained more battle skills in raids on the Hyperboreans, and freed Njal's daughter from the Witchmen of Louhi. Conan himself was unlucky and ended the adventure in Hyperborean chains.

He escaped and led the Hyperboreans an epic chase across the northern wastes. The best way out was south across the mountains into the civilized lands. (Though Nemedians might hesitate to call Brythunia civilized.) Once clear of Hyperborea he seems to have never considered an immediate return to the north. The time as a slave had left him with a lifelong prejudice against the servants of Louhi and increased his restlessness and curiosity about the civilized lands.

Conan made his way even farther south, to Arenjun, the city of thieves, notorious even among the sinful cities of Zamora. He had little to offer but a strong sword arm and a willingness to take risks. This led him to the Maul, Arenjun's criminal sanctuary, and the trade of thief. In a tavern he heard of Yara the priest, his impregnable tower and the mysterious treasure called the Elephant's Heart. With a brief pause to kill a sneering Kothian, Conan set off to perpetrate a masterpiece of crime. Whatever he lacked, it was neither ambition nor self-confidence.

This is Conan in his late teens, as he embarks on one of his earliest great exploits. He is six feet tall and weighs 180 pounds. His pale skin and the combination of blue eyes and black hair mark him for a Cimmerian to any knowing eye. He is a skilled sword and shield fighter and has learned some tactics, as far as the slapdash northern style of war allows. He is illiterate and knows little of the complex patterns of civilized life. His often-expressed contempt for the softness of civilized men is at least partly to camouflage his uncertainty. He is very conscious of his youth, and tries to hide it. He is potentially a hero, but as yet neither mentally nor physically mature. He must add both muscle and wisdom before he is Amra the Lion or King Conan.

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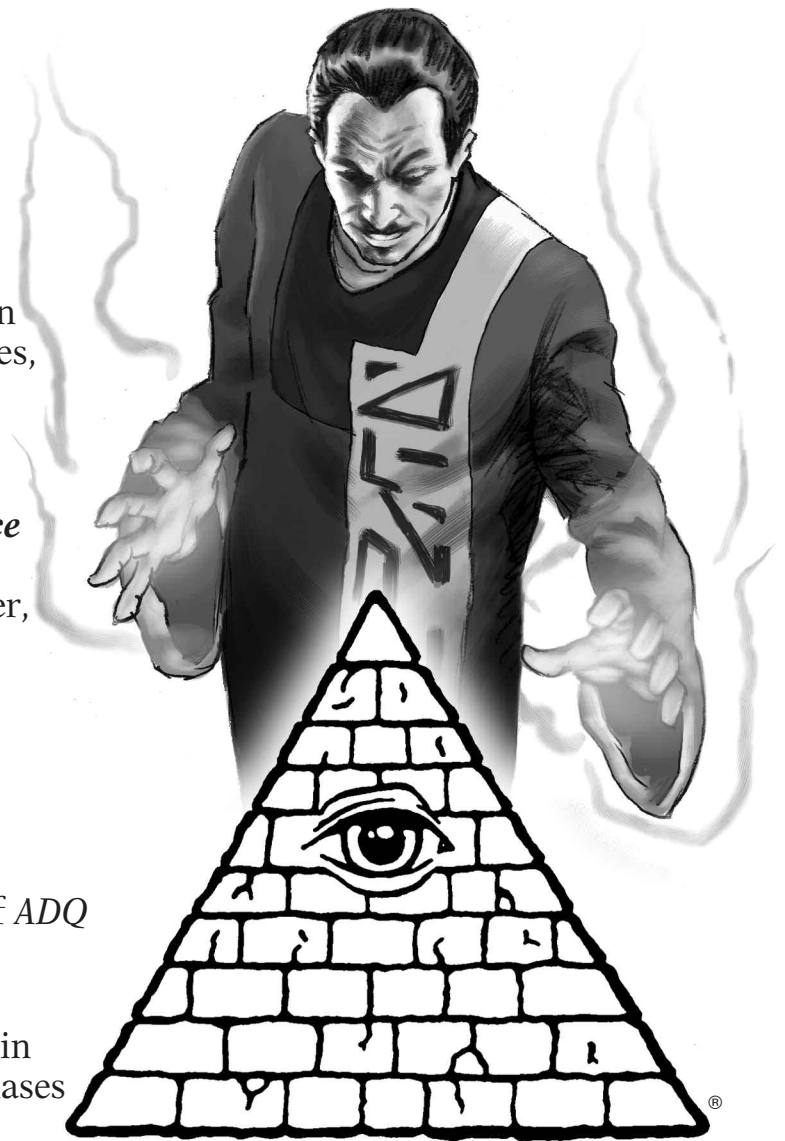
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