

## THE HYBORIAN AGE SETTING

Howard's Hyborian World is set in a specific period of an imaginary pre-history. R. E. Howard developed the history of this world in a realistic and consistent manner. To create a reasonable and credible setting for the stories, Howard, and those after him, made assumptions about this world. These assumptions included how people of the world viewed their surroundings, how the characters of the stories reacted to situations involving magic, and what feats characters were capable of accomplishing. The following information modifies the AD&D rules to get more of the feeling Howard intended for the characters of his world. It should be noted that alignments (and alignment languages) for PCs or NPCs are not designated in this setting. R. E. Howard's Hyborian World does not lend itself well to assigning alignments to its human inhabitants.

## PEOPLE OF THE HYBORIAN AGE

The countries of the Hyborian World are mostly formed by different human groups. The Cimmerians of Cimmeria are different in appearance from the Shemites. The Zingarans can be identified from Gundermen and Picts. Some of the kingdoms are formed of mixed groups, but even this mixing is identifiable to characters of the Hyborian World. Each kingdom has its own language. However, most people are able to speak several languages, and the languages that exist are not difficult to learn. These languages may have many similar features, borrowed from each other. Aside from differences of appearance, the people of the Hyborian World also have many different attitudes and behaviors, depending on the individual's place of origin. Cimmerians, such as Conan, are a hard, stoic people with equally hard gods. They live by raiding. The Turanians prefer intrigue and luxury. The people of Stygia, noted for their interest in magic, have an evil reputation. The Picts are barbaric and cruel, given to warfare and feuding. Behavior often identifies where a person is from in the Hyborian World. This is important, because there is a great deal of rivalry and warfare between the different kingdoms. Spies, sorcerers, and killers in the night are all tools of kings and princes. There is not a time in the Hyborian Age when some kingdom is not fighting or plotting against another. As players pay attention to where characters are from, they are better able to predict what will happen. Demihuman races do not exist in the Hyborian Age setting.

### Languages

Languages spoken in the Hyborian Age can be classified in different groups, which share common characteristics. A character speaking a language in a group, is also able to understand and speak other languages in the same group, although he will not be fluent, and the accent will clearly identify him as an outsider. So, for example, a character speaking Cimmerian will be able to speak also Nordheimer and Pictish, but its accent will betray his origin. All characters are assumed to be literate in the languages they know (with the exception of Barbarians, as noted in the class description). Acquisition of further languages follows the rules in the PHB.

#### **Hyborian**

Aquilonian  
Argossean  
Border Kingdom

#### **Khari**

Hyperborean  
Khitan  
Stygian

#### **Black Kingdoms**

Amazonian  
Darfari  
Keshani

Bossonians		Kushite
Corinthian		Puntan
Nemedian	<b>Atlantean</b>	Zimbabwean
Ophirean	Cimmerian	Ghanatan
	Nordheimir	
<b>Shemitish</b>	Pictish	<b>Vendhyan</b>
Kothic		Kosalan
Shemitish	<b>Hyrkanian</b>	Meruvian
	Hyrkanian	Vendhyan
<b>Vilayet</b>	Turanian	
Afghuli		
Iranistani		
Yuetshi		

The remaining main languages, Brythunian, Zamoran and Zingaran, are unrelated to any other tongues. There are also several ancient languages, which, while no longer spoken, are used in many arcane and diabolical writings. They include: Demonic, Old Stygian, Acheronian, Atlantean, Lemurian and Valusian.

<b>Table: Hyborian Races</b>			
<b>Name</b>	<b>Secondary skills</b>	<b>Typical classes</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Acheronian	Sage ability (supernatural)	Any spellcaster	
Cimmerian	Forester, Trapper	Barbarian*	
Himelian tribesman (Wazuli)	Forester	Barbarian*	
Hyborian	Any	Any	
Argossean/Barachan	Sailor, Navigator, Trader	Fighter, Thief	
Bossonian	Bowyer, Fletcher	Fighter	WP: Bossonian bow
Gunderman (Aquilonian)	Armorer	Fighter	WP: Pike
Hyperborean	Lapidary	Fighter	
Tauran (Aquilonian)	Forester, Farmer	Ranger	
Hyrkanian or Turanian	Bowyer, Fletcher	Barbarian^	
Khitan	Sage ability (supernatural, humankind)	Illusionist, Monk	
N. Black Kingdom tribesman (Gullah, Chaga, Ghanata)	Forester	Barbarian^+	Illiterate, WP: scimitar, Ghanata knife, any spear, Stygian bow
Nordheimer	Forester, Sailor, Fisher, Farmer	Barbarian*	WP: broad sword
Pict	Forester, Trapper, Hunter	Barbarian+	Illiterate
Shemite (Pelishtim)	Trader, Jeweler, Sage ability (supernatural)	Barbarian^, Fighter	WP: any bow
S. Black Kingdom tribesman (Darfari)	Forester, Sailor, Navigator	Barbarian+	Illiterate, WP: any spear, club
Stygian	Sage ability (supernatural)	Any spellcaster	WP: Stygian bow
Vendhyan	Sage ability (humankind)	Fighter	WP: light lance
Zamorian	Gambler	Thief (/Acrobat), Assassin	
Zingaran	Sailor, Navigator, Trader	Fighter, Thief	WP: arming sword

\* As "Scandinavians" (UA p. 20)

^ As "Rovers" (UA p. 20)

+ As "Savages" (UA p. 20)

WP: weapon proficiency; proficiency in at least one of the weapons shown is usually acquired at first level.

Illiterate: all characters of this race start illiterate whatever their class.

Secondary skills: the most common secondary skills. Starting characters should choose among the ones listed. "Sage ability" means that Sages expert in the topic shown can be found among members of the race.

## HEROES OF THE HYBORIAN AGE

The AD&D classes can be “interpreted” in terms of roles common to the Hyborian setting.

<b>Hyborian Age role</b>	<b>AD&amp;D class</b>
Borderer	Revised Ranger (see below)
Noble	Any character class, either by virtue, birthright or strength.
Nomad	Barbarian (with <i>Horsemanship</i> tertiary skill)
Pirate	Fighter, Barbarian or Thief (with <i>Sailor</i> secondary skill and/or <i>Small rowed boat</i> tertiary skill)
Scholar/Sorcerer	Any spellcasting class

Some classes are less common, or do not exist at all:

- Paladins do not exist
- Bards can be found among the northern countries (Cimmeria, Nordheim, Hyperborea).
- Monks can only be found among the eastern countries (Khitai, Vendhya, Hyrkania).
- Cavaliers are only found in Aquilonia (in the region of Poitain) and in Zingara; these two countries are the only ones to have developed a rudimentary form of chivalric code of conduct.

These latter classes cannot be accessed at character creation by any character whose origin is not in the countries listed (but they might later be accessed by dual-classing).

### **The Ranger (Borderer)**

This variant Ranger class (also called Borderer) has all the abilities and restrictions of the standard Ranger (PHB p.24, UA p.21) with the following modifications and additions.

- Spellcasting powers and magic item use are removed.
- Alignment restrictions are removed (since alignment does not apply).
- The followers gained at 10<sup>th</sup> level will exclusively be humans and animals (DMG p.16).
- *Humanoid* / "*giant class*" *opponents* must be substituted with creatures (humans, humanoids and/or animals) which are common to the region where the Ranger operates. For example, the opponents of an Aquilonian Ranger living beyond the Thunder River might be Picts, sabretooth tigers and giant snakes.

The following skills of the Barbarian class are gained at the same level:

- Primary skills: Climb cliffs and trees, Hide in natural surroundings.
- Secondary skills: Survival, First aid, Outdoor craft.
- Tertiary skills: Any one.

## LOOT, COIN AND THE SPOILS OF WAR

### High living

The rule for player character living should be strictly enforced (DMG p. 25).

## Technology

The crafts and skills of the Hyborian Age range from quite primitive to very advanced. Craftsmen are quite skilled in working with metals. They can make steel weapons that are virtually indestructible. However, they do not make or use much armor, generally using nothing more than scale armor or chain mail. Sometimes a breastplate is worn, but it is generally made of bronze or another soft metal. Leather armor is common. All normal medieval weapons are available. Siege weapons (catapults, ballistas, etc.) are known and can be built. Transportation is available in several different forms. Horses and camels are used, although horses are rare in the northern areas and camels are used only in the deserts. Chariots are common in lands where horses are numerous. Ox carts are used, but horse-drawn wagons are not known. Boats and ships include rowboats, small fishing boats, galleys, and small sailing vessels.

## Equipment

The following changes to the costs and availability of items on the Equipment List should be used when adventuring in the Hyborian World.

The prices are given in gold pieces to conform with the other PHB entries. However, the naming conventions for money in a Hyborian campaign are different. The most common money type, used throughout the Hyborian kingdoms, is the Aquilonian Luna, which comes in three sizes: the Silver Luna (equivalent to 1 gp), the Gold Luna (equivalent to 1 pp), and the Bronze Luna (equivalent to 1 sp).

<b>Equipment List</b>	
<b>Armor</b>	
Banded	350 gp
Plate (very rare)	1,500 gp
Splint	350 gp
<b>Livestock</b>	
Horse, draft	200 gp
Horse, heavy war	1,000gp
Horse, medium war	800 gp
Horse, light war	600 gp
Horse, riding	400 gp
Pony	100 gp
<b>Tack and Harness</b>	
Barding, chain	1,000 gp
Barding, leather	300 gp
Barding, plate	5,000 gp
Bit and bridle	15 gp
Saddle	50 gp
Harness	5gp
<b>Transport</b>	
Galley, war	25,000 gp
Ship, large merchant	(not available)

Ship, war	(not available)
<b>Slaves</b>	
Female, beautiful	60 gp
Female, common	30 gp
Female, highborn, beautiful	150 gp
Male, savage	5 gp
Male, work-shy criminal	8 gp
Male, hard-working	15 gp

To equip a starting character, instead of giving the usual amount of money, you can allow choosing one item from each column in the following table.

Item 1	Item 2	Item 3
any weapon	100' rope, grapple, bridle	Horse (riding), saddle
	2 weeks of food	Chain mail
	Knife	Padded leather
	Cloak	25 gp
	Saddle Bags, small	Bronze plate
	Helmet, small	

Some pieces of equipment, notably weapons, have different names in a Hyborian setting, although their characteristics conform to those in the PHB.

Note that no proficiency can be acquired at 1<sup>st</sup> level for all those weapons whose name includes a regional/ethnic reference, unless the character comes from that region or the description tells otherwise.

AD&D name	Hyborian name
Long sword	Arming sword
Two-handed sword	Greatsword <sup>^</sup>
Composite long bows	Shemite and Hyrkanian bows <sup>*</sup>
Composite short bows	Stygian <sup>&amp;</sup> and Bossonian bows <sup>*</sup>
Short bow	Hunting bow
Bastard sword	War sword <sup>@</sup>
Heavy crossbow	Arbalest
Scimitar	Tulwar <sup>~</sup> =
Dagger	Poniard <sup>=</sup>
Dagger	Ghanata knife <sup>=</sup>
Short sword	Yuetshi knife <sup>=</sup>
Broadsword	Zhaibar knife <sup>=</sup>

<sup>^</sup> Only Hyborians (except Bossonians and Taurans) and Zingarans can acquire proficiency at 1<sup>st</sup> level.

<sup>~</sup> Only Hyrkanians and Vendhyans can acquire proficiency at 1<sup>st</sup> level

<sup>@</sup> Only Nordheimer can acquire proficiency at 1<sup>st</sup> level

<sup>&</sup> Also Chagas can acquire proficiency at 1<sup>st</sup> level

<sup>\*</sup> These bows are always built with a specific strength rating to grant the user his strength bonuses to attack and damage provided his strength is not less than the strength for which the bow was built.

<sup>=</sup> Uses same stats as AD&D name weapon (which exists in the setting).

The following weapons are characteristic of the Hyborian setting.

Knife, Ghanata: The Ghanata knife is commonly used by the tribesmen of the Southern Desert. It is two feet long, heavy, razor-sharp and slightly curved.

Knife, Yuetshi: This is a long, saw-edged knife with a crescent-shaped blade. It is wielded by the Yuetshi fishermen of the southern Vilayet sea.

Knife, Zhaibar: The Zhaibar knife is as long as most swords, though it is shaped very much like a large knife, with a thicker blade than any sword. It is used throughout Ghulistan. The blade is three feet long, triangular, and intended only for slashing rather than thrusting. Most Zhaibar knives are bone-handled.

Poniard: This is a heavy, long dagger designed for war and favoured by fighting men as an off-hand or secondary weapon. The blade is usually fifteen inches to nineteen inches long, with the pommel, guard and handle bringing the total size of the weapon to over two feet.

Tulwar: This heavy curved sword resembles a massive scimitar. It is wielded for its sheer cutting power and sometimes as symbol of rank among warriors of the East.

#### Akbitanan (masterwork) weapons

The expertise of the Akbitanan smiths combines with a superb source of high-grade steel mined locally to the city to produce weapons that have near-perfect balance, unsurpassed hardness and a strength and flexibility that renders them almost indestructible. Akbitanan weapons can generally be found for sale only in Akbitan itself – these weapons are so famed that the smiths of that city have more than enough business without actively exporting their wares. Almost all Akbitanan-manufactured weapons are bladed arms such as daggers, swords and scimitars. Akbitanan weapons give a bonus of +1 to hit, although they are not considered magical in any way.

Furthermore, they save at +1 on the Item Saving Throw table.

An Akbitanan weapon costs five times the cost of the base weapon (minimum 50 gp).

## HEROISM AND FATE

Conan is sometimes able to do things beyond the range of the AD&D rules. These impossible actions are part of Conan's special abilities. It is important for characters to be able to do the same things, so they are given Fate Points. When preparing to play, tell players their characters can try heroic, amazing, or impossible feats by spending Fate Points. Anytime a player wishes, his character can attempt something amazing (more than the allowed number of attacks, a deathblow, etc.) by spending Fate Points. The player must clearly describe what his character is trying to do. Do not tell a player how many Fate Points his character has remaining or how many he needs to spend to attempt the chosen feat. As DM, you must decide whether the attempt succeeds by using the following guidelines.

1. Spending one Fate Point lets a player:
  - A. Make one extra attack in a round; or
  - B. Automatically hit an opponent; or
  - C. Climb without falling; or

- D. Catch something tossed to the character; or
  - E. Leap a chasm; or
  - F. Tear a door off its hinges; or
  - G. Pick up a man-sized object; or
  - H. Be “left for dead” (see the Healing section).
2. Spending two Fate Points lets a player:
    - A. Knock out a person with fist or weapon; or
    - B. Spring back from a trap just in time; or
    - C. Climb while carrying another person; or
    - D. Make two extra attacks in a round.
  3. Spending three Fate points lets a player perform a heroic action beyond the scope of the rules.

A character can try to deliver a deathblow—killing an opponent with one attack—by spending Fate Points equal to half the hit dice of the opponent. The player then rolls a normal hit. If the result is 20 or more, including any modifications to the die roll, the opponent has been slain. If the die roll is less, the attack is resolved normally.

A Fate Point can never be used to affect any of the following:

1. A die roll that has already been made. Spending Fate Points must be declared before any die is rolled.
2. Any Saving Throw. A Fate Point can be used to avoid a situation requiring a Saving Throw, but the player cannot spend Fate Points to affect the roll.
3. A Fear Check

Characters start with 3 Fate Points at 1<sup>st</sup> level, and they gain 1 Fate Point each time they advance a level. Furthermore, each time a character accomplishes a major goal, either personally or as part of an adventuring party, he gains 1 or 2 Fate Points, always at the discretion of the DM. Usually this will occur only at the successful conclusion of an adventure. Also good roleplaying and relevant character contribution to an adventure might earn 1 Fate Point. An entirely unsuccessful adventure means that characters do not earn any Fate Points. Finally, particularly clever plans, or daring and truly heroic actions, are paid by the gods of fortune with 1 Fate Point.

## HEALING

Howard normally depicted the Hyborian deities in his stories as cold and aloof. No one turned to them except in times of greatest need. Crom, the god of Conan's tribe, was a grim and harsh deity. None called on him for aid, for he sent doom and death more often than he helped his followers. Because of this, clerics as they appear in the AD&D rules are almost non-existent. There is very little magical healing of any type, yet characters quickly heal and recover from ferocious battles. Instead of the normal rates of healing given in the AD&D rules (DMG p.82), characters heal 1 hit point per day regardless of rest. Characters who rest a day heal hit points equal to half their Constitution score (round down). Both healing rates are cumulative with the First Aid skills of Barbarians and Rangers. Also, the “-3 hit points” rule (DMG p.82) should be used.

A flagon of wine

The rule in the DMG p.82 about using strong spirits to stop characters from losing hit points should be enforced: no character should go adventuring without a flagon of wine!

Left for dead

When a character's hit points reach -10 by any means, he may spend 1 Fate Point to avoid being killed outright. He is instead 'left for dead.' A character who is left for dead appears dead to a casual examination, though he still has a chance of recovering, particularly if quickly attended to. If he is healed of at least 1 point of damage within one hour of being left for dead, either by mundane or by some sorcerous or other means, he is considered to be stable and at -9 hit points (DMG p.82). If he is not healed, he must make a System Shock roll after one hour. If successful, he stabilises himself and is at -9 hit points. If he fails, he is finally and irrevocably dead, whether or not he has any Fate Points left.

## REPUTATION AND GLORY

In Hyboria, a person's deeds are much more important than his wealth. Performing heroic deeds earns a reputation for a character that affects how others treat him. He may be known for being heroic and steadfast, grim and savage, cunning and clever, or dark and dangerous. The reputation he earns depends on his feats and how he accomplishes them. Fame is determined by the class level of a character.

Most PCs are not employed in normal professions. Player characters are adventurers—they travel, they do battle, they get hurt. They can be extremely wealthy one day and broke the next. They may also have work one day and be unemployed the next. A good adventurer creates his own work. The quality (and quantity) of that work depends on the fame of the character. The more renowned he is, the better the position he can demand.

Below is a list of the types of work a PC might be able to find. The three groupings are based on the level range of the character.

Little Reputation (level 1 to 4)

Bodyguard

Caravan guard

Common soldier or sergeant

Member of a bandit camp

Moderate Reputation (level 5 to 8)

Army captain

Bandit leader

Caravan master

Chief or Hetman of a tribe

Special Envoy to a Prince or King

Great Reputation (level 9 or more)

General



High Priest  
Royal Councillor

In addition to regular jobs, characters are often hired to perform special missions. These missions are one-time jobs, usually highly dangerous, illegal, and (sometimes) well-paying.

## MONSTERS

Monsters as found in the AD&D rules are extremely rare in the Hyborian World. Certainly none live in or near settled lands, unless magically bound to a site or kept as the pet of a powerful person. Such instances of pets are uncommon. The owners must constantly be on guard against their own creatures and unfortunate incidents do occur. Monsters are found in the wild slightly more often. Still, they are never common. The most-encountered creatures of the Hyborian Age are normal predators—wolves, lions, tigers, and bears. These creatures may stalk lone or small groups of humans. Unlike normal predators, these animals are more ferocious and determined, seldom abandoning a hunt until killed. True monsters found in the Hyborian World are normally quite dangerous and powerful. There are few small monsters (stirges, blink dogs, or owl bears, for example) with the exception of larger versions of common animals—giant rats, snakes, spiders, etc. In size and power, most monsters are more like the stegosaurus, elementals, frost giants, type II and V demons, iron and stone golems, yuan-ti, naga and lamia. These monsters usually act alone, hunting singly or at the bidding of a spellcaster. Many monsters are summoned to the Hyborian World from other dimensions. Their existence here is impossible except through this summoning. Monsters are typically located in two areas—wildernesses that form their native habitat or at the site of some ancient people or evil. Hence a stegosaurus would be found in the swampy jungles that were its home, while an iron golem would be guarding the ruins of some ancient city or suffering under the curse of a now-forgotten deity. Whenever a monster is encountered, there is always a very good reason why it appears there. When considering opponents for the characters in Hyboria, remember that the most common opponents will be human NPCs. These are the greatest foes of the player characters.

## KNOWLEDGE AND POWER

In the Hyborian Age, the arts of magic are still practiced. However, knowledge of the powers and scope of this art has declined from previous ages. Much of the lore has been forgotten or obscured. Only a few people are willing to devote their lives to the study and travel necessary to gain any magical powers. Furthermore, it is a dangerous occupation. Many things can go wrong for the unwary or ignorant student. Consequently, there are very few spellcasters in the Hyborian World. Those that do exist are often of great power. In the Hyborian World, the title “priest” or “sorcerer” can be used for any kind of spellcaster. Most spellcasters are associated with one religion or another, regardless of whether the spellcaster is a cleric; however, this has no effect on the character's abilities. In fact, the majority of the extremely few spellcasters are mostly magic users and illusionists.

The training rules (DMG p. 86) should be strictly enforced for spellcasters, to represent the need to study and to associate into temples, covens or sorcerous societies.

### Sacrifice

Quite often, spellcasters try to increase their power to most effectively cast spells. This is possible by performing dark rites involving the sacrifice of a living being. Sacrifices can be performed under a series of conditions which make them more or less effective, as shown in the following table.

When performing a sacrifice, the relevant modifiers for all the conditions that apply must be summed up. The result gives the increase in level of the spellcaster. Such level increases only affect the spellcasting capabilities (number of spells per day and their power) and saving throws. The level increase does not allow the spellcaster to use spells of a level he could not normally cast. The levels so gained are lost at the rate of 1 per day.

Condition	Modifier
Victim has less than 1 HD or 0 level	-1
Victim has 1-4 HD	0
Victim has 5-8 HD	1
Victim has 9+ HD	2
Victim is a common animal	-1
Victim is a rare animal	1
Victim is noble	1
Victim is virgin	1
During uncommon event (full moon etc.)	1
During rare event (eclipse, falling star, etc.)	2
Special location (temple, sorcerer's tower etc.)	1
Unique location (ancient ruins, sacred mountain etc.)	2
Torture (at least 1 day; target save vs. death to resist)	2

*Example: Khestsas is a 14<sup>th</sup> level Magic-User. He wants to summon a demon by using the cacodemon spell. To increase the probability of success of the spell, he decides to perform a ritual sacrifice of a young commoner (-1) virgin (+1) girl. He sets up an altar in his tower (+1) when the moon is full (+1). He does not torture the girl, since he fears she will not endure it. After performing this sacrifice, he will effectively be a (14 -1+1 +1+1=16<sup>th</sup>) level magic-user. He has the rest of the day to cast the cacodemon spell as a 16<sup>th</sup> level magic-user. After one day, he will be a 15<sup>th</sup> level magic-user. The effects of the sacrifice will last for 2 days.*

### Obsession

Delving into secrets that the man was not meant to know exerts a toll on the human mind, which manifests through obsession. Obsession affects a character by making him desire more magical power, no matter what the cost. Anytime a magic-using character is faced with the temptation to obtain more magic (in the form of items, spells, etc.), he must make a Saving Throw vs. spells (to which the wisdom modifier applies) to avoid resisting. If the check is successful then he did not resist the temptation and the character succumbs to the obsession. He must do whatever is necessary to gain the magical power. Obsession may force a character to do something that is against the desires of the player. If the player finds a way to satisfy his obsession without hurting others, he may do so; in any case the character cannot ignore the obsession.

It should be noted that the more involved a character is with magic (i.e. the more experienced he is), the more difficult it becomes to resist; such is the nature of the fundamentally corruptive powers of sorcery.

### Magical items

Like spellcasters, magical items are very rare and generally bring grief to those who use or find them. They are items from previous ages, lost and forgotten except to those who search long and hard. Magical items are usually only usable by spellcasters for increasing or adding to the spellcaster's ability. Each item is different and must be researched and studied before it can be used. Black secrets and horrible histories are often the background for such items. The use of such items is dangerous—inaccurate information about the item can lead to unfortunate results for the user. Players should not expect their characters to acquire many (if any) new magical items. Even if they do find an item, it will be difficult for them to use it correctly or in the best way.

### Magic Users

Of the spellcasters, the magic users are the most common. They gain their powers through careful study, travel to distant lands, gathering rare powders and plants, and having their agents search ancient ruins for objects of power hinted at in moldering texts. They seldom become directly involved in things, controlling and manipulating through others and threats. More important than the practice of magic is the gathering of knowledge. In the Hyborian World, knowledge can mean power. It is usually enough for a magic user to threaten to use his powers. Those who receive such a threat know or imagine the horrible result of those powers and so obey the magic user. This has led to many kingdoms of Hyboria being directly or indirectly controlled by magic users who have some power over the ruler of the land.

Magic used in the Hyborian Age tends to be of summoning, illusion, charming, and death types. Magic as heavy artillery (*magic missile, fireball, lightning bolt*, etc.) is very rare, and should not be used at all. In fact, inappropriate spells are usually of the Evocation and Alteration schools.

Some examples of appropriate Magic User spells follow: *charm person, friends, protection from evil, shield, shocking grasp, ESP, forget, locate object, pyrotechnics, ray of enfeeblement, scare, shatter, gust of wind, feign death, fumble, hold person, phantasmal force, slow, confusion, fire shield, monster summoning, fear, hallucinatory terrain, repulsion, polymorph self, animate dead, distance distortion, message, strength, confusion, extension, transmute rock to mud, contact other plane, conjure elemental, dismissal/beckon, dolor, eyebite, power word stun, ensnarement, spiritwreck, banishment, cacodemon, torment, binding, trap the soul, gate.*

### Illusionists

Most of these spellcasters operate in the eastern Hyborian kingdoms, like Khitai, Vendhya etc. which have strong traditions in mind-affecting sorceries. In fact, most of the human populations from these regions are particularly superstitious. Some examples of illusionist spells follow: *change self, color spray, darkness, hypnotism,*

*light, blindness, fog cloud, hypnotic pattern, suggestion, phantasmal force, misdirection, alter reality, fear, spectral force.*

### Clerics

Clerics with spellcasting powers are virtually unknown in the Hyborian Age. Most of their roles are taken by magic users and illusionists. What few clerics exist do not, as a rule, offer their services to the hurt or injured, but use their powers for the advancement of their deity (invariably a dark god or demon). Therefore, the player characters cannot expect any type of magical healing or curing from NPCs while adventuring in this world. Clerics will only act to benefit their deities and temples. If the characters can find the services of a cleric, spell assistance will be in the form of information and detection. It should be noted that the name cleric is never used; they should be considered as sorcerers whose spellcasting powers are taught by the entity which they serve, by means of a demonic pact; usually this means the cleric has sold his soul. For any spell level above the second to which the cleric has access, he acquires one insanity (DMG p.83) due to the contact with those alien entities. It should be noted that the priests of some deities (most notably Mitra, Asura, Ibis) are not necessarily clerics, and if they are spellcasters at all, they are magic-users or illusionists.

There may be druids among the barbaric cultures (Picts, Nordheimir, Hyperboreans etc.), serving the cult of Jhebbal Sag or worshipping some other nature spirit or natural force; otherwise characters of this kind are extremely rare or nonexistent. It is suggested that clerics and druids be NPC classes only.

### Gods of the Hyborian Age

The Hyborian world knew as many cults and religions as it knew tribesfolk and peoples, and religious practices and beliefs were as often the result of superstitious dread and sorcerous practices as of exalted spiritual yearnings and theological understanding.

In any case, the age bred few atheists, and even the most cynical of philosophers accepted the existence of greater beings, both good and evil, as a fundamental tenet of reality. Though the various individual gods were often worshipped within strict geographical boundaries, the age was thoroughly polytheistic, and it was a matter of course for nations to acknowledge the existence of rival deities to their own. The major exception to this rule was to be found among certain priests and adherents to the god Mitra who declared their deity to be the one true god, deserving of unwavering, monotheistic devotion.

Among the barbarian Aesir and Vanir of Nordheim, **Ymir the Frost Giant**, lord of storm and war, was chief of all gods, while individual tribes might have their own local deities as well. Ymir's domain was Valhalla, a snowy, shadowy place that was home to warriors fallen in battle; Ymir's daughter, **Atali**, was said to have appeared to dying warriors as harbinger of their journey to her father's realm.

The Cimmerians worshipped a grim and savage god, **Crom**, Lord of the Great Mountain, who cared little for mankind save to breathe into men's souls the power to strive and slay. The Cimmerians believed in a shadowy afterlife in which the souls of the dead would wander Crom's grey realm aimlessly for all eternity.

The Hyperboreans to the east worshipped ancient **Bori**, while west of Cimmeria, the Picts served **Jhebbal Sag**, the "ancient god of darkness and fear", as well as the **Ghost Snake** and **Gullah** the gorilla-god. Unlike the Cimmerians, the Picts had no

aversion to human sacrifice, and their black altars were permanently stained with the gore of men, women and children.

In the kingdoms of Aquilonia, Argos, Ophir, Nemedra and Zingara, south of Nordheim and Cimmeria, **Mitra** worship was almost universal, rivaled here and there only by cults of small numbers such as that of **Asura**, **Ibis**, **Ishtar**, and even, to some degree, the Stygian serpent-god, Set. Unlike the battle-minded gods of the north, Mitra was a gentle god. Blood sacrifice was expressly forbidden in the Mitran religion, the rituals of which were marked by simplicity, dignity, and beauty. Unlike pagan idols, the statues of Mitra were mere emblems meant to represent the god in idealized form and *not* to be worshipped themselves.

Koth, which at one time knelt to Mitra, afterwards fell under the influence of Shem and Stygia and abandoned the gentle god for the more sensual rites of Ishtar, as did Khoraja and Khauran.

The city-states of Corinthia may each have had patron gods, though Mitra-worship was known there, as was the cult of **Anu** the bull-god.

Zamora, on the other hand, never accepted Mitra but played host rather to any number of weird and mysterious cults and divinities. Most notorious of them was **Bel**, the god of thieves, borrowed from the Shemites of Shumir, and most horrible was **Zath, the spider-god of Yezud**, worshipped in the form of a giant tarantula sculpted in black stone.

The land of Shem also worshipped a plethora of divine beings, most of them fertility gods and goddesses as befitting an agricultural people. Each city-state owned its own patron deity such as Bel, noted earlier, and **Pteor**, the male sky-god, mate to the Earth-Mother; the latter appeared in several guises as **Ashtoreth**, **Derketo** and **Ishtar**. Ishtar, in particular, was worshipped in rich temples and at lavish shrines with rituals of blood sacrifice and orgiastic frenzy performed before sensuously carved idols of ivory.

To the Zuagir tribesmen of the Eastern Desert, **Yog**, the ancient demon Lord of the Empty Abodes, was considered most sacred.

South of Shem, in Stygia, **Set the Old Serpent** reigned paramount, a reminder of the Elder Gods worshipped everywhere in the pre-human period of history and later feared in the Hyborian kingdoms as the most abhorrent and foul of demons. Indeed, the gruesome rituals of Set worship, carried out in temple, tomb and pyramid, and including live human sacrifice and sorcerous obscenities, only underscored the reason why Set's very name evoked disgust and terror among civilized and barbarian peoples alike.

Among the Black Kingdoms Set held some sway, but native gods such as **Jullah**, **Jhil** and **Gwahlur** had large followings of their own, as did countless local demons and spirits.

Turan in the east held **Erlík** and the **Living Tarim** as holiest of gods, while Zamboula bowed to **Hanuman** the horrible man-ape god.

Farther east in Kosala, the cult of **Yajur** offered their bloodthirsty god strangled humans, while in Khitai **Yun** seems to have been worshipped less violently with incense and prayer.

The entities of the Cthulhu Mythos are little more active than modern times; they also are worshipped in one form or another (see DDG p.43). In fact, many of the above gods can be directly related to Mythos entities: Dagon, Derketo, Erlík (Hastur?), Set (Yig?), Yog (Yog-Sothoth?)

## **A Listing of Some of the Known Hyborian gods**

**Adonis:** A Shemite God.

**Ajuju:** Also called “The Dark One.” He is a god of southern Stygia and the Black Coast.

**Anu:** A god or goddess worshipped in Zamora.

**Ashtoreth:** A Shemite god or goddess. Handmaiden of Ishtar.

**Asura:** The god or goddess worshipped by the king of Vendhya. In the northern lands, this religion was persecuted by others. There, the temples were hidden and the rituals kept secret. Common belief had them as human sacrificers to some snake-god. They were particularly hated by the followers of Mitra. The dead followers of Asura were carried on specially-painted pilgrim ships to some place far to the south. No one interfered with these boats.

**Atali:** A daughter of the god Ymir, she mocked those dying on battlefields of the north, luring them to be slain by her brothers as sacrifices to their father.

**Bel:** The god of thieves. He is a Shemite god, born in ancient Shumir.

**Bori:** The god of the Gundermen before their conversion to Mitra. Most likely this god was the great chief of the Hybori, altered by time.

**Bragi:** A northern god of the Vanir or Aesir, associated with wolves.

**Crom:** The main god of the Cimmerians, he is a harsh and unhelpful god. He lives in a great mountain, and breaths spirit into men at birth. He cares nothing for his followers, being likely to send doom and death to any who call on him. His afterlife is a land of ice, cloud and mist. Crom is the only identified Cimmerian god, although warriors of that grim land have been heard to call on others such as **Babd, Macha, Mannigan, Morrigan, and Nemain.**

**Dagon:** A god worshipped by the Zembabweians.

**Derketo:** Goddess of Shem, Kush, Stygia, servant of Set, she is called the “Queen of the Dead.” Derketo is goddess of lust, and her worship revolves around carnal rituals.

**Erlík:** A Turanian god with an evil reputation, he is known by many names, including “the Flame-Lord” and “Yellow God of Death.” His priests shave their heads, and worshippers file their teeth.

**Four Brothers of the Night:** Some type of wood spirit of Pictland.

**Gullah:** The gorilla god of the Picts. He is also called “the Hairy One who lives on the moon.”

**Jhebbal Sag:** Ancient god of darkness and fear of the Picts. Beast-master.

**Hanuman:** An ape-god who may have been a god of the people of Grondar. His temples have a black altar holding his image, where he receives human sacrifices.

**Ishtar:** The “Earth-Mother.” Goddess of Shem.

**Louhi:** The evil god of the Hyperboreans. Fond of human sacrifice, Louhi rules through the Wizards of the White Hand.

**Living Tarim:** Prophet of Erlík. Responsible for bringing the faith of Erlík, the Flame-Lord down from Pathenia, founding the Turanian Empire.

**Mitra:** A benevolent god who demands much of his worshippers. Worshipped widely in Aquilonia. According to Mitraic belief, each person is called to a virtuous life, and expected to follow the tenets of the faith of Mitra, including truthfulness, honor, and trustworthiness. Telling a lie or betraying a friend are mortal sins. His priests must remain celibate and abstain from all alcohol, as they wage war on their most ancient foe, the serpent-god Set.

**Set:** God of Stygia and the Black Kingdoms (where he is known as Damballah), Old Father Set the Serpent controls the faithful through fear and manipulation. His priests

deny themselves all material pleasures (including wine, women and song) in return for power. Mortal enemy of Mitra.

**Ymir:** The Frost Giant. A huge man with snow-white skin and a flaming red beard, clad in frostrimed chain mail, a horned helm and wielding a huge axe. God of the Vanir, Aesir, and Nordheimr. The Lord of Storm and War's castle is said to be located in the far north of Vanaheim.

**Yog:** Yoggites, as Yog's faithful are called, are exclusively carnivorous. Worse still, unless they consume human flesh at least once a month, they are considered unclean. Worshipped primarily in Darfar, the vampire-bat god's minions are widely feared.

**Yama:** God of the Meruvians. Called the King of the Devils of Vendhya, Yuma is a six-limbed demonic being with a beast's head.

**Zath:** The best known of the Zamoran deities, the spider god of Yezud is said by his priests to walk the earth. It is rumoured many giant spiders live in tunnels beneath the temple of Zath in Yezud.

## THE TERROR OF THE UNKNOWN

An important part of Conan's personality is his instinctive fear of unnatural things—magic and creatures that defy explanation. Conan's barbarian upbringing is responsible for this feeling. Such things are unwholesome and evil; therefore, they should be feared.

The result of this fear is either that the character loses his action for that round (he stops in horror or awe at the sight of the thing) or he flees, or acquires a insanity, (if the DM deems the encounter to be really mind-shattering); characters might even die from the fright!

This flight must be away from whatever caused the fear, even if that carries the character into other dangers or unexplored areas. This fear lasts until it is overcome by the character, or the character is actually hurt by the monster or person. It should be important to note that characters from lands that have more contact with magic or more knowledge of monstrous creatures are less affected.

Some monsters, spellcasters, and unusual magical items or situations may force a Fear Check. If the monster is ordinary (wolf, lion), no check is necessary. A check is made the first time the monster is encountered at close range, the first time a spellcaster does something involving magic (casting a spell or using a magical item), and whenever the DM calls for a check. After a character has made a Fear Check for a particular creature, object or situation, he does not need to make another if confronted again. This is regardless of whether the character originally passed the Fear Check. To make a Fear Check, the character should roll a saving throw vs. Spells (to which the Wisdom modifier applies). If a natural 1 is rolled, additional effects are possible, depending on the DM's judgment, e.g. insanity (DMG p.83), death (for 0<sup>th</sup> level characters) etc.

Characters who pass a Fear Check can move and act normally. Characters who fail a Fear Check cannot move or act until they are either attacked, distracted by another person, or successfully roll. Only one attempt can be made each round.