

PERSIA

Battleground of Light and Dark

A Supplement for the **ZENOBIA** Roleplaying Game



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CHAPTER I

HADUGA

DECLARATION OF FACT

Persia. A magical kingdom stretching from the borders of the Empire to the foothills of the Indus Valley. A land of harsh deserts, fabulous mountains, exotic principalities and well-watered valleys. A mysterious realm of djinni, of bustling bazaars, black-hearted sorcerers, wise and beneficent *magoi* and cruel oriental despots.

Persia is the archenemy of Rome, an enduring kingdom known as Iranshahr to all those who dwell within it. Created by the Persian king of kings (Great Shah) Cyaxares over a thousand years ago, Iranshahr has seen numerous changes of government, it is an eternal land that barely flinches at the arrival of some new landlord. It will endure.

PERSIA is a complete survey of the Eternal City's great eastern rival, and it can be used by the **ZENOBIA** Game Master in a number of ways. Persia exerts a powerful influence on the East (including the Empire's own eastern provinces) and this book provides a comprehensive guide to how its presence will affect characters and campaigns. Imperial characters may meet Persians or other inhabitants of Iranshahr (such as Chaldeans or Sarmatians); and the adventurous might even cross the border to explore this exotic land first-hand. Finally, the GM might relish the opportunity to let players create Persian characters and to run a wholly-Persian campaign, referring to the Eternal City only as a "mysterious western empire." In order to convey the power and richness of the Iranian culture and to provide a complete gaming experience for those who wish to see the world from the Persian perspective, **PERSIA** is written from the Iranian viewpoint and where possible I use Iranian words and terminology. For Iranians, Iranshahr is the center of the universe, not some half-forgotten fringe power, and the way that this book is presented will reflect this. We look at Persia and Persian characters through Persian eyes, not those of a cynical and pragmatic Imperial.

Persia is not the Eternal City. Immense and mysterious forces are at work here. This land has been a cosmic battleground since the dawn of Creation. Light and dark, truth and falsehood, good and evil all wage eternal war. Followers of truth must fight the demons of darkness wherever they appear. These demons are the nefarious servants of Ahriman - Prince of Darkness. For centuries the warrior-heroes of Iranshahr, aided by the wisdom of *magoi* fire-priests, have pursued the legions of Ahriman. Often the vile demons take human form, or recruit their own human champions. Try as you might, you cannot avoid this cosmic struggle, pick a side - and fight!

THE PERSIAN WAY

“Themselves they consider in every way superior to everyone else in the world, and allow other nations a share of good qualities decreasing according to distance, the furthest off being in their view the worst.”

- Book I, *The Histories* by Herodotus

To the inhabitants of Iranshahr their homeland is a magical and wonderful place. The sun shines brighter there and the sky, washed by the rains, makes everything appear sharper and more colorful. To a Persian, other lands seem utterly monotonous. Iranshahr has vast, baking deserts colored a thousand different hues and snow-covered mountains that reach halfway to heaven. It is a land of incredible contrasts – of fire and ice, a land that has forged the heart of its people. The mountains have made them hardy and resilient; the empty deserts have made them wry and contemplative. It is no wonder then that the Zoroastrian religion is dualistic.

But the nature of the Persian people is far from black and white. They have a love of life that puts the dour Imperial stereotype to shame. Poverty-stricken peasants and wealthy satrap alike adore decoration and fine architecture, as well as the beauty of a setting sun or the sight of flowers blooming in the desert. Life might be hard but it isn't a burden because life for a Persian actually *means* something. Ahuramazda has chosen Iranshahr as the battleground between Light and Dark. Every thing of beauty is a victory, a thing to be admired, revered and be thankful for.

Persian society is feudal and every person knows his or her place in the scheme of things. Rarely does anybody rail against the obvious injustice. Ahuramazda has decreed it so, things are the way they are for a purpose. There is a cosmic war being fought for men's hearts – the ordered society of slaves, bondsmen, nobles and priests is his army. And so a Persian, no matter his station, has a fierce pride and is never shy of displaying his wit and resourcefulness. Some of the spirit of Iranshahr is reflected in the Persian language, a language that flows like a mountain stream, with a gentle sing-song intonation. Stories told in Persian are richer, more elegant and more subtle than in any other language.

The essence of the Persian worldview can best be imagined as a flame (which is appropriately enough the symbol of Zoroastrianism). Like the flickering flame of the god Atar, the Persian spirit has a fiery nature, restless and ever-moving, full of energy and light and brightness.

To evoke the feeling of an eternal, timeless land, I have used phrases and language from a number of different periods in Iranian history. I have mixed Sassanian Persian and Achaemenid Persian with modern Farsi and Parthian and Greek terminology. In part this solves problems of gaps in the record, but it underscores the mood of the book - Iranshahr is oblivious to the minor changes of kings and dynasties. Gods and demons wage war here as they have for centuries. Iranshahr is a timeless land ...

Dates in **PERSIA** are measured in relation to the founding of the first human presence in Iranshahr, a time when Hoshang established his empire and when gods, angels and demons used Mankind as a pawn in the struggle for the fate of the cosmos. Ahuramazda is said to have created the world to act as a battleground. The founding of the first human dynasties mark the start of that battle. Using this dating system (codified by the *magoi* fire wizards) the current year 260 AD is, in Persian, the year 4971 DM (*daewanam mashyanamca* or 'of gods and men').

CHAPTER II

IRANSHAHR

TOUR OF THE REALM

“Glory lay over this land from the beginning”

- Modern Iranian saying

Iranshahr is an immense land. It always has been since the days of the first Persian shahs. Uniting the disparate tribes of the dusty Iranian plateau, the Persian monarchs created a powerful empire of patchwork provinces [satrapies] each ruled almost independently by despotic governors [satraps]. This mighty Persian empire often threw out tendrils of conquest and at its greatest extent ruled parts of India, Egypt, and northern Greece. But rebellions and civil wars often pulled the most western territories back out of Persia's hands. These territories, provinces and principalities, which form the traditional heartland of Iranshahr, have grown accustomed to centuries of Persian rule, justice and customs. The core territory of Iranshahr is the Iranian plateau with its speakers of Persian and other languages. The term also encompasses some traditional territories adjacent to the plateau that are also inhabited by Persian speakers. The vast realm of Iranshahr has had many royal capitals over the centuries. Parthian conquerors established their own capital on the banks of the River Tigris, on the western frontier of the empire. Once a nomad encampment, now a glittering Iranian metropolis, Ctesiphon is still the stunning jewel in Iranshahr's crown.

PARTHIA v. IRANSHAHR

In historical Roman sources this eastern kingdom is referred to as Parthia until 978 AUC (AD 226) when it became known as Sassanid Persia after the new ruling dynasty. Before the Parthians seized control of the empire it was ruled by Alexander the Great and a succession of Seleucid kings. Alexander himself inherited Iranshahr from the Achaemenid Persians, and they from the Medians (who actually established this great empire). Rather than continually refer to these ruling forces, I have used the Persian term 'Iranshahr' throughout this book to denote the land and the eastern empire associated with it. This is a timeless phrase for a timeless land.

Likewise the native peoples of Iranshahr are called Iranians. In **PERSIA** this simply means 'inhabitants of Iranshahr', but the label covers all ethnicities, such as Persians from Persis, Sogdians from Sogdiana, Parthians from Parthyena, Chaldeans from Chaldea. The issue of language is a very complex one. While each region has its own tongue, the Aramaic language has become a lingua franca (except in the die-hard satrap of Persia, where Persian is still the language of choice).

THE IRANIAN LANDSCAPE

The landscape of Iranshahr is formed of several different terrains. The kingdom is dominated by a central triangular-shaped plateau which is ringed by mountain chains. This plateau is mostly grassy steppe land used by locals for grazing cattle and sheep. Many species of wildlife live here including hyena, jackal, bear, ibex, wolf, leopard, porcupine, pheasant and partridge. There are two deserts in Iranshahr, a harsh salt desert called the Dasht-E Kavir in the center of the plateau, and the sand and rock desert called the Dasht-E Lut, further south. Both are uninhabited and desolate. In the spring and wintertime, small streams flow into the Dasht-E Kavir, creating lakes and muddy swamps that are small, salty and prone to shrinking in the high heat of summer. More often, the deserts are dry and barren. The lands adjacent to these arid deserts is harsh thorn and scrubland. There are numerous salt lakes dotted across the Iranian plateau.

Looking out across most of the Iranian landscape, one does not see rolling green pastures, green fields, orchards and meadows, one sees harsh, dry scrubland, dotted with gnarled trees and sheep, feeding off tough yellow grasses. Much of Iranshahr is dry and unyielding – but life flourishes in the oases and the well-watered river valleys. Here the grass is luxuriant, trees cover the hill sides, there are fields of rice or wheat, fruit growing abundantly in orchards, and the bustle of contented people going about their everyday lives. To travel from one city to another, one must leave an oasis of green behind and traverse the baking uplands, hoping to reach the next town, city or rest-house [*caravanseraï*] before the water runs out.

To the north of the plateau running parallel to the southern shore of the Hyrcanian Sea are the Elburz Mountains, containing the incredible Mount Demavand. The seaward slopes of the Elburz are fertile and lush, as is the Hyrcanian plain that extends to the shore of this vast inland sea. Deciduous trees stand proud in sprawling forests, and vines are cultivated by the locals.

Along the south-west edge of the Iranian plateau run the Zagros Mountains. These impressive and important peaks are covered with a semi-humid forest cover of oak, pistachio, walnut and elm. To the east of the Iranian plateau are lesser mountains. The Further Satrapies of the Persian Empire lay in this far distant region. From the most northerly, up on the grassy windswept steppes of Parthyena, southwards to Aria, Zarangia, Arachosia and finally Gedrosia, these provinces virtually form separate kingdoms of their own, since they are so far removed from the Persian capital at Cteisiphon. The distances involved are mind-blowing, but these Further Satrapies *are* part of the mighty Persian Kingdom.

SATRAPIES

“There are lofty mountain ranges quite different from those we know and a great variety of populous tribes having different names and bearing uncommon designations, they being of a class quite different from our own. All the precious things of land and water come from there ...”

- Chapter 57, Sung Shu, c. 500AD

Iranshahr is made up of 15 separate satrapies, each one virtually an autonomous realm further divided into smaller local districts [*kura*]. A small number of satrapies (namely Atropatene, Hyrcania, Charax, Elymais and Persia) are actually ruled by client shahs, such is their status, but all others are ruled by a satrap, a local potentate and nominated governor of the province. The influence of a satrap is often immense since he places members of his own clan into positions of responsibility and cultivates allies and clients within his satrapy almost as a vassal shah would. Most satraps place their court at the capital city of the satrapy.

Do not confuse Persian satrapies with Imperial provinces. The Empire of the Eternal City often creates borders without reference to tribal loyalties, the province is an administrative tool for the collection of taxes. Satrapies are almost defined by tribal loyalties. Each one is almost an independent feudal kingdom, controlled by the despotic satrap from his capital (or even from Ctesiphon, with a vizier running the satrapy on a day to day basis). Many satraps have inherited the position from their fathers or uncles, others are royal cousins, while some are administrators of great status. The Great Shah has the right to replace any of his satraps without notice. He keeps a watchful eye on their activities since the history of Iranshahr is littered with local rebellions and civil wars. Imperial towns and cities follow set plans and incorporate the same public buildings, and most are governed by their own senates. In Iranshahr cities differ from satrapy to satrapy depending on the local culture - there is little need for uniformity. The satrapies are diverse in town planning, organization, politics and culture. A GM should strive to exploit this diversity. A trip through Iranshahr should be an assault on the senses and sensibilities, with wild and wonderful encounters in each new satrap.

The 15 satraps are listed here using their traditional Greek names. Their Persian equivalents are included, as are the names of the satrapal capitals:

<i>Satrapy</i>	<i>Persian Equivalent</i>	<i>Satrapal Capital</i>
Arachosia	HARAKUVITASH	Kandahar
Aria	HARAIVA	Artacoana
Atropatene	AZERIA	Phraaspa
Carmania	ASAGARTA	Salmus
Chaldea	BABIRUSH	Ctesiphon
Charax	CHARAK	Charax Spasini
Elymais	KHUVIA	Ahwaz
Gedrosia	MAKARA	Purah
Hyrcania	GURGAN	Zadrakarta
Isfahan	VASPUHRAKAN	Isfahan
Media	MADIA	Ecbatana
Parthyena	PARTHAVA	Hecatompylus

Persia
Zarangia

PARSIA
ZRANAKA

Istakhr
Zaranj

The tour of the Persian satrapies which follows is not done in alphabetical order, but according to the common caravan routes used by merchants. Many journeys begin and end at the Persian winter capital of Ctesiphon.

CTESIPHON

When Mithridates I, the first Parthian king, conquered Iranshahr and became the Great Shah, his army arrived on the east bank of the Tigris to find Seleucia, the old Seleucid capital, facing it across the waters. Eager to co-operate with the new dynasty, the wily inhabitants of Seleucia quickly made an agreement with the Parthians in order to secure the city's freedom to trade and prosper. They persuaded the Parthian clans to refrain from settling in the city. And so, camped in their nomad tents on the opposite bank, the Parthian army unwittingly established what was to soon become Mithridates' splendid new capital, Ctesiphon.

Eclipsing the city of Seleucia on the far bank of the Tigris river, Ctesiphon is today known as the Heart of Iranshahr. It is a complex of seven towns called 'the cities' by locals, or more commonly Mahoze (which means 'the metropolis'). These seven cities are descended from the original nomad encampments of the seven Parthian tribes. The fabulous Grand Palace is located within the capital, and the Great Shah (the Persian 'king of kings') spends most of the year in this well-watered capital. He journeys up into the cooler Iranian highlands during the intense desert summers. A number of ancient Iranian cities might serve as a summer capital including Ecbatana, Zadrakarta and Istakhr.

Approaching Ctesiphon through lush well-irrigated farmland shaded by stands of lazy date palms, one cannot fail to be impressed by the size and splendor of the city. High semi-circular towers stand proudly along the extensive circuit of the city walls. A wall punctuated by exquisite, yet formidable gateways. A forest of Persian war-banners flutters from towers and parapets - each one a bronze dragon, open-mouthed and hollow with a colorful cylindrical windsock puffed out by the desert breeze. As the winds pick up in the late afternoon the dragon-standards [*draco*] resonate like trumpets - deep bass calls that echo through Ctesiphon's streets and out beyond the walls.

Within the city walls the seven-fold nature of Ctesiphon becomes apparent. Each section is itself walled and gated. The streets of the capital are crowded and jumbled, spilling from bazaars into lanes, into squares with fountains and gardens and on into cluttered craft districts. There is no planning, only a confusing amalgam of eastern bustle and splendid glazed-brick architecture. Carved wooden fretwork of stunning beauty forms screens and window shutters, doorways and fences. High balconies look down on avenues lined with palm-trees, cool colonnaded walks surround courtyards and open squares. Everywhere is color and activity.

Approaching the Grand Palace, close to the eastern gate, the bustle is less intense, the streets broader, the houses becoming lavish villas. Elite royal guardsmen, the ferocious

Shahanshahi, strut their way down streets, the gaily clad horses of noblemen trot toward the gates, for there are hunts to join, races to be held, and cross-country rides to break in new steeds. The color and pageantry of the riders and their mounts signifies wealth and status, the people of Ctesiphon wisely step aside. The Great Shah's Grand Palace has an immense throne-room roofed by an astonishing vault soaring 40m up into the air and 28m across. This throne-room is carpeted with a silk paradise [*firdaus*] carpet, which is 30m ft long. It pictures a golden landscape, with paths of silver thread, meadows colored green with emeralds, and streams picked out with white pearls. The throne-room is flanked by two huge arcades, both elaborately paneled inside and out with gold and silver and precious materials.

There is a profusion of temples in the capital. The great temple to Ahuramazda is located on the main avenue leading toward the Grand Palace and east gate. It is a fabulous fire-temple devoted to the high god of Iranshahr with its own ornate gateway into the precinct, cooling colonnades that flank all sides of the precinct, and of course the all-important high altar with its Eternal Flame. Temples to other gods have also been established, including many shrines to the god of the Solymans and to Ashtoreth and Baal - revered deities of the local Decapoltan population. Ctesiphon does not have one district apportioned for religious buildings; temples are located wherever convenient.

MEDIA

From Ctesiphon caravans travel eastward out of Chaldea and climb the zigzag trails up into the Zagros Mountains. This chain of peaks divides the Iranian plateau from the lazy rivers of flat Chaldea. The northern end of the Zagros Mountains is a high and bleak upland cut by seasonal rivers and fertile gorges. This is Media, the ancient Iranian heartland, center of the very first empire on this plateau nine-hundred years ago and site of the old Median capital, Ecbatana. Oases, mud-brick forts, ancient tombs and fortified villages dot the landscape. Under the Persians, Ecbatana serves as the satrapal seat of the province of Media and it stands squarely on the Silk Route that leads from distant Serica to the oasis of Margiana, thence to Arsakia and on to Ecbatana. This wealthy city controls the major east-west route through the central Zagros, the so-called Silk Road. From Ecbatana, the goods pass on into Decapolis via the Fertile Crescent or across the desert via Palmyra, or via a more southerly route through Chaldea to Ctesiphon. Ecbatana is Iranshahr's highest big city, a place of fantastic splendor with silver-roofed temples, palaces adorned with gilded cedar wood and a hundred exquisite gardens. Magnificent Persian buildings within Ecbatana include the citadel on the Mosalla hill. The second great city of Media is Isfahan, for centuries the territory of the crown prince. Isfahan is a place of architectural wonder. Exquisite bridges cross the River Zayandeh, and blue-tiled gardens surround the city squares - these are magical places of flowing water, shady walks and flowers.

HYRCANIA

Hyrcania is the 'land of wolves', a wild and mountainous district split between grassy plains extending to the shores of the Hyrcanian Sea and the lushly forested northern slopes of the Elburz Mountains behind them. The Hyrcanian Gates are the safest way to traverse Hyrcania to reach the eastern satrapies. It is a well-traveled pass through the mountains, an easy route which allows access eastwards through an imposing southward

spur of the Elburz that juts out into the desert. The satrapy is generally hilly and inhabited by fierce Daylamite hill-tribes. At the eastern end of Hyrcania, a region called Mazanderan, the population is well known for its irreligion and often blasphemous ways. Mazanderan is shunned by travelers and the established caravan routes.

Alexander the Great campaigned in this land and set Heracleides with a party of shipwrights to build a fleet of galleys that might explore the Hyrcanian Sea and prove once and for all whether the sea was truly a sea (as his tutor Aristotle had taught) or whether it was in fact a gulf of the Ocean.

Arsakia is the largest city of the kingdom, a Persian outpost high in the Elburz that is of great antiquity, but the satrapal capital is Zadrakarta on the plain. The caravan trail leaves Arsakia to continue eastward through the Hyrcanian Gates and from there it follows the southern slopes of the Elburz into Parthyena. Few travelers to Hyrcania are unimpressed by the Red Snake [*qermez mar*], an ancient and 125 mile-long wall of crumbling mud-brick that extends out from the Hyrcanian shore-line in an attempt to keep out the Turanian steppe nomads of the northern plains.

PARTHYENA

The flatlands at the eastern end of the Elburz extend northwards along the shore of the Hyrcanian Sea as well as south to merge with the desolation of the Dasht-E Kavir. The southern plains are known as Parthyena. It is a wind-blown steppe of wild horses and wild nomads who settled here five centuries ago, and whose most important families until a few decades ago controlled all of Iranshahr. Parthyena has few established settlements since it remains, essentially, a land of horse nomads and steppe-peoples. Visitors here would not guess that the a long line of Great Shahs were once descended from this local nomad stock. The satrap goes unrecognized, remains relatively poor and is exploited mainly as a source of mercenaries for the wars of the Great Shah.

The satrapal capital is a caravan city called Hecatompylus, one more staging post on the journey east toward the Persian border. Hecatompylus is known as the 'city of a hundred gates' and sits in rolling hills of wheat fields and stands of poplar tree. People here love horses and outside of the walled villages the nomads spend much of their lives in the saddle, eating, sleeping even relieving themselves without dismounting. Children ride well, while adults are all accomplished experts, capable of fantastic equestrian feats. The southern half of Parthyena (all land south of Hecatompylus) is called Semnan, a dry and hot scrubland that is rarely frequented by the nomads. The Semnan plain is the haunt of shepherds, as well as bandits, drujis and exiles.

ARIA

The satrapy of Aria lies along the valley of the river Ochus as it dashes westwards down from the mountains of the Hindu Kush. North of the rocky hill-country of Aria sweeps the immense Kara Kum desert and the distant oasis of Margiana. South, across lesser mountain valleys also flowing west down from the Hindu Kush is Zarangia, land of salt-lakes and oases. Artacoana is the satrapal capital, a bustling settlement centered around a towering mud-brick citadel. Wheat fields dotted with dovecots and fortified farmsteads, and bordered by poplars and willow trees surround Artacoana. The city

serves as a stopping point for caravans coming out of the Kara Kum that are heading for the sea. They ply a southerly trading route, one that operates in conjunction with the Silk Road going directly from the Margiana oasis to Hecatompylus, Arsakia, Ecbatana and Ctesiphon. The Arians are a hardy mountain-people used to isolation and hardship; but they always welcome strangers and are not jealous of the pastures and rich harvests that the Ochus valley offers them. Winter snows turn the hot satrapy into a frozen wilderness temporarily closing the trails up into the Hindu Kush.

Different Arian tribes control different stretches of the Ochus valley as well as a number of the smaller northern valleys. These tribes have been known to make war on one another all summer, futile and bloody attempts to settle tribal feuds begun before Alexander walked here. Arian cemeteries fill up during these internecine conflicts, and they are visible from quite a distance - each grave marked by a forest of fluttery banners and flags. The satrap remains aloof in his palace at Artacoana during these periods of civil war and does not get involved unless the revenues owed to the Great Shah are seriously affected. He feels that tribal anger is best vented against its neighbor another rather than the Persian government.

ZARANGIA

The Iranian plateau drops away to the east to a lower level and the satrapy of Zarangia. Sited on the shores of Lake Seistan, Zarangia's capital is Zaranj, a beautiful but remote outpost of decadent Iranian life. This lower land has a number of salt lakes fed by rivers gushing down from the mountains that rise up formidably to the east - the vast and frightening range of the Hindu Kush. Although the satrapy is low-lying and surrounded by mountains that are snow-capped in winter, it remains hot and arid for most of the year. The life giving Helmand river flows out of the Hindu Kush to feed the lakes of Zarangia and it passes through the Desert of Death, a local term for the deadly Dasht-E Margow desert. Caravans traveling south from Aria water at the oases of Zaranj, readying themselves for the push on to Arachosia and India *or* south to Gedrosia. Since Zaranj Oasis sits on one of the main routes into India, merchants, travelers and officials from that exotic kingdom are often seen seeking shade on the streets of the city, or sat together sipping sherberts or spiced wines. Zarangian fashions display a good deal of Indian influence, as do the dances and musical entertainments enjoyed in the *caravanserais*, inns, villas and palaces of this satrapy.

ARACHOSIA

South of the Hindu Kush a number of high river valleys support comfortable farming towns and together they form the satrap of Arachosia, the most easterly of Persia's distant provinces. These valleys are shadowed by great brown ridges and make for slow and difficult travel. Stony tracks cross and re-cross the cold blue streams passing green gardens and harvests of corn and apricot drying on mud-brick roofs. Arachosian villages are smoke-blackened shanties of mud-brick that offer a haven to the weary traveler with their hovels, dank hostels, stables, stone warehouses and meager trading posts. Roofs are often weighed down with stones, and some are so rock bound that chimney smoke is the only sign of their existence! The cities in Arachosia have all of these features but also gardens, palaces and forts. They include Quetta, Kandahar, Kabul and Ghazni.

The difficult Bolan Pass can be negotiated eastwards to pass through the Solomon Range and lead down into the fabled river valley of India. Or the Khawak Pass can be approached up the Panjshir valley northwards to cross the Hindu Kush into Bactria. Otherwise Arachosia spreads south and south-westwards into a region of harsh deserts. The greatest of these are the wide Rigestan, the Gowd-E Zereh and the Hamun-i-Mashkel salt flat. This complex of wastelands continues southwards until it reaches the high and hot Makran Mountains. Travelers caravan southwards from one city to the next and skirt the Arachosian deserts to eventually reach the capital of Gedrosdia, Purah. Arachosian cities have always been active places of cultural interplay between India and Iranshahr. In the bazaars skilled physicians called hakims claim descent from the doctors of Alexander the Great, Philip and Critobulos, and still practice Greek techniques.

GEDROSIA

Between the Makran Mountains and the sea lies the deadly Makran Desert that caused Alexander the Great and his huge army so much hardship. This barren desert is a wind-scoured, red-rock wilderness. Queen Semiramis and Cyrus the Achaemenid Great Shah both attempted to cross this wasteland and only just survived, the queen with twenty survivors, the king with only seven - or so it is said. Nothing grows in the Makran Desert except thorns, tamarisks and the occasional palm tree. The burning grit swallows carts and horses, poisonous snakes terrorize walkers, laurel-like shrubs send animals mad, and gravel-strewn rock ridges cut legs and boots. A good oasis exists at Turbat, and is protected by a Persian fortress. To the west the Makran Desert becomes scrubland and is home to the capital of the satrapy, Purah. A fishing village called Gwadar exists precariously on the coast, backed by the awful might of the desert. There a thriving fishing community lives in a straw-hut shanty, beneath a gigantic natural rock outcrop. Even further west a traveler will reach Carmania and is on his way back to the Zagros Mountains.

CARMANIA

Further east along the coastline from Gedrosia is the satrapy of Carmania a low warm hill-land with good pasture and easy access down to the fertile coastal plains. The satrapy is focused on the Straits of Salmus, and the satrapal capital and wealthy port of Salmus from which the straits derive their name. The Carmanian Mountains dominate the Carmanian interior, but these peaks merely form a pleasant upland of peaks and valleys that hinder travel only slightly.

PERSIA

Persia is a mountainous table-land with many salt lakes that sits at the southern end of the Zagros chain. The satrapy is the original home of the ancient Achaemenid Persian royal family and of the current Sassanid Persian Great Shahs. The cities of Persepolis and Pasargadae flourished here in lush, well watered river valleys. The region is still wealthy, rich and fertile - a place for local Persian nobles to relax and enjoy the fruits of their luxurious lifestyles. There are five *kuras* in Persia, each one named after the city within its territory - Istakhr (adjacent to the ruins of Persepolis), Bishapur, Khwarra, Darabjird and Arrajan.

ELYMAIS

The satrap of Elymais was known to the ancient Babylonians as Elam, a land of barbarian mountain-men who often swept down to wreak havoc on the settled city-states of Babylonia. These raiders intermixed with the lowlanders, even establishing their own dynasties for a time, and many Elamites brought Babylonian culture back to the Elamite cities high in the Zagros Mountains. Greatest of all these burgeoning settlements was Susa, today a powerful and wealthy city, an integral part of the Persian Empire. Like many of Iranshahr's cities, Susa is situated within a fertile river valley. Other Elymaite settlements are scattered through the southern Zagros, and even in the dry foothills between the mountains and the Tigris river. Once a unique and distinct tribe, the Elymaites are now no more distinct from the Chaldeans with whom they have mixed for three thousand years. They are no longer isolated warriors, but a quiet people content to minister to their capital, Susa, without pretensions to further conquest or expansion. Today most Elymaites are shepherds or valley farmers, and a good many of the *athrawan* class go on to court duties around the empire. Susa is a busy administrative center and recruits any hundreds of scribes every year for service in the *dippana*.

CHARAX

Charax is a major commercial site within the Persian economic sphere. Its best-known son is the philosopher Isidore of Charax whose work 'Parthian Stations' lists the various useful and important stopping points along the trade route running from Decapolis across to Osroene, across the Zagros Mountains into northern Persia, Hyrcania and beyond the Celestial Mountains to Serica. Isidore was active during the reign of the Emperor Augustus. Unfortunately there is no mention of Charax in that work as the town is located on a much more southerly trade route. Isidore also wrote a larger study called 'Around the Parthian Empire'.

Charax is located on an artificial elevation between the Tigris and the Choaspes Rivers at the point where they meet, very near the Persian Sea. Pliny the Elder describes the foundation of the city by Alexander the Great. This 'Alexandria' is an uncertain identification, but a colony was most definitely formed there by the Seleucid King Antiochus IV as 'Antiochia'. The colony was later destroyed by flooding, but was restored by Hyspaosines who was the son of a local Saracen ruler named Sagdodonacus after whom it took the name Charax. Under the Saracen potentate, Hyspaosines, the surrounding country was rapidly conquered and thus was founded the kingdom of Charax.

The city is on elevated ground, and it needs to be, since the land of Charax is a land of shifting waterways, mires, sun-bleached swamps and lagoons. Both the Euphrates and the Tigris empty into the Sealand, the half-water/half-land miasma that is the kingdom of Charax. It is almost impenetrable to land attack, and thus a safe haven for exiles, refugees, traitors and criminals. Local Chaldeans can trace their ancestry back to the beginning of the world and claim that the remains of Eridu, the First City, lie within the Sealand. The local economy is dependant on trade levies from caravans and ships entering the Sealand. Fishing provides much needed food and crops can be grown in abundance. For the poor Chaldeans living outside of the mud-brick cities, homes are made of woven reeds, as are mats, doors, baskets, shields and almost everything else

one can think of! Long skiffs negotiate the narrow waterways and carry cargoes ranging from freshly cut reeds to a family on their way to a temple, goats ready for slaughter or a family's men folk out fishing.

CHALDEA

The land of Chaldea has been the prosperous heartland of the civilized world since the beginning of time. It is a land of vast city-states linked to one another by canal and river, a heavily populated realm of orchards, irrigated farmland, gardens and wetlands. Winding like arteries from city to city are the two immense rivers Euphrates and Tigris. The Euphrates lies to the west and is broader and slower flowing than its companion. The Tigris lies further east and is navigable for only a fraction of its length. Both rivers flow through desert, providing the city-states along their length with fresh water for drinking and for irrigation, transportation by reed boats (of every conceivable size) and with fertile mud during the annual floods. It is not surprising, then, that the Greeks called this place 'Mesopotamia' [Land Between the Rivers]. The Persian government refers to Mesopotamia as Chaldea after an ancient conquering desert tribe.

Names such as Gilgamesh, Sargon the Great, Hammurabi, Utnapishtim and Nebuchadnezzar echo through the glorious historical annals of Chaldea. The greatest city of the ancient Land Between the Rivers was splendid Babylon, the Abomination, the Mother of Harlots. Babylon was once the center of a great empire, but it has long since been consigned to dust and desert and other city-states have risen in its place. Babylon is lost – a forgotten treasure. Other cities also rose and were lost to the dust; Akkad, like Babylon, was the capital of an immense empire founded by Sargon the Great two and a half millennia ago.

Age. Chaldea is age old. A group of personae might well stop at a dusty inn of baked brick, in the burning desert half a day's journey yet from the canal city which is their final destination. One of the personae might ask the innkeeper why it is named 'The Sail maker' and her reply (Chaldean inns were sometimes run by women) would be that when the founder of her family built the inn, the Euphrates river flowed not 30 feet away. In the thousand years that have followed the river has changed its course, but the inn has stood its ground and in the intervening years served more camel drivers than bargemen ...

Many cities survive from the earliest times, including Ur, Eridu, Uruk (home of Gilgamesh the famous Babylonian hero), Isin, Nippur, Borsippa, Kish, Sippar, Dur-Sharrukin, Dur-Kurigalzu, Eshnunna and many lesser sites. They are sprawling cities, grown large over the millennia, connected to fields and the rivers by a vast and complex network of irrigation channels and waterways. When the rivers rise and flood the land (an annual event) the farmland turns to swampland around each city. Peasant farmers live in beautifully made reed houses dotted on islands of firm ground that will (hopefully!) never flood. Nearly all transport in Chaldea is conducted by reed boat. Reeds and mud are the great building materials here. Both exist in abundance. Reeds are woven to make boats, corrals, fences, bridges, rope, houses, baskets, mats, doors, backpacks, tables, stools and so on. Mud, of course, is mixed with cut reeds and then baked

in the sun to form building bricks. With baked bricks the Chaldeans have made peasant hovels, gateways, city walls and towering ziggurats.

Of course being the oldest civilization on earth means that Chaldean society is one of the most sophisticated. The organization that each city must maintain to keep the irrigation channels dug and cleared is stupendous, and the vast populations living in these canal cities must be fed daily with wheat and vegetables harvested from the fields outside the city walls. A huge elite has grown up and this ensures the smooth running of the city-state economy. There are many scribes writing in Aramaic on parchment and papyrus, many kinds of priest for the thousands of gods and demi-gods of Chaldea, and a large population of landed gentry who own estates, but live well in the cities from the profit.

When the Achaemenid Persians invaded and absorbed Chaldea into their own empire, they could not but admire and learn from this most ancient of societies. Not only was Persian theology influenced, but Persian language, politics and even economy was profoundly affected. The Persians, in turn, gave the notoriously independently-minded city-states Persian government and Persian taxes. Gradually, as the Persian elites lorded it over the conquered citizens, new fashions and customs were adopted. It became useful, if not essential, for city dwellers to adopt Persian culture. Those that did rose higher, faster. When the Alexander the Great seized the Persian throne from Shah Darius III, Greek culture now became the civilization of the elite. But Iranian culture, outlasting the Seleucids by two-hundred years, continues to dominate life in the Chaldean cities. Imagine the prevalent culture as Iranian, with a Greek affectation, and an underlying core of Chaldean beliefs and customs.

New cities have been established in the 'Land Between The Rivers', but none more powerful than Seleucia-on-the-Tigris and Ctesiphon. Seleucia was the twin capital of the Seleucid shahs, while Ctesiphon, facing Seleucia across the waters of the Tigris, was constructed by the previous Iranian dynasty: the Parthians. Ctesiphon has already been detailed. The foundation of Seleucia-on-the-Tigris was accompanied by great omens. The shah is said to have consulted Persian *magoi* to select the most propitious day and hour to begin work on the settlement, but they deceived him with a false time. Even so, the army suddenly began work on the foundations, unbidden, at the correctly predicted time, as if compelled by some powerful force. And so the trickery of the *magoi* was revealed. They were then forced by the events to bless the foundation of this new city.

ATROPATENE

In the days of the Median Empire a prosperous and militarily strong kingdom existed in the mountains around Lake Van and Lake Urmia, north of Decapolis. This was Urartu, famous for its rock-cut citadels, skilled metalwork and artificial waterways. Just prior to the conquest of Urartu by the Median shahs, a tribe of horse-riding Turanians thundered out of the north and occupied the eastern half of Urartu around Lake Urmia. This part of the country was lower and descended to the shoreline of the Hyrcania Sea. Under Iranian rule the two halves of Urartu became Armenia (in the west) and Atropatene (in the east). While the Armenians remained proud and independent, and were not easily brought under Median sway, the Atropatenians proved amenable to Iranian culture and

adopted the customs, dress and religion of Iranshahr. The mountain spirit of the long-dead Urartians is lost now, replaced instead by the opportunistic comfort loving bloodlines of the Turanian settlers. And so the people of Atropatene have much in common with Aria, Zarangia and the Parthians (all descended from Turanian settlers).

While the mountains of Atropatene still hide a number of remote cities in fertile valleys, the economy of the satrap is focused on the plain adjacent to the Hyrcanian seashore. Crops are grown here, and animals pastured in the winter. Horses are raised here, too, and the Atropatenians retain a fierce and abiding love of this animal. Horses from this region are surpassed only by Heavenly Horses of Ferghana.

THE SILK ROAD

Iranshahr lies at a crossroads, it does not exist in isolation. To the west, across the dusty wilderness of the Stone Desert, stand the impregnable provinces of the Empire. To the east reached by high passes is the ancient kingdom of India. To the north and north-east in the gaps between seas and deserts is a scattering of frontier realms, teetering on the very edge of civilization. And this way leads into terrible wilderness, onto steppe, into desert, across mountain fastness - a trail of oases and caravanserais that eventually lead the traveler (if he survives the journey) to magical Serica - the Land of Silk.

BACTRIA

South of the Amu Darya river and the western tip of the Celestial Mountains lies the kingdom of Bactria with its capital at Zariaspa. Bactria is a cool, temperate land of rugged hills and mountains that descend northwards to river valleys that can support fine pastures and many farming communities. But ever southwards the land rises higher and higher until the Bactrian trails lead high into the daunting snow-covered peaks of the Hindu Kush. This formidable mountain chain heads off east through the clouds. It is an extreme barrier to travel and there are only two passes through the entire mountain chain.

Zariaspa is known as the 'Mother of Cities', and is a great crossroads on the Silk Road. It is ringed by great towered walls of dried brick, and dominated by a huge citadel dating from the time of Alexander. Delightful gardens and fertile fields lie beyond the city walls. Anahita, goddess of the Amu Darya, is the patron deity of Zariaspa and the inhabitants pay homage to a magnificent gilded statue of her that was offered by Artaxerxes II. Her cult enjoys licentious rites, of wine drinking and sexual excess.

SOGDIANA

Sogdiana is a distant land of fierce warrior chiefs that lies north of the mighty Amu Darya river and south of the Syr Darya river. North, beyond this limit of civilization lies the Turanian steppe land. The Kyzyl Kum [Red Desert] dominates the vast western part of the land the stretches to the Hyrcanian Sea. Sogdiana is a region of dune fields, harsh scrub-land, wind-swept steppe and rocky hills. It is unforgiving, cold and bleak in

winter, hot and dry in summer - a land of extremes. In spring and fall a dreary rainy season turns much of the land into a sea of mud. Horses are revered in Sogdiana and throughout Sogdiana the greatest gatherings are always grand horse fairs. The territory of Ferghana, in the east of the kingdom, is famous for its strong and swift horses. In 102 BC the emperor of Serica, Wu, sent an expedition to Ferghana to capture some of these Heavenly Horses. The local warlords beat off one attack, but the Serican army triumphed in the end.

The eastern territories of Sogdiana rise suddenly to become the western end of the impressive mountain chain called the Celestial Mountains. The rulers of Sogdiana are the arrogant and warlike warrior chiefs who dominate their territories from mountain fortresses and fortified farms. Commanding a host of skilled tribal cavalry, the chief enacts his own laws and detains who he likes. This unreliable patchwork government makes trade and travel through Sogdiana an unnerving experience.

Samarkand is the City of Dreams, the most important city in the east. Merchants from across the world can be found here. The bustling bazaars trade in silks, carpets and spices. From Persia come dates, peaches, walnuts, frankincense, myrrh and fragrant narcissus flowers. From Sogdia and Bactria come jade and lapis lazuli. From India comes pepper, sandalwood and ivory. Crowds of people from across the world fill the streets and bazaars. Samarkand is an oasis of bright green fields on the edge of the Kyzyl Kum desert, set between two spectacular mountain ranges and watered by the Zeravshan river. Its apples are famous. The central citadel and the palace stand on Afrasiab hill, a sheer drop to the river below. Always a great prize for Turanian and Sogdian war-leaders, the city is protected by a baked-brick wall nearly 15 km long, and up to 12m high in places.

Lying along the southern shore of the Syr Darya river sits the remote city of Khojend, outpost of Iranian civilization. It began life as Alexander's most northerly marching camp during his war against the nomads across the river, but its fortifications and proud spirit has enabled it to endure. It is a beautiful city famous for its pomegranates and the chivalry of its population who maintain a tradition of descent from the original Macedonian colonists. The Mogul Tau mountains rise almost 1,700m immediately beyond the city walls, an impressive backdrop for the city.

KAZGAR

Jewels and gems, they are but stones; Barley and beans, they strengthen your bones
Kazgari wall-graffiti

Kazgar is a legendary place, a common setting for Iranian fairy-tales and myths of all kinds. Kazgar is half-fiction and half-fact. You must journey there to see the truth of it. To reach distant Kazgar the brave caravan-leaders follow the rocky and precipitous trails from Samarkand up into the Celestial Mountains. It is a hard climb up into the snowy peaks, and travelers need warm furs, sheepskins and wraps. They must beware of the steep drops, the blizzards and the threat of altitude sickness. In winter the high passes are closed, forcing caravans to wait for months until they become traversable.

The city sits in the foothills on the other side of the Celestial Mountains. Traveling from the opposite direction Serican merchants rarely journey further west than Kazgar, the weary travelers cannot summon the resolve needed to cross the stupendous mountains in front of them. There are sharp-eyed, richly dressed traders from Samarkand a-plenty, however, and even a few Buddhist monks from India, carrying scrolls from one monastery to another. Founded by Sogdians in ages past, Kazgar is the first of a number of lonely colonies up in this wilderness of peaks and deserts, colonies that stretch all the way to Serica. Local people often display the 'Serican' features of narrow eyes, dark skin and small stature. Fashions are typically a mix of Iranian and Serican, and the traditional far eastern thin moustache can be seen here as often as the pointed beards of the Sogdians. The Kazgari manage the trade routes with great skill, but greedy rulers do spring up and tax the caravans mercilessly. All of these cynical 'protection' charges push the price of silk up to hundreds of times what it is worth in Serica.

Up here Arabian camels are in use, but the two-humped Kazgari camel is an essential beast of burden that is at home in the deserts and the mountains, in blistering heat and freezing cold. Donkeys and mules also have their uses. The shaggy-haired yak is found in Kazgar and the surrounding mountain ranges and can also be put to service by the caravan-leaders.

TAKLAMAKAN

The Silk Route eastwards from Kazgar splits to go either north or south of the terrible Taklamakan Desert. Kazgari say that 'Taklamakan' means 'He who goes in, does not come out'. Robber gangs pose a great threat to the unwary, they strike with speed from the safety of desert, alerted by spies and informers and sometimes aided by evil magicians! The Taklamakan is a place of dark mystery, reputed to be the haunt of demons, dragons and evil spirits ready to trick the unwary and then devour them. The sand-storms which rain down dust onto cities and caravans are believed to be caused by these spirits, and some say that entire towns have vanished forever in the swirling sand clouds. One ancient city, Loulan, thrived by the lake of Lop Nor. When the lake dried up and turned into salt marsh, Loulan was abandoned to become the home of dragons and demons. Today travelers shun this cursed place.

Caravans can skirt the Celestial Mountain range [Tien Shan] as it runs along the northern edge of the desert, or skirt the Headache Mountain range [Kunlun Shan] as it runs along the southern edge of the desert. The Headache Mountains get their name from the awful pains in the head that the high altitude of the peaks can cause. Oases are dotted along both routes, and these small settlements are inhabited by brave Kazgari, men and women who make a living from the caravan trade. The northern route passes from Kazgar to Kuga, thence to Turpan, to Hami and then to Anxi on the other side of the Taklamakan. The southerly route passes from Kazgar to Yarkant, Khotan, Keriya, Qarkilik, Dunhuang and then to Anxi.

Dunhuang is known as the City of Sands and is the site of a crescent-shaped lake (Crescent Moon Lake) that sits amidst the sand dunes. No-one knows how it stays so pure. Perhaps the holiness of the city is partly responsible. The Thousand Buddha Caves are found here, filled with statues and offerings to the gods and their messengers, and

decorated with beautiful wall paintings of exquisite color. Travelers pray here in earnest, setting up offerings to the deities of the caves, either as thanks for a safe passage through the Taklamakan, or in the hope that a safe passage will be granted.

Turpan, on the northern route is a blazing hot inferno during the summer months, and locals take shelter in their basements. The winter months are equally unpleasant, bitterly cold winds howl down from the mountains, giving Turpan the epithet 'Storehouse of the Wind'. For the rest of the year well-watered Turpan is a comfortable and pleasant city known by all as the 'Bright Pearl of the Silk Road'. Persian *qanats* were dug here many centuries ago to channel water from the mountain streams into the gardens, pools, fountains and water-courses of Turpan. The result is a fertile settlement where orchards and fields deliver up fruits and vegetables in abundance.

JADE GATE [*Yumen*]

Jade Gate is the most westerly city of the Serican Empire, and the terminus of the Great Wall, that immense fortification that stretches halfway around the world to defend Serica from the nomad raiders of the Turanian steppe. Jade Gate forms a crucial link on the Silk Road, since it is in effect the stopping point for Sogdian merchants looking to purchase silk, and the starting point for Sericans wanting to export silk. As such Jade Gate is at once an impressive military settlement as well as a cosmopolitan market, a bazaar linking two worlds - East and West. Little more need be said of Jade Gate here - as part of Serica the city is also part of another world ...

TURANIA

*"My people have married me
In a far corner of Earth:
Sent me away to a strange land,
To the king of the [Turanians],
A tent is my house,
Of felt are my walls;
Raw flesh my food
With mare's milk to drink
Always thinking of my own country,
My heart sad within."*

- poem by Chinese princess Hsi-chun, 110 BC

Turania is a vast flatland, a steppe that extends for an unknown distance northwards from the base of the Celestial Mountains and from the banks of the Syr Darya river. For centuries wild nomad horsemen have ridden out of Turania to menace the towns and cities of the civilized cultures. It is a vast melting pot of nomadic tribes and clans, fighting, trading, competing and merging. New tribes occasionally achieve prominence and sweep all before them. The Cimmerians, the Scythians, the Sarmatians and even the Parthians came out of Turania, and the current tribe of note, grazing their stocky ponies and cattle on the fertile plains around Lake Balkash, are the Huns.

The home-land of the Huns lies north of Serica's Great Wall, built in ages past to hold back the Turanian hoards. Serica forced a peace with the Huns, but many tribesmen were unhappy with the laws of that strict empire and desired freedom. The Hunnish chiefs [*tanjou*] led their warriors westwards on a campaign of murder and plunder and they settled around Lake Balkhash two centuries ago.

The tribe of Huns are, like all Turanians, short and stocky, black-haired with narrow eyes and dark skins. They terrify their enemies with their horribly disfigured faces (made so by ritual scarring). The rolling gait of the men is due to the fact they spend much of their day in the saddle. Of course they are natural horsemen, capable of fantastic equestrian feats - it is said that even Turanian women and children can ride well. Woolen tunics, and fur-fringed caps, jackets and leggings of goat-skin are the typical garb of a Hun. Weaponry usually consists of a composite bow, a spear, lasso and sometimes a shield or a sword.

Yurts, round tents of felt stretched over a wooden lattice, form the dwellings of the mobile Huns. Each is decorated with colorful hangings and rugs and a cooking stove inevitably fills the yurt with smoke. The drink of the Huns is bitter-tasting 'kumis' - fermented mare's milk. The life of a Hun is hard, but his world is a beautiful one. A vast blue sky and an endless green plain are the universe of the Hun. Shamans mediate between this world and the spirit world. The yurt itself becomes a representation of this universe, it is circular and is divided down the center into the male and female halves. It is divided bilaterally, too, by age, with the elders at one end and the children at the other.

CHAPTER III

SHAHNAMEH

THE BOOK OF KINGS

"How shall a man escape from that which is written; How shall he flee from his destiny?"

Firdusi, *The Book of Kings*

The *Shahnameh* or Book of Kings is an epic poem tracing the on-going fight between the first hero-kings and the demons [*daevas*] of Ahriman, Lord of Darkness. Although written in the tenth century AD by the poet Firdusi, it is a perfect starting point from which to explore the long and glorious history of the land. We end with a look at Persia's government and justice system.

The story of Iranshahr actually begins with the first man Gayomart and the primitive bull, Gosh. From this pair sprang all life. When both were killed by Ahriman, only the seed of Gayomart survived and from this emerged the first human couple, Mashya and Mashyoi. Ahuramazda watched over them like a father, but Ahriman tried to cloud their thoughts with his evil powers. Mashya and Mashyoi soon gave birth to seven couples, and one of these couples, Siyamek and Siyameki, became the parents of Hoshang - the first Great Shah.

THE HERO-KINGS

Hoshang began his glorious reign by avenging his father whom a demon had murdered. He went on to create a peaceful and stable kingdom, and to spread justice and good government across the land. With the aid of powerful magic he created and taught his subjects the arts of civilization. His son, Tahmuras continued the work of forging an ordered society. Such was the magical skill of this Great Shah that he bound Ahriman with spells and rode him around the world like a steed! But in his absence the demons rose up in rebellion. Tahmuras returned with his great-mace to fight a vast and awful army of demons in league with a regiment of evil magicians. The fighting was short and bloody, but with holy magic Tahmuras was able to bind most of the dark army to his power and the demons willingly taught him the secret art of reading and writing.

The son of Tahmuras was Yima, and this wise shah presided over a golden age. To save the people of Iranshahr from the devastating floods and droughts wrought by the demon Mahrkusha, Yima built an underground fortress [*var*] and stocked it with representatives of every living thing. In this way only the purest and most virtuous of all species

survived. Ahriman longed to destroy Yima and to fulfill this ambition the Prince of Demons transformed a man into a demon. This demon, Zohak, would eventually succeed in vanquishing the Great Shah. Zohak was originally a prince of Arabiya, and the masterful deceptions of Ahriman convinced Zohak to murder his father and proclaim himself Shah of the Arabs. The Prince of Darkness, in disguise, infiltrated the Arab fortress posing as the king's chef. When the demon-lord offered Zohak a new meal made of the flesh of animals (until that time his people had known only vegetarianism), the king was delighted and granted the demon-chef a reward of his choosing. Ahriman begged only to kiss the shoulders of the desert shah, and upon doing so, the Prince of Demons vanished.

Zohak watched in horror as two black snakes grew from his shoulders and no treatment or spell could remove them. The demon-lord Ahriman returned, this time disguised as a doctor, and he prescribed a diet of fresh human brains for the twin monsters. With this depravity, Zohak began his inexorable transformation into a demon and servant of Ahriman. His first act was to capture Yima and saw him in half, seizing the throne of Iranshahr and initiating a thousand-year reign of wickedness and evil.

One night Zohak dreamt that a young prince would rise up and enslave him, and upon consulting his *magoi*, discovered that the prince would be named Feridun. To forestall such an uprising, Zohak ordered the massacre of every child in the land. Of course Feridun escaped to India and grew to manhood anyway, soon establishing himself as a powerful prince. It was not until a blacksmith called Kaweh appeared at his palace and demanded justice (his sons had been eaten by Zohak's serpents) that Feridun gathered an army about him and marched to face Zohak in battle. While the army marched westwards toward Zohak's fortress in the desert a guardian angel [*fravishi*] sent by Ahuramazda taught Feridun potent magics. This magic helped Feridun to overcome the talismans protecting Zohak's castle and enabled him to set free Yima's beautiful daughters from their enchanted prison. The prince carried a great-mace and when Zohak emerged sword in hand, Feridun beat him almost to death. Another fravishi appeared and commanded the hero to bind Zohak within a cavern deep within the bowels of Mount Demavand. Feridun mounted the throne in triumph as the Great Shah and he continued to fight injustice for the next five hundred years.

In Feridun's old age he divided his vast empire between his three sons, Selm the eldest, Tur and Irej the youngest. Selm was to reign over the West, Tur was given wind-swept Turania, and Irej inherited the majesty of Iranshahr. The brothers of Irej were jealous and joined forces in trying to overthrow him. The young brother did not want to be the cause of upset and sought out his brothers alone and unarmed. Cruelly they murdered him and sent his perfumed head in a golden box to their father. The aged Feridun was heart-broken and yet he longed for revenge. That revenge came in the form of his grandson, Minucher, the devoted son of Irej. Minucher met Selm and Tur on the battlefield and defeated them both, scattering their army and receiving the crown from Feridun, who then died, his vengeance satisfied. Minucher proved to be the stern Great Shah and the scourge of the nomadic Turanians.

Many generations later Rustem, one of Iranshahr's greatest heroes, rose to prominence. His father was Zal, a perfect and valorous hero known for his might deeds and his

beauty; and Rustem proved himself his father's son. His greatest deed was the slaying of the White Demon in the mountains of Tabaristan. Other demons too challenged the might and wisdom of brave Rustem. He fought with courage for the Great Shah, and as new shahs took the throne, he continued to serve them with equal fervor. Only the treachery of one of these shahs, Lohreshp, brought Rustem down. Jealous of the glory that Rustem had gained, the Great Shah arranged for a spear-lined pit to be dug within his hunting grounds and to be cleverly disguised. Lohreshp then invited Rustem to hunt with him and led the hero to the trap. Rustem's horse Raksh tried to warn his rider, but Rustem, eager to chase the prey, spurred his horse forward. Both horse and rider fell to their deaths, but only after Rustem had managed to kill the treacherous Great Shah with a parting bow-shot.

With the death of Rustem the Turanian nomads no longer feared to cross the Kara Kum and ride into Iranshahr. Chaos ensued and the kingdom fell apart. Local shahs ruled the tribes - there was no central power, no Great Shah. Ecbatana was abandoned.

Great Shahs (dates uncertain)

Hoshang
Tahmuras
Yima
Zohak
Feridun
Minucher
Qobad
Kaus
Khosrau
Lohreshp

THE MEDIAN KINGS

When the Assyrian king Shalmaneser III marched his army into the Zagros Mountains in 843 BC he encountered a number of scattered mountain people calling themselves Medes. The Medes were descended from the proud inhabitants of that once royal city, Ecbatana. Now they lived in the fertile valleys, and they were divided into small, independent groups, each ruled by its own shah. Within two centuries these Medians had formed a confederation with which to repel the latest wave of attacks from Turania (this time the Scythian and Cimmerian tribes). Deioces, a local shah, proved to be inspirational, and he led Medians into the ruins of Ecbatana where they built him a palace and restored the city to its former glory. Deioces became the Great Shah and established a Median dynasty lasting 150 years. His grandson, Cyaxares, led Media on the path toward greatness and by conquering both the Scythians and the mighty Assyrians he forged the greatest empire the world had ever seen. The culture of the Medes became the foundation upon which every other Iranian empire (including the Parthian) has stood.

The dynasty ended with ignominy in the hands of Astyages, the wicked son of Cyaxares. He had a daughter named Mandane whom he married to a local Persian prince called Cambyses. The *magoi* predicted that their child would usurp the throne, and so Astyages arranged for his herdsman to expose the new-born Cyrus in the mountains. However, the peasant brought up Cyrus as his own son, until the Great Shah discovered the deception when the boy was ten. Cyrus was allowed to live and grew up to become a promising Persian leader. He eventually overthrew Astyages in 550 BC, but allowed the tyrant to live comfortably within Ecbatana.

Great Shah	Dates (BC)
Deioces	700 - 647
Phraortes	647 - 625
Cyaxares	625 - 585
Astyages	585 - 550

THE ACHAEMENID KINGS

The accession of Cyrus the Great began the dominance of Iranshahr's most famous and most spectacular dynasty, that of the Achaemenid Persians. Cyrus' ancestral homeland of Persia was a mountain realm that bred lively and determined people. Beginning a tradition that would echo down the centuries, Cyrus did not smash the Median Empire and eradicate its culture. Instead he adopted and adapted much of the Median administration, and assimilated a great deal of Median civilization, including language, religion, dress and ritual. His family had experience in government and had ruled Persia for almost 150 years, going back four generations to the founder of the dynasty, Achaemenes.

It was Cyrus the Great who marched against Lydia and defeated King Croesus (545 BC), and Cyrus who brought the military might of the Persian Empire to bear on its powerful rival Babylon. He entered the city peacefully in 539 BC, and amongst other magnanimous acts, freed the Jews from their captivity. From the capital at Ecbatana, Cyrus laid the foundations of his empire, a legacy that would endure for over seven centuries. His son, Cambyses, extended the empire into Egypt (522 BC), but it was Cambyses own successor, Darius I, that would initiate the greatest military campaign of all - the invasion of Greece.

Darius had to crush the uprising of a *magus* called Gaumata before he could claim the throne. Gaumata claimed to be a young brother of Cambyses and he had the support of a number of other *magoi*. Other rebellions followed, but Darius dealt with them mercilessly. Under his rule Persia prospered; he codified the tax system, cut a canal from the Red Sea to the Nile, sent out a voyage of exploration into the Indian Ocean and invaded the Indus Valley in 514 BC. His quest for gold in the land of the Turanians ended in military stalemate, and so the Great Shah turned toward Greece. His sea-borne invasion ended in disaster in 490 BC on the plain of Marathon.

Xerxes, the son of Darius, organized a massive military force to conquer the Greeks once and for all. But in 480 BC the Persian fleet was routed at Salamis, and the vast army defeated at the Battle of Plataea. From then on Persia would only interfere in Greek affairs through bribes, ambassadors and the employ of spies and traitors. Affairs at home, such as building projects, hareem intrigues and the plotting of courtiers would come to dominate the rule of later Achaemenid shahs. During the reign of Artaxerxes II, for example, Egypt rebelled and gained its independence. Other satrapies followed suit; the Empire was beginning to fracture. In response, Artaxerxes III led a huge army to quell a spate of revolts but was poisoned by the eunuch Bagoas on his return. Bagoas installed Arses, the shah's son on the throne, but he lasted only two years, dying from poison intended for the scheming eunuch. Bagoas instead turned to Darius III (grandnephew of Artaxerxes II). This Great Shah proved able and ruthless, finally ending Bagoas' intrigues with a poisoned draught.

Although Darius was able to reconquer Egypt, the Empire he governed would eventually become the war-prize of Alexander the Great, who began his ten-year campaign in 334 BC. With the burning of the Persian city, Persepolis, and the treacherous murder of Darius by Bessos, satrap of Bactria, the Achaemenid era of splendor and power came to an end. Greeks would rule Iranshahr for the next century-and-a-half.

Great Shah	Dates (BC)
Cyrus	550 - 530
Cambyses	530 - 522
Darius I	522 - 486
Xerxes I	486 - 465
Artaxerxes I	465 - 424
Xerxes II	423
Darius II	423 - 404
Artaxerxes II	404 - 358
Artaxerxes III	358 - 338
Arses	338 - 336
Darius III	336 - 331

THE SELEUCID KINGS

"In my view it is beyond dispute that Seleucus was the greatest king of those who succeeded Alexander, of the most royal mind, and ruling over the greatest extent of territory, next to Alexander himself."

Arrian, *The Campaigns of Alexander*

The Persian Empire had loomed over Ionia for centuries but no Ionian general had ever been able to contemplate a full-scale attack against it. Alexander, son of Philip of Macedon, inherited his father's kingdom and his father's unbeatable Macedonian army. His stubborn vision and hunger for glory led him to march on Persia, and with military

genius and the backing of his troops he won victory after victory, finally reaching the Persian heartland in 331 BC. Darius III had fled but was murdered by one of his own satraps in 330 BC. Alexander, reluctant to return home, pushed deeper into Iranshahr, establishing Ionian colonies, setting up Ionian administrators, marrying his men to the local girls. Alexander pushed forward fighting militant satraps and fierce Turanian nomads, until he finally stopped his conquests at Khojend on the Syr Darya river. Or so his soldiers thought. Driven by a quest for glory, Alexander traversed the high passes to reach India, where he fought the local shah into submission. Upon his return to Babylon, Alexander died in 323 BC at the young age of 32.

With the death of Alexander, the empire quickly fragmented. Soon Alexander's military officers were seizing neighboring territories and coming into conflict with each other. The general Seleucus had been awarded the Persian satrapy of Babylon in 320 BC. After being forced to fight for his throne, Seleucus quickly extended his rule to encompass the cities of Media. In 305 he invaded India and fought the Indian king Chandragupta until both sides signed a peace treaty (under which terms Seleucus received some 500 elephants). At this time Seleucus declared himself king (Great Shah) bringing him into direct conflict with the old war-leader Antigonus One-Eye who also laid claim to that title. This led to the famous Battle of Kings in 301 BC. At Ipsus in Asia Minor, Seleucus and his allies (Lysimachus, Ptolemy and Cassander) shared out the territories of Antigonus, who fell in the battle aged 80. Now Seleucus ruled Decapolis, Mesopotamia, Armenia, Cappadocia (and the rest of Asia Minor), Persia, Media and all of Iranshahr as far east as the Indus. The realm was his.

Seleucus was a prolific founder of cities, the most famous of these is Seleucia-on-the-Tigris. Other cities he founded are named after places in Macedonia or Ionia, or the achievements made either by Alexander or himself. Seleucus ruled twenty satrapies, and gave over control of those in the east to his promising son Antiochus (born to Seleucus' Persian wife Apamea). Seleucus, had carved out for both himself and his heir a vast empire almost equal in size to that of the Achaemenid kings. After a reign of 34 years, Seleucus died, struck down by a treacherous blade, aged 73 years and was immediately succeeded by his son Antiochus I.

There were numerous struggles for power in the coming decades and the war for supremacy continued to be waged against the other Ionian kingdoms. The successors of Seleucus tried desperately to retain control of the satraps, but piece by piece the provinces were lost. An ominous turn for the worst occurred in 250 BC during the reign of Antiochus II when the Great Shah was forced to yield territory to exiles from a rising Turanian nomad tribe called the Dahae. These exiled tribesmen were called Parthi or Parthians. Bactria, now cut off, also seceded. Seleucus II tried to unseat the Parthians, but failed. A later Great Shah, Antiochus III waged war on a number of rebel satrapies, and even forced the Parthian chiefs to submit. Unfortunately the Empire of the Eternal City, a rising star in the west, crippled the Seleucid army at the Battle of Magnesia in 190 BC. The Imperials so weakened Seleucid power that eastern satraps began to break away - easy prey for the ruthless Parthians.

Great Shah	Dates (BC)
Seleucus I Nicator	305 - 281
Antiochus I Soter	281 - 261
Antiochus II Theos	261 - 246
Seleucus II Callinicus	246 - 225
Seleucus III Soter	225 - 223
Antiochus III the Great	223 - 187
Seleucus IV Philopater	187 - 175
Antiochus IV Epiphanes	175 - 164
Antiochus V Eupator	163 - 162
Demetrius I Soter	162 - 150
Alexander Balas	150 - 145
Antiochus VI Epiphanes	145 - 142

THE PARTHIAN KINGS

"The Parthians in whose hands the empire of the east now is, having divided the world, as it were, with the Romans, were originally exiles from Scythia. This is apparent from their very name, for in the Scythian language exiles are called Parthi."

Justin, History of the World

Between 160 BC and 140 BC the aggressive Parthian shah Mithridates I conquered the whole of Iranshahr. The Persian populations of Iranshahr did not like the new rulers, nobody did, and when a number of invasions were staged by Seleucid exiles in Decapolis, these regions offered their help - all to no avail. Over time the Parthians settled into government, simply adopting the customs, titles and ways of life of the Iranians. Many Ionians still remained in Iranshahr and they were able to retain their identity. The new Parthian Great Shahs faced the threat of invasion from their homeland, the Turanian steppes, and waged continual war on Scythian nomads. Phraates II was killed while fighting the Scythians.

Eventually, in 95 BC, the eastern satrapies were pacified and a number of Scythian tribes were settled in Aria which then became a buffer state. Under Mithridates II the Parthian administration was consolidated and trade links forged with distant Serica in the East. It was following the death of Mithridates that the Empire began to come into direct conflict with the Parthians. At first the Empire signed treaties of neutrality which were honored by the Great Shah Phraates III, but the Imperial general Pompey violated these agreements and seized some of the western satraps. After the assassination of the Great Shah by dissidents, the Eternal City employed intrigue to keep the throne from Orodes II and in the hands of Mithridates III. It failed.

Orodes would get his revenge in 53 BC when the ambitious Imperial general Crassus organized a full-scale attack on Chaldea. Ignorant (or dismissive) of Parthian military tactics, Crassus was to pay the ultimate price for his folly. The Great Shah and Surena (one of the seven clan chiefs of Parthia) utterly destroyed the vast invading army at the

Battle of Carrhae, humiliating the legions of the Empire. Both Crassus and his son were killed in the fighting.

In 51 BC, the Parthian prince Pacorus began a series of attacks on the eastern provinces of the Imperium. His raids proved counter-productive and he was reined in by the Great Shah. Eleven years later Pacorus took another army into the southern part of Asia Minor and Labenius, an Imperial traitor, led a Parthian force into the north. This great Parthian invasion could not hold onto its conquests in the face of mounting opposition and in 38 BC Pacorus died in battle and his army was defeated. The Empire took back its territories.

Following the murder of Orodes II by the remaining princes, a civil war threatened to split the Parthian army. A dangerous rift had developed between the wealthy and aristocratic cataphracts [heavy cavalry] and the horse archers of more humble origins. Phraates IV, son of Orodes was now on the throne. He was able to quell the discord in time to prevent the audacious invasion of Parthian Atropatene by Mark Antony in 36 BC. based on Julius Caesar's original plans. The Parthian army continually harassed and attacked the Imperial columns. When the Imperial siege of Phraaspa failed, Mark Antony withdrew. A second attempt to invade Atropatene with his Armenian allies fared no better.

Phraates IV later entered into negotiations with Augustus leading to a compromise and a peaceful settlement. Augustus had rightly noted that the Parthian military machine, although devastating in the attack, found it difficult to sustain any kind of offensive over time. This had led the emperor to conclude that the threat from Parthia was not as great as it at first seemed.

For decades the mountain realm of Armenia had been a source of contention between Parthia and the Eternal City. Since the days of Augustus, Imperial influence held sway, a line of puppet-kings had ruled the kingdom much to the general annoyance of the Great Shah. When the Parthian shah Vologases I installed his own brother Tiridates as the king of Armenia (54 AD), the Empire sent in troops to dislodge him. The Great Shah was forced at this time to put down a rebellion in Hyrcania, but was soon forced to defend Armenia from a vast Imperial army. This Armenian war lasted from 58 - 60 AD and ended with negotiations that secured Tiridates, as king of Armenia. While this brought Armenia into the Parthian sphere of influence, Nero received Tiridates in the Eternal City as king, awarding him a ceremonial crown.

Armenia continued to be a thorn in the side of Parthia. When the Great Shah began to meddle in Armenian affairs in 114, the Empire once again dispatched legions into the Armenian mountains to wage the First Parthian War. The tough and warlike Emperor Trajan turned Armenia from a buffer state into an Imperial province and the next year secured the approaches to this new province by marching into Parthian-occupied Assyria. In 116 Trajan continued his stunning Parthian campaign by conquering the Parthian satrapy of Chaldea and taking Ctesiphon, the winter capital of Vologases III. The Great Shah himself was captured along with his daughter. This was an unprecedented attack since no Imperial army had as much as dented the Parthian Empire up until that time. Late in the year local rebellion tried in vain to oust the occupation

forces. It was only when Hadrian, Trajan's successor, came to power that the legions abandoned Chaldea and the Imperial border was re-established along the Upper Euphrates river. Parthia was left unmolested, until the rise of the Sassanid Persians, reclaiming the ancient Persian right to rule over Iranshah!

Great Shah	Dates (BC)
Mithridates I	141 - 138
Phraates II	138 - 127
Artabarnus I	127 - 124
Mithridates II	123 - 88
Orodes I	88 - 80
Sinatruces	80 - 70
Phraates III	70 - 57
Mithridates III	57 - 54
Orodes II	54 - 37
Phraates IV	37 - 2
Phraataces	2 - AD 4
Orodes III	AD 4 - 6
Vonones I	8 - 12
Artabarnus II	12 - 38
Vardanes I	38 - 47
Gotarzes	47 - 51
Vonones II	51
Vologases I	51 - 78
Vologases II	78 - 80
Pacorus	80 - 105
Artabarnus III (co-ruler)	80 - 90
Vologases III	105- 147
Vologases IV	147 - 191
Vologases V	191 - 208
Vologases VI	208 - 228
Artabarnus IV (co-ruler)	216 - 224

THE SASSANID KINGS

The fortunes of Iranshahr changed dramatically in April 224 AD when the king of Persia (a vassal state), defeated Great Shah Artabarnus on the battlefield. Two years later this minor king was officially installed as the Great Shah in Ctesiphon. The bloodline that had originally established Iranshahr was now back in control after more than six hundred years of foreign domination. A resurgence in Persian culture and history has swept the land and artists, poets, architects, sculptors and tailors harken back to the glory days of the Achaemenids, to Darius and Xerxes and the power of a world-spanning empire. Ardashir is also pronounced Artaxerxes, a name with a direct connection to the Achaemenids.

After securing the satrapies of Iranshahr, Ardashir turned his attentions on the Empire, which had proved to be such a bane on the Iranians during Parthian overlordship. In 230 he marched into Osrhoene and seized Nisibis and Carrhae. The young Emperor Alexander Severus led his armies against this revitalised Iranian force but the legions could not make any headway. Ten years later, crown prince Shapur rode into Hatra - a symbolic and militarily potent prize for any army in the region. The following year this eager young man succeeded his father as Great Shah, and began his father's planned conquest of the Empire's eastern provinces. The Imperials squabbled over the throne while on campaign, Emperor Gordian III was murdered on the banks of the Euphrates to make way for a new emperor, Philip the Saracen (his praetorian commander). This greedy manipulator bought off prince Shapur in 244 AD with 500,000 denarii (with promises of annual payments).

In 252 AD, Great Shah Shapur was back to head a renewed onslaught on the Empire's eastern provinces, overrunning Decapolis and seizing mighty Antioch. A new and trusted emperor had taken charge, however, with a loyal and determined son at his side. Emperor Valerian would try to reclaim the East while his son, Gallienus would lead armies against the German barbarians in the West. Valerian arrived in Antioch, recently abandoned by Shapur's forces, in 254 AD. For six years he fought the Persians in the Decapolis, in Osrhoene and in Chaldea, with neither side gaining any major advantage. Finally, the Great Shah's luck changed, and his forces trapped Emperor Valerian and his army inside the plague-ridden and starving city of Edessa. When Valerian attempted to bargain his way out, Shapur agreed to parley and captured the emperor in the company of his bodyguard and trusted advisors. Victory!

The Emperor Valerian, an old man, has become the personal slave of the Great Shah, forced to crouch below Shapur's mighty Fergahana warhorse and allow the Great Shah to use his back as a step. When Valerian dies, Shapur plans to have the emperor's skin flayed, dyed vermilion and hung at the back of his audience chamber in Ctesiphon to act as a dire warning to Imperial ambassadors!

With Valerian in chains, the Great Shah celebrated with a renewed invasion of Imperial territory, but victory was not gained. Ballista, commander of the praetorian guard, led a powerful counter-attack in Cilicia, that captured Shapur's harem. As the Persian army withdrew across the Euphrates river Queen Zenobia of the desert city Palmyra, sent her general and lover Odaenathus to drive them back even further. The desert warriors of Palmyra, until now acting as scouts, middlemen and frontier guards, became enthusiastic conquerors, seizing the territories lost by the Empire.

Great Shah

Ardashir (Artaxerxes IV)
Shapur

Dates (AD)

224 - 241
241 Onwards

AFFAIRS OF STATE

“They obey their princes, not from humility, but from fear.”

- Justinus, *History of the World*

The office of Great Shah differs significantly from that of Emperor of the Eternal City. The Emperor is fabulously wealthy and at the very top of the Imperial social system. But he is still *Princeps*, First Citizen. Common soldiers can, and did, rise to become Emperor. Not so in Iranshahr, where birth and blood-line are all important. The Great Shah, and indeed lesser shahs, are considered to be godlike, their right to rule divine. Shahs often have to be separated from the mortal realm, and from the lives of the common folk. Anyone attending an audience with a shah has to prostrate themselves fully on the floor and avoid eye-contact with the potentate. Court officials are likewise imbued with the divine authority of the shah and must be treated in a similar (if less severe) fashion. Much of the time while holding court, a shah remains aloof from his guests, ministers, foreign visitors or supplicants by remaining within a kiosk of silk drapes, invisible to the outsider. Yet he himself can look out across his banqueting hall.

The purity of divine nature of the shah must not be sullied. The ground upon which he walks must first be purified, his mount must be the most perfect Heavenly Horse of Ferghana. His weapons and armor must be free from defects, his clothes worth an kingdom and made of the purest of materials, his food blessed three times and tasted for him by a eunuch slave. Within his palace he walks on special carpets forbidden to others. To ignore these rituals is to become contaminated with the mortal world, and a shah would see his power and authority suffer commensurably. Imperials and Ionians have always lampooned (or murdered...) any of their leaders who appeared to be adopting these customs.

THE BUREACRACY [*Dippana*]

Although there are capital cities and royal palaces, the Persian court is continuously on the move from one royal residence to another around the kingdom. The cities frequented most by the royal entourage include Ctesiphon (especially in the winter), Ecbatana in the summer, Arsakia, Hecatompylus and Isfahan.

The commander of the king's bodyguard [*vuzurg framadar*] holds a very important place in the hierarchy, he is able to dictate who gains an audience and who does not. He is also responsible for the security of the royal court. Equal in power is the grand vizier [*vastrabara*] who acts as an intermediary between the Great Shah and the mass of officials and servants of the administration [*dippana*]. Other senior members of Persian government include the chief scribe [*dipir-i-mahist*] and the chief administrator [*dipir-i-vuzurg*]. These offices overlap somewhat, but the former acts as a private secretary, while the latter manages the staff of scribes and accountants [*hamarkar*]. Areas of government are directly controlled by ministers [*framadar*] each supported by its own bloated bureaucracy. *Framadars* are awarded their positions by the Great Shah and may be wealthy nobles, royal relatives, military commanders or trusted satraps.

A most important part of the Great Shah's court is the hareem, which takes care of the needs of his many wives and children. Eunuchs [*shakir*] staff the hareem, and find employment in many other parts of the Persian bureaucracy besides. A *shakir* can be trusted, he has no family ties, no issue, no ambitions. These loyal servants are bought as slaves by the Great Shah from subject states, satraps or from foreign lands. Other members of court include doctors, wise-men, astrologers, *magoi*, wealthy merchants, famous sea captains, mercenary generals, poets, playwrights and philosophers. It is a cosmopolitan crowd, all vying for royal favor, all scheming and intriguing - trying to come out on top. Each member of the royal family also has their own court.

ROYAL SPIES [*Askadar*]

"I had better begin [the invasion of Greece] by sending a party of Persians over to Greece to reconnoiter ... They can then bring me back a full report of everything they see and hear. After that, when I have the information I need, I will begin the war."

- Darius speaking in Book III, *The Histories* by Herodotus

The Great Shah routinely dispatches a roving army of spies [*askadar*] into the satrapies to ensure that his taxes are being collected. These spies are known as the 'Eyes and Ears of the Shah', and they surreptitiously monitor the satraps' behavior. They are constantly on the look-out for any signs of treason. Any one of the satraps (members of the highest nobility, or even royal cousins) would make a worthy contender for the throne, and the Great Shah needs to know who they are long before they rise up in revolt. It does not help the matter that some satraps spend long periods of time with the royal court and its many intrigues, and leave the day to day running of the province to trusted aides. Perhaps he has some business to conduct or he might have duties at the royal court that frequently take him away from his satrapy. Each *askadar* is a master of disguise. He (or she) can spend weeks or months reconnoitering a satrap and preparing a mental report of the satrap's loyalty (or lack thereof). Most *askadar* are multi-lingual, masters of dialects as well as local languages. They are known for their ability to blend into the social scene, but they are always on the alert, watching and listening.

IMMORTALS [*Amrtaka*]

The royal troops of the Achaemenid Persians were called Immortals because they always kept their unit up to full strength. The Immortals were steadfast and loyal soldiers, the toughest troops of the Persian war machine. Following the conquests of Alexander this imperial guard was immediately disbanded. Unknown to the world, however, a core of officers vowed to keep the traditions and memory of the Immortals alive - to truly make the unit 'immortal'. For centuries the organization existed only as a secret society of Persian military officers, a fraternal brotherhood of no importance and with no real objective. The recent line of Sassanian Persian shahs quickly discovered that the Immortal secret society was a wonderful military intelligence network and a very successful espionage agency.

SACRIFICERS [*Gyanarspar*]

The Cult of Sacrificers is a Parthian terror cult of sophisticated but bloody assassins. It was established centuries ago by an unnamed Dahaeen holy man (a shaman) who taught his disciples on the Turanian plain how to trap and bind the souls of the enemies they killed. This was accepted easily in a culture that already hunted heads and drank the blood of defeated enemies. The fierce Parthian warriors became even fiercer - empowered by the supernatural forces guarding them. These horse nomads were afraid of nothing. In 250 BC the other Dahaeen tribes shunned the Parthians; the tribe was exiled, forced to flee southwards into Iranshahr. So began the slow conquest of Iranshahr by these uncompromising nomads ...

The Cult of Sacrificers (properly translated as 'sacrificers of their lives') is today a mysterious organization of assassins, enacting the brutal will of the Great Shah: The soul of each newly initiated assassin is placed within a shrine inside the cult's remote fortress headquarters in the Elburz Mountains. Parthian shamans who rule the cult have the magical skills needed to sever the soul from the body, carrying on a tradition handed down from the cult's holy founder. The soul is secured within a magically inscribed bronze lamp, and so remains honest, pure and unsullied by the horrible crimes and murders the assassin will carry out during his life. Upon the assassin's (inevitable) demise the soul is released and is granted access to eternal paradise [*firdaus*] by Ahuramazda himself.

Fusing ideas from nomad shamanism and the Iranian religion of Zoroastrianism, the Cult of the Sacrificers is a peculiar and bloody religious sect. Its adherents are mystical fanatics who believe that the spirits of their victims protect them, that their souls will remain unsullied and that they will dwell in paradise when they die. The shamans who control the cult have always employed mind-altering drugs to assist their magical rituals, they have extended drug use to the cult's regular members. Assassins are regularly given a 'taste of paradise' during some mystical drug-induced journey - an experience which drives them on to perform their murders with ever increasing vigor and zeal.

A Parthian war hero called Parthamaspartes is the current Grand Master of the cult and he is famous for surviving unscathed a direct hit from a Roman *ballista*. Parthamaspartes instills a fanaticism within his followers that many Parthian cultists find frightening.

Occasionally the Great Shah calls upon his Sacrificers to perform a discrete assassination to remove a particular satrap or official from a department in the *dippana*. Patience and determination are the hallmarks of the assassins. A particular assignment for a female agent might involve being married to a suspect nobleman to provide monthly reports on his behavior. It might be ten or twenty years later when the Great Shah directs that Sacrificer to plunge a dagger into her husband's heart. Other assassins might be dispatched into the Empire to murder military leaders or governors.

ROYAL COURIERS [*Pavarnak*]

The nerves of Iranshahr have always been the efficient mounted couriers [*pavarnak*] who have criss-crossed the land, maintaining communications and allowing the decrees of the Great Shah to be heard in every corner of the empire, no matter how remote. Well

maintained and patrolled roads link the major cities. These roads are dotted with caravanserais - Iranian stopping points that are a combination of inn, water-hole, oases, postal station and guard tower. The better examples are run by the royal administration for the use of couriers and court officials, but nearly all welcome paying visitors. The documents [*chak*] carried by the gallopers are written in Aramaic on sheets of parchment. Aramaic is the language of the Persian bureaucracy, and if it is a royal edict will be translated into the common language of the satrapy upon arrival there.

RULE OF THE SATRAPIES

As we have seen, the Persian kingdom is divided into satrapies [provinces], and each satrapy is governed by a feudal lord, a satrap, who is master over his territory and its inhabitants. Nominally loyal to the Great Shah (who may have granted the satrap his possessions), these overlords are shahs all but in name. They have great judicial, religious and military powers and must extract taxes to pay for the satrapal bureaucracy [*dippana*], as well as the multi-layered bureaucracy at the provincial capital and the military forces needed to garrison it. Additional taxes are levied on behalf of the Great Shah.

Within each satrapy are a number of local land-lords [*dihqan*], noblemen who owe fealty to the satrap and who govern the smaller territories within the provinces on his behalf. In time of war each *dihqan* must assemble and equip a local levy to send to the satrap, and it is the *dihqan* himself who will command them. The *dihqans* enter battle as the light horse archers, that military force for which the Persians are justly famous. *Dihqans* are the chivalric land-lords administering local justice, ruling fortified villages from mud-walled castles and passing on their lands to their sons. Satraps may come and go but the *dihqans* remain.

The Great Shah has generally been tolerant in his dealings with the inhabitants of his empire, and those of subject states. It is a tradition which goes back to Cyrus and the Achaemenid Persians. The satrapies each have their own customs and laws, and these are codified and respected. Few royal incumbents have ever imposed a set of foreign traditions upon their subjects. Laws are administered and codified by attorneys [*yatakgov*] and councilors [*andarzbad*] who ensure that local laws are respected, and that the decrees of the Great Shah are enacted lawfully. Both *yatakgov* and *andarzbad* are priests of Ahuramazda who have had legal training; the former advise the *dihqans* and satraps, the latter assist the common people in seeking a judgment.

CRIME & PUNISHMENT

The fact cannot be overstated that punishment for heretical or criminal acts is severe. The neatly codified and argued legal system of the Eternal City (which we today enjoy the benefits of) does not exist in Persia. In the eyes of the Great Shah, all men and women are slaves to be mastered and controlled. This attitude is held by his satraps and, to a lesser degree by other members of the *azata* class; and it is the nobility which dispenses justice. The audience chamber is also a court of law with the *dihqan* or satrap judging local cases and meting out appropriately harsh punishments. How far up the social scale a criminal (or plaintiff) can go for a judgment depends purely on who he knows – on his contacts. If a persona is involved on either side of a dispute (he might

have been robbed or might be accused of a crime by the clergy or the village headman) then he appeals to the highest level *azata* that he knows. Usually this is the local *dihqan*, sometimes it is the satrap. Having a friend at court is always helpful! Lucky is the man who knows a courtier within ear-shot of the Great Shah...

The case in hand is then heard at the palace or villa of the highest ranking *azata* who has been asked to make a judgment. There are no juries, merely the whim of the *azata*. Prey that he is merciful! Both plaintiffs will get a chance to speak and may call forth a witness or two to back them up. Often an ordeal is demanded by the judge, a physical ordeal of pain involving boiling oil or molten metal that tests the character and thus veracity of a suspect or plaintiff. The *azata* will then make his judgment.

Each satrap has its own peculiar customs, laws and regulations (they are in effect self-governing kingdoms) and to assist the *dihqan* or satrap in his decision-making, Zoroastrian priests called *yatagovs* are on hand to advise him. They can temper local customs with the law of the Great Shah and also with the moral precepts laid down by Zoroaster. For very minor cases (of petty theft, boundary disputes and affray) the *yatagov* can make a judgment on their own without the presence of the satrap or *dihqan*. Such a case will be heard at the porch [*eiwan*] of the palace or villa, not the grand audience chamber.

Defendants or plaintiffs can also turn to the *mobeds* for help. Most fire temples have a few priests on staff who are councillors [*andarzbad*]. The *andarzbad* is a solemn and serious religious thinker, not some silver-tongued legal eagle. When asked for help he will demand the plaintiff take an oath of truthfulness over a sacred fire. Truth is the fulcrum of Persian society, and the councilor must be sure of his client's guilt or innocence. Once this is determined he advises his client of his moral obligations, his rights under local law, and the ways in which he can phrase his statement to the court. The *andarzbad* is not interested in 'getting his client off', only in the Truth – and how it can best be revealed. *Andarzbad*s do not ask for payment since they carry out a religious duty.

Most palaces have cells for the detention of criminals, and most villages have whipping posts to which a suspect can be chained until his trial. No-one receives a prison sentence as a punishment. By far the most common punishments are:

- Payment of an appropriate sum of money to the plaintiff.
- 10 – 200 lashes of the terrible nail-studded whip [*sraosha carana*]
- Loss of hand
- Mutilation of facial features, typically nose and ears
- Blinding
- Dragged behind a horse that is driven into the desert
- Exposure – staked out in the sun until dead
- Decapitation
- Flaying alive
- Staking out and trampling by a couple of war-horses
- Pulled apart by four galloping horses

- Crushed by an elephant
- Impaled onto a spike
- Thrown from fortress battlements
- Exposed by being buried up to the neck in the desert

The punishment will fit the crime (and the temperament and personality of the judge). Many satraps revel in conjuring up new and obscene forms of punishment for transgressors. Also note that a high status convict (an *athrawan* or *azata*) will often be given a much lighter sentence than a slave, bondsman or foreigner. Due to religious reasoning, criminals are never executed by being burned alive, drowned or burned to death.

GREAT CLANS OF PERSIA

The five Great Clans of Persia are incredibly powerful and ancient institutions. They go back to the first days of Parthian conquest when the tribe made a five-pronged attack into Iranshahr ending at Ctesiphon where the five clans established a joint capital.

Mithridates I founded his new dynasty in the shadow of these clans, indeed his own clan (Mihran} was responsible for elevating him to power in the first place. A shah's primary loyalty is always to his own clan, followed by the other clans and finally the general Iranian population.

A great deal of factional politics goes on behind the Persian throne. Although the Great Shah is free to make his decrees as he sees fit, in certain matters the Great Clans have a veto. In general these matters include the succession to the throne and any commands that relate directly to the Great Clans. The succession is a particularly thorny problem and throughout Parthian history there have been many rival claimants. Procedurally, things are a little more complex than the simple 'successor naming' of the Imperium. Each Great Clan, including the current shah's clan of origin, puts forward a candidate and the current shah is obliged to groom these princes for government; as he does so he decides upon a successor. It is likely that the candidate from his own clan will be a blood relative, perhaps a son, a brother or an uncle.

When the Great Shah has announced his successor the clan chiefs retire to debate his decision based on the shah's reasons (which he must enumerate). He will also have announced the important positions in government (mainly as *framadars*, satraps or other important offices) that he has assigned the rival candidates to. The council of clan chiefs cannot veto the succession but it can announce its displeasure. Usually this will only occur if a highly unsuitable candidate is chosen, or if the top jobs awarded are not 'top' enough. Often the most powerful clan dominates the dynasty for a while until suitable heirs become scarce, and then the reins of power shift to another rising clan. Surprisingly, few successions end with inter-clan feuding and bloodshed. Unhappy princes do occasionally seize power elsewhere in Iranshahr in a bid to overthrow the shah's chosen successor.

GM's should realize quickly that there is huge potential for dynamic campaigns here. Who is fit to rule? Can another prince prove himself worthy? Are the clans forming alliances in secret? Is one prince waging a smear campaign against his rivals? Can the judgment of the current shah be swayed? What about the clan chiefs – what will it take to buy them off?

The fire wizards (*magoi*) supervise this process; in fact should the Great Shah die before coming to a decision (which he is expected to do within the first five years of his rule) then the impartial *magoi* make the decision on his behalf.

The Great Clans have influence because their male members are granted high office in the Persian kingdom. Each is a blood-line of ancient noble chieftains retaining a fierce stamp of tribal individuality. It's members are *dihqans*, satraps, court officials and military officers – hereditary positions that belong to the clan by right. Most clans have a power base, territories scattered through Iranshahr that are dominated by their own satraps and *dihqans*. There are five Great Clans:

Clan Suren

Clan Suren (of Carrhae fame) has often been a minor player in the earlier Parthian period. The clan owns territories in the east which were subject to much unrest and Turanian incursion – but in the last three centuries peace, trade and the development of the eastern economies has brought about a new era of wealth, power and prosperity for Suren. The power base of Suren is centered on the satraps of Aria, Arachosia and Zarangia with some *kura* in northern Media. The Suren capital, in which clan ceremonies and councils are held is the oasis town of Zaranj.

Clan Sassan

Clan Sassan has become intertwined with religious affairs. It's power base is southern and central Media, as well as parts of northern Carmania and *kuras* around Darabjird in Persia. Sassan is politically powerful, many of its men folk are senior *mobeds* and fire wizards. The clan chief of Sassan is the Great Shah himself, Shapur, and he holds the exalted position of *zarathustrotuma* – head of the Zoroastrian religion. The clan has heard of the upstart *mobed* called Mani in Chaldea, and is putting pressure on clan Mihran to do something about him.

Clan Mihran

Of all the clans, Mihran has the greatest reputation for excellence in warfare and it has proved to have the upper hand during the recent conquests in the west. Its territories include all of Chaldea, Elymais and Atropatene, with some *kura* in eastern Parthyena. The clan chief Hooshyar holds the office of King's Bodyguard [*vuzurg framadar*]. It's men folk are all battle-hardened after spearheading the raids into Imperial territory over the last few years.

Clan Zik

Clan Zik holds territories in Parthyena and the *kura* of Nisea in northern Media. Its central concern is the breeding of horses. The clan has always owned the best herds and

its men folk have jealously guarded their quality bloodlines. Of course some of the best riders and cataphracts come from Zik. The clan has nurtured an intense rivalry with Mihran over the centuries, stemming partly from the rivalry for the throne in the early years, and partly from the competition for glory on the battlefield. The clan chief is Dardarshi and he holds the office of Grand Vizier [*vastrabara*] – putting him in direct conflict with Hooshyar of Clan Mihran, the King's Bodyguard.

Clan Nahr Tira

The fifth Great Clan is Nahr Tira, an ancient dynasty that has always looked to the opportunities that Persian reconquest of Iranshahr can provide. It was Nahr Tira that had the old network of underground irrigation channels [*qanats*] restored and expanded. It was Nahr Tira that sent out the first envoys to Serica. It is always Nahr Tira that makes any improvements to the *caravanserais* that are crucial for trade. The current clan chief is Ariobarzanes and he holds the office of chief administrator – head of the *dippana*. Clan holdings include Gedrosia, central and southern Carmania, Charax and a number of *kura* in Persia and Aria.

CHAPTER IV

HAMARANA

BATTLE: A FEAT OF ARMS

"Of engaging with the enemy in close fight, and of taking cities by siege, they know nothing. They fight on horseback, either galloping forward or turning their backs."

Justinus, *History of the World*

The history of Iranshahr is a history of conflict and every Great Shah is ready to wage war. Potential threats are everywhere - in the royal court, in the petty rivalries among satraps and the *dihqans*, in the hill tribes of the rougher satrapies and on the frontiers of the empire. The greatest menace to Persian security is the Empire, a voracious military monster gobbling up territory and relentlessly enslaving peoples. Persians are superb horsemen and archers, warfare flows within their veins. This love of combat is both a curse and a blessing - on one hand constant conflict sparks frequent episodes of internecine conflict; on the other it hones a martial spirit that is able to outwit the Imperial legions.

The Persian levy system organizes its troops into regiments [*hazaraba*; *sing. hazarabam*] of 1,000 men commanded by nobles given the title *hazarapatish*. These regiments are further divided into ten companies [*sataba*; *sing. satabam*] each of around a hundred men and commanded by a *satapatish*. The smallest unit of the Persian army is the ten-man squad [*dathabam*; *pl. dathaba*]. Each *dathabam* is commanded by a *dathapatish*. In the event of combat or medical casualties troops are reassigned to other *dathaba* in order to retain the ten-man field strength. This means that often there are fewer than ten *dathaba* in a *satabam*. Both *sataba* and *dathaba* had deputy commanders responsible to the unit commander, called the *pascasatapatish* and *pascadathapatish*, respectively. During wars of crisis, when tens of thousands of troops are called up, the Great Shah gives command of a 10,000 strong division [*baivarabam*; *pl. baivara*] to a trusted nobleman whose military title is *baivarapatish*. These units tend to be temporary in nature and dissolve when the men return to their villages, towns and tribes.

Despite Persia's military readiness it does not support a standing army like the Empire. Instead the Persian kingdom relies on individual noblemen in a vast feudal chain of responsibility. The satraps, and their inner circle, supply a hastily drawn up Persian army with its heavily armored cataphracts while the poorer *dihqans* provide the superb horse archers. Each nobleman is expected to bring to the battle a peasant levy to act as spearmen. Mercenaries can fulfill a host of miscellaneous duties and are always available for hire. Most of these fighters are tough hillmen from the mountain districts

of Iranshahr, others are nomad horsemen fresh from the steppes. The Persian army could not be more different from the Roman.

CATAPHRACTS

The cataphracts are the Persian equivalent of medieval knights - noblemen trained in the arts of mounted combat who lead the army on their heavily armored horses, clad head-to-toe in metal armor and wielding an array of deadly weapons. The mere sight of these elite warriors, a wall of metal flashing in the bright desert sun, saps the morale of most enemy units especially that of foot-soldiers. As cataphracts approach at a steady trot the instincts of an opposing infantry unit is to close up for self defense, playing into the hands of the wily Persians, who will quickly bring up horse archers to attack the bunched-up soldiers with a hail of merciless arrows. The heavier cavalry is also routinely screened and protected by lighter horse archer units. Veteran infantry who have faced cataphracts before and are ready for this rouse try to retain an open formation, hopefully forcing the cataphracts to engage in a frontal assault. Yet however the infantry react, the heavy cavalry has the upper hand, so devastating is its shock charge. The only hope of victory the opposition has is to separate the cataphracts from their horse archer escorts. This is easier said than done – the Persian heavy cavalry dominates events on the battlefield.

Only the very richest noblemen can afford to be cataphracts. The Great Shah, his generals, senior administrators, wealthy *framadar* and court officials would all be equipped as cataphracts in time of war. They may not even have much training or experience in battle, but their status virtually *requires* that they furnish a complete cataphract panoply. Members of the royal family, satraps and wealthy members of their family will also go to war as cataphracts. Less well endowed officials, poorer relations, senior servants, *dihqans* and their sons accompany their masters and feudal overlords as unarmored horse archers. Satraps can typically muster a regiment or two of cataphracts during times of crisis; but the Great Shah can muster a much greater force, such as an entire division [*baivarabam*] of these elite troops.

Cataphracts are most famous for the armor worn by the riders. Long, knee-length coats of chain mail, scale or *lamellae* plates are worn, sometimes covered by a richly embroidered felt tunic. Arms and legs are fully protected by linked bands of metal armor [*basuband*], similar to the gladiator's *manica* which forms a tough, almost impenetrable defense. Persian helmets [*xud*] typically taper to a point and are decorated with a horse-hair plume. While most helmets feature a neck-guard of scale or chain mail. Some cataphracts wear aventails [*grivpan*], frightening and dehumanizing veils of chain mail hanging from the front rim of the helmet to provide complete protection for the rider's face. The weapon that makes the cataphract so fearsome is the heavy 12-foot lance [*xyston*], but he also carries into battle a long sword [*shamshir*] and sometimes also a Persian war-club [*bashgah*]. Shields [*gerrhon*] are abandoned since the cataphract armor is virtually immune to arrows, javelins and slingshot, provides a measure of protection from sword and spear blows and a reasonably effective defense against Imperial *pila*. Cataphract armor for the mounts is available in lamellar or scale, has identical defense values to the human equivalent, but is exceptionally expensive!

A cataphract must also be able to afford a stable of fine-bred Nisean horses to be used in rotation. Only these tough breeds are able to carry the heavy coats of scale armor, bronze chamfrons and peytrals (protecting the horses head and chest respectively). Some cataphracts opt to forgo the horse armor for increased speed or stamina.

GUARD CAVALRY [ASAWIRA]

Both the Great Shah and the satraps of the Persian kingdom enjoy the protection of *asawira*, elite cataphracts forming a household cavalry and mounted bodyguard. The *asawira* are handpicked cataphracts, esteemed noblemen who have proven their loyalty and skill in arms. They are vassals to their lord as other cataphracts are, but enjoy a closer relationship often having exalted titles such as Kinsman [*Huvaku*] to indicate the trust the shah has in them. Expensive gifts, estates and offers of marriage to a shah's daughter are some of the rewards offered by a grateful king. Each *asawira* unit is led by the Master of Horse [*Asapatish*] who is a relative of the Shah or satrap, a man of his own clan. On campaign, the *asawira* surround their lord, and lead charges against enemy positions, rush to the defense of a unit under attack as an elite reserve force, or perform mundane, yet distinguished, diplomatic duties such as escorting dignitaries and court officials or providing protection to ambassadors. They can also enforce the lord's justice in the satrapy, punishing an entire village or a rebellious *dihqan*.

As favored nobles, the *asawira* are awarded great gifts in recognition of their status. These will include a golden short sword [*akinaka*], a purple cloak, a golden torque and bracelets and a Heavenly Horse of Ferghana complete with a golden, gem-encrusted bridle. To enhance their fearful reputation it is common for units of *asawira* to wear chilling masked helmets bearing the image of a grotesque face. In this way they become even more distant and impersonal.

The Great Shah maintains six regiments of *asawira*, and various companies can be found on official business across the empire. Satraps maintain fewer *asawira* than that, typically just a few companies. The more powerful governors can call on a full regiment.

HORSE ARCHERS

Far outnumbering the heavy cavalry are the horse archers, light cavalry units impressive in their mobility and speed. Though the mounted archers appear less threatening at first glance compared to the spectacle of the glittering cataphracts given the opportunity the horse archers gladly display their deadly skills. Lightning fast, able to turn and flee in an instant, capable of mass maneuvers and sudden charges, the horse archers can strike repeatedly at enemy troops without suffering a single casualty. Their riding skills are exceeded only by their marksmanship with the bow. Horse archers and cataphracts work in concert to rout enemy forces. Cataphracts break up enemy formations, creating panic and disorder. In return, the horse archers provide cover and let loose a volley of well-aimed arrows before turning and galloping out of range, firing accurately over their

shoulders even while retreating (the infamous tactic known as the Parthian shot). In 38 BC, Prince Pacorus, son of Orodes II, was killed in battle when he led his cataphracts against the Imperial legions without a protective force of horse archers.

The killing is made possible by the use of a powerful bow [*kamhan*], a composite construction of horn, sinew and wood. It is an unsurpassed weapon of speed, penetration and reliability - a worthy rival of the Imperial pilum. Horse archers craft their own combined bow case and quiver, known as a *gorytos*. *Gorytoi* are worn on a waist belt and can become a symbol of status. A poor nomad might have a simple *gorytos* of leather and felt while that of a *dihqan* or official from Ctesiphon might be covered in gold or silver. Any enemy hoping that the horse archers will soon run out of arrows are regrettably mistaken, for the Persian forces prepare a camel train that ensures a steady supply of arrows to the battlefield. This reserve ensured the destruction of Crassus' legions at Carrhae.

Horse archers rely on speed and maneuverability and so shun armor. Typical costume is a long-sleeved felt coat [*kaftan*] that is beautifully embroidered, along with decorated trousers and ankle boots. Horse archers sometimes wear a Scythian cap [*bashlyk*] which is soft and pointed with flaps hanging over the ears and neck. More commonly the *dihqans* and petty nobles like to display their well-tonsured hair, exchanging the *bashlyk* for a colored headband of ribbons.

NOMAD MERCENARIES [*DAHAE*]

While the Persians have always depended on horse archers as the backbone of the military and Persian equivalent of the legionary, generals and shahs needing to supplement this force, regularly turn to the horse nomads of the Turanian steppes. The Turanian tribes have a long historical relationship with Iranshahr, from co-operation and colonization to resentment and even conflict. There are always nomads wanting to make a life for themselves within Iranshahr, and by selling their military skills and expertise, the nomads can leave the precarious life of the Turanian steppe behind.

In the first century of Parthian rule, the Great Shah routinely recruited members of the *dahae* confederacy into his army. Seeing the advantage they provided, a number of satraps followed suit. Exiles from the *dahae* often came south, hoping that the Parthians (once a *dahae* tribe themselves) could offer them employment. Although nomad mercenaries now come from many other Turanian tribes (as well as Sogdiana), *dahae* has become a traditional title for them all. Full regiments of *dahae* are quite rare. More likely a satrap will have at his disposal a *satabam* or two of mercenary cavalry ready for immediate use within his province. The existence of such a force means that the satrap need not call on his *dihqans* when some minor task, such as an escort, police or patrol duty, must be performed.

A *satabam* (or *hazarabam*) of *dahae* will usually be named after a charismatic chief who leads it. After his death the name may be retained, or an equally charismatic chief might stamp his own identity (and thus his name) on the mercenaries. The nomads will retain many of their old customs and traditions, they will often retain older clothing and gear where it represents gifts from loved ones, from tribal elders or even the tribe itself.

They dress as other horse archers, but their clothing is much less ornate, and unadorned leather is more common. Scythian caps [*bashlyks*] are very popular. In addition, many *satabam* retain their tribe's traditional 'cut' – a distinctive way of shaping and arranging the manes of a horse as an identifying mark.

An important role played by the Royal Mercenaries (those *dahae* recruited to fight in the service of the Great Shah, as opposed to the contingents of a satrap) is to garrison his citadels and strongholds that are scattered across Iranshahr. These forts represent the military might of the Great Shah in the provinces, and are both a statement of power and a lever to be used against a disobedient satrap. Most are sited at strategic points on river crossings, at the heads of valleys, mountain passes, on the approaches to important cities and rarely hold more than half a dozen *sataba* of mercenaries. Directly responsible to the shah, these strategic forts are garrisoned by *dahae* paid directly from the Royal Treasury. A royal warden [*didapatish*] commands these fortresses. In effect, the shah retains a loyal military force in satrapies that may be ruled by less reliable governors. The aim is to discourage rebellion. Local regions are required to pay tribute to help support these foreign mercenaries, and since the *dahae* are cavalry, this tribute tends to be in the form of fresh horses.

ROAD WATCH [*ASTANDES*]

The road watch or *astandes* are horse archers tasked with patrolling the dusty roads of Iranshahr. Caravanserais are found on every road and caravan route in Iranshahr, and the revenue they generate from passing merchants and travelers assists in maintaining the roads and supporting the *astandes*. The road watch checks on the honesty of the *caravanserai* owners, lends assistance to caravans that require it, including acting as an escort for caravans traveling on perilous routes. Because they mix with adventurers, traders and travelers from across Iranshahr and beyond, the *astandes* collect myriad rumors of treasures, lost cities and relics and frequently pass on what they hear. Some are tempted to pursue these wild fancies.

Although road watch troopers were originally recruited from nomad tribes, the Persian government prefers to maintain this corps of horse archers at its own expense. This force replaces losses by continually recruiting the sons of current members. Established in its current form by Vologases II, the four regiments of *astandes* are considered to be more reliable and trustworthy than mercenary cavalry, especially since the opportunity for plunder, robbery and extortion presents itself on a daily basis. In addition to having garrisons at the gates of every city, they have way stations at oases and *caravanserais* throughout the realm. The road watch are seen frequently on caravan routes and royal roads and are charged with preventing robbery, brigandage, enslavement and attacks on travelers by nomad raiders. The uniform of this elite unit includes a hood and cloak of saffron, a color that can only be acquired at incredible expense. The saffron cloak is a mark of distinction and trust. The GM should note that the road watch is a highly respected and generally honest collection of men.

DESERT SCOUTS [*USHABARI*]

The desert scouts perform similar duties to the *astandes*, but work primarily with camels in Chaldea and the Stone Desert. The *ushabari* are made up of Saraceni tribesmen who

bring their knowledge of the desert, its hazards and waterholes, as well as an understanding of tribal custom and history in that part of the world. Desert scouts are recruited individually and garrisoned in major Chaldean cities. While on patrol they may spend months journeying from caravanserai to oasis, village to waterhole, Saracen encampment to city. Their task is to ensure that Persian merchants are able to move freely up and down the trade routes across the deserts to Palmyra, Decapolis, Petra and to the remote kingdoms of Sabae. There is one *hazarabam* of desert scouts currently operating in the north, and its troopers often clash with patrols from the Palmyrene camel corps [*dromedarii*] as well as legionnary auxiliaries from Palmyra patrolling along the Mesopotamian border in Chaldea. Desert scouts are not as reliable as other Persian mercenaries: their fickle nature sometimes results in defections or desertions - often when such actions would hurt the western satrapies the most.

The desert scouts ride a well-trained camel, and always trail a second that acts as a reserve mount and beast of burden, carrying the trooper's food and large stocks of water. Each *satabam* of desert scouts wears distinctive Saracen-style robes carrying the emblem [*rang*] of the unit. Each rider wears a headband and cloak and carries a composite bow, quiver and separate cylindrical bow case, a short sword [*akinaka*] and a small wicker shield [*gerrhon*].

INFANTRY

The ordinary infantry of the Persian army is universally poor. It is made up of reluctant peasants, farmers and shepherds dragged to the battlefield by the *dihqans* and the satraps, mostly with only rudimentary militia training. A typical levy infantryman is a spearman, bringing to the battle a leather-covered wicker shield [*gerrhon*], a simple spear [*neyze*] and a poor quality short sword [*akinaka*]. He wears no armor, just a plain *kaftan* with baggy trousers [*sarawil*] and simple boots. Most wear dome-shaped felt caps.

So unwilling are these men to fight, and so low their morale, that some commanders have found it necessary to chain them together by their ankles in order to prevent hasty retreats. It is regular practice, in fact, to shackle soldiers to their guard posts to prevent them from deserting. No wonder, then, that the great bulk of any Persian force consists of cavalry. Infantry acts mainly as a screening force, as a camp guard and simple force of occupation. It is never trusted with important or combat-crucial tasks. That said, some infantry is of great value and details of these elite forces are given below.

ROYAL GUARDSMEN [*SHAHANSHAI*]

The royal guardsmen are the handpicked bodyguard of the Great Shah. Members of the nobility would be disgraced if they were to be seen on the battlefield on foot, so the *Shahanshai* are picked from the bravest, the brightest, the fiercest and most cunning members of the peasant levy. These men are natural warriors: some are veterans of many campaigns, others have much less experience, but possess all of the requirements for the royal guards. Any candidate must first have killed at least three men in hand-to-

hand combat. The duties of the *Shahanshai* include guarding the palaces, acting as bodyguards, escorting nobility, garrisoning and policing of any royal city, arresting traitors and other criminals and forming an elite phalanx of spearmen on the battlefield. There are two regiments of Royal Guardsmen, divided up between various royal residences, cities and garrisons of Iranshahr. The commander of the *Shahanshai* is a man of considerable political power, he does not have the stature of an Imperial praetorian prefect, but is still an important Persian official.

The Royal Guardsmen have a fearsome reputation and show no mercy to those weaker than themselves. They are sadists, killers, torturers and fanatics - fully aware that they are the best and the most privileged of the common people. This twisted esprit de 'corps is usually displayed as loathing and hatred of both nobles *and* commoners. The *Shahanshai* do respect their commander and the Great Shah and his immediate family. The further away a member of the royal bloodline is from the shah, the less deference he will receive from the Royal Guards. All of the officers are commoners too, members of the Great Shah's own clan. In this way they are bound by loyalty to serve him, not through blood or aristocratic honor, but through clan kinship.

The uniform of the *Shahanshai* comprises a nobleman's knee-length tunic of richly embroidered cloth in black, silver and purple. This is worn with voluminous black trousers and ankle boots. A *shamshir* is worn on the belt along with a silver-plated *akinaka*. A purple cloak is worn that can be wrapped around the face for protection against the desert winds. Unique to the Royal Guards are polished *bashlyk* helms, metal copies of the traditional Turanian nomad hat, which taper in on both sides to meet at a rounded crest. So as to leave no doubt they wear the *varegna*, the falcon with unfurled wings that is the emblem of the Great Shah, on their circular shields, which they carry into battle along with spears.

ROYAL HAREEM WARRIORS

It was the kings of India who began to create guard units of warrior women. Since India was a satrapy of the Persian Empire for some time, this practice was taken up by the Great Shahs of the Achaemenid dynasty. Unlike the Indian rulers, who employed them as exotic palace ornaments, the shahs had a more practical use for them. Reliable bodyguards were needed to watch over the huge royal hareem, and these warrior women seemed ideally suited to the job. All are slaves, and most are recruited from the tougher mountain tribes from around Persia. The female warriors accompany the shah's wives where-ever they go, striding confidently alongside the heavily draped litters in which the royal wives are transported.

The costume of the royal hareem warriors harkens back to their Indian origins; they wear sarong-like skirts held up with a finely embroidered belt and in defiance of tradition and decorum they are bare-chested. Their gender is advertised, not disguised. Each warrior also wears a head-dress of cloth wound around her hair that rises in tiers. She will also wear arm-bands, bracelets and ankle-rings, signs of status and wealth. The typical weapon of a royal hareem guard is a long sword, carried in a scabbard and slung on a baldric.

MERCENARIES [*KARDAKES*]

There are many duties too important to leave to the levy infantry, but too trivial to waste the time of the *Shahanshai*. For these tasks, which include the policing of cities, the garrisoning of border forts, patrolling and scouting, ambushing, skirmishing and other varied military activities, the Great Shah (and likewise, the satraps) hire mercenaries [*kardakes*]. Mercenaries are a tough breed of men, uncivilized barbarians, hill-men and mountain-dwellers accustomed to conflict, pain and hardship. Even though these men risk constant death or dismemberment, they are glad of the easier life of the *kardakes*. Such a fate, at least, lies in the hands of the individual, and not the indifferent whim of famine, blizzard or drought. Common recruiting grounds for mercenary hill-men includes the territories of the Daylamite tribes of Hyrcania and the Kurdish tribes of Atropatene, the mountains of Armenia and the dusty villages of northern Decapolis.

Like the nomad mercenaries, the *kardakes* are led by their native chiefs and wear traditional tribal dress (often warm hill clothing such as felt caps, thick tunics and baggy *sarawil*). As skirmishers they have no need of armor, and carry the preferred weaponry of their native land. This will be either sling, javelin or (in northern Decapolis, for example) bow. Satraps can raise their own mercenary units to garrison the forts, watchtowers and palaces of the satrapy. Such mercenary *sataba* or *harazaba* will follow the governor to war. The Great Shah retains an impressive force of mercenaries that he employs for a number of varied duties. Many more are garrisoned in the royal citadels dotted throughout the satrapies (see Nomad Mercenaries). Royal mercenaries are paid by the Royal Treasury to ensure their loyalty to the crown, and, as with *dahae*, the host satrapy must pay tribute to these forces to help with their upkeep.

TREASURY ARCHERS [*GANGABAI*]

When Royal Mercenaries are paid each quarter, the Great Shah sends a heavily-guarded gold shipment by donkey caravan, guarded not by *dahae* or *Kardakes*, but by Treasury Archers [*Gangabai*]. Although the *dahae* and *kardakes* are more reliable and trustworthy than simple peasant levies, they cannot be trusted with the wealth of the kingdom - and the *Shahanshai* deem the delivery of wages to be far beneath them!

To resolve this dilemma the *dippana* began to offer condemned criminals a chance to serve their shah through loyal service as a Treasury Archer. Condemned criminals awaiting execution are a source of great manpower: the best are adaptable, resourceful, tough and knowledgeable in the ways of the liar, thief and bandit. Murders and traitors are never considered for the Treasury Archers. The names of potential candidates are passed through the complex bureaucracy to arrive on the desk of the Treasury *framadar* for his consideration. Men and women are selected with care. When the decision has been made (based on the criminal's crime, his propensity for violence and possible traitorous sentiments) the candidate is taken to the Royal Treasury in Ecbatana where he is officially enslaved by the government. Since crimes are often judged by the Great Shah himself in his audience chamber at Ecbatana, the prisoner is never certain of his eventual fate until he reaches this city.

Recruitment is not an automatic reprieve, however. The candidates are put through a punishing regimen to test their stamina, willpower, obedience and loyalty - military

training in a compressed timeframe with a momentous end. Either they pass and become relatively well-paid, well-clothed and well-treated officials of the *dippana*, or they fail and are executed. Recruits are trained in ten-man units (*dathaba*) and the same fate awaits every man. Either the entire *dathabam* fails or it succeeds. This system of collective fate is continued in service, with the execution of the entire ten-man squad the inevitable result of any indiscretion, disloyalty or crime (no matter how small) by any member of the unit. In this way, the *gangabai* police themselves. Each *dathaba* is led by a veteran Treasury Archer, and these squads all look up to a foreman [*sarkargar*] who commands the unit's *satabam*. Beyond this there are no larger formations of Treasury Archers. They purposely remain as small and flexible units who know their commanders personally. Note that since the *sarkagars* have been through the hellish recruitment procedure, they command respect in ways that arrogant soft-living noblemen cannot.

Treasury Archers travel by foot and wear the archaic costume of the Achaemenid Persian Immortals, wonderfully patterned ankle-length robes that went out of fashion seven hundred years ago. This inculcates the service with a high degree of esprit de'corps. They carry spears, oval shields emblazoned with the *satabam's* insignia, dagger [*dashne*] and *shamshir*. Each man carries a composite bow, cylindrical quiver and a bow case inlaid with silver. The Treasury Archers, like many Perians, are expert shots.

PERSIAN WEAPONS

Although the Persians follow a different military tradition to the Empire, many of the weapons used by its forces are familiar to every legionary. This section is intended to highlight any differences and provide some indication of how some of the weapons were used.

Both the axe [*tabar*] and the war pick [*sagaris*] are favored weapons of the Turanian tribes. The war pick in particular has proved very popular as an Iranian weapon of war for several centuries. Of course the composite bow [*kamhan*], which is manufactured from animal horn and selected woods, is a popular weapon amongst all ranks of society. Persians specialize in its use from horseback. The long sword is a metre in length and an expensive but worthwhile weapon wielded by *azata*. The curved Middle Eastern scimitar (a word derived from 'shamshir') did not appear until Medieval times. The Imperial *falx* actually predates the Arabian scimitar.

A weapon that is as popular with cataphracts as the *shamshir* is the war club [*bashgah*]. Almost 3 feet in length, the *bashgah* resembles an iron-bound base-ball bat. Swung one-handed with momentum, it can knock a rider from his horse and smash his bones beneath his armor. The god Sraosha carries a bladed *bashgah* in his fight against the daeva.

Note that the heavy lance of the cataphract is known as the *xyston*, a term introduced into Iranshahr by the Seleucids – a term which has persisted. The influence of the

Seleucids on arms and armor is even more obvious in the territories that lay between the Empire and Persia. Even the term ‘cataphract’ is an Ionian survival from the days of Seleucid rule.

<i>Weapon Type</i>	<i>COMBAT Bonus</i>	<i>Cost</i>
Bow (2 handed) [<i>Kamhan</i>]	+2	150
Burning Torch	+2	1
Club	+1	5
Dagger [<i>Dashe</i>]	+1	35
Handaxe	+1	25
Javelin [<i>Palta</i>]	+3	60
Longsword [<i>Shamshir</i>]	+2	150
Shield (cannot attack)	+1	100
Sling	+1	10
Concealed Dagger [<i>Xanjar</i>]	+1	50
Spear [<i>Neyze</i>]	+3	20
Shortsword [<i>Akinaka</i>]	+2	100
Staff	+1	5
War-Axe [<i>Tabar</i>]	+2	100
War Club [<i>Bashgah</i>]	+2	60
War Pick [<i>Sagaris</i>]	+3	120
Whip	+2 (Stun only)	25

PERSIAN ARMOR

The heavy armor of the Persian cataphracts is renowned throughout the civilized world. But such armor, although a well-made and formidable defense, is worn only by the wealthy *azata* as they ride into battle. Cataphract armor is made up of a mail, lamellar or scale coat reaching to the knees, arm, leg and foot defenses of scale or metal bands [*basuband*], a helmet with a flap of lamellar, scale or mail to protect the neck, and often a fierce iron mask to protect the face. All-over body protection. Wearing cataphract armor while dismounted is very impractical; even walking is a struggle! Professional spearmen and bodyguards wear less encumbering forms of metal armor (a long or short-sleeved cuirass of scale, lamellar or chain mail), while skirmish mercenaries and peasant infantry typically wear none.

Scale and mail armor is much the same as the Imperial equivalent while lamellar armor is distinctly eastern. It is composed of small rectangular plates of bronze or iron stitched together onto a heavy backing jacket. In performance it differs little from equally efficient scale armor. Quilted tabards are worn by some professional warriors (especially those on parade or ceremonial duties, since the thick tabard can be highly decorated) and also by *kandakes* and levy spearman who can afford them. Sometimes a brown sheepskin stands in for a better-made tabard.

<i>Item</i>	<i>Rating</i>	<i>Cost</i>
Persian Helm	1	100
Quilted Tabard	1	300
Short-Sleeved Mail Cuirass	2	800
Long-Sleeved Mail Cuirass	3	1200
Cataphract Armour	6	4200

INTO THE FRAY

The Persian state seems to be in a continual state of war, much like its archenemy, the Eternal City. Nevertheless, Iranian shahs have never seen the need for a standing army, perhaps fearing that whoever controls this army in battle might just as easily control the throne once hostilities have ceased. Proof of such paranoia was demonstrated after the battle of Carrhae when the Great Shah had Surena the valiant general executed to forestall any chance he might turn against his master. In such an unstable world of shifting alliances and of shadowy rivals, the Persian system (and one that Iranshahr has known throughout its history) depends on feudal loyalties - a chain of obligations and services from Great Shah to satrap to *dihqan* to village elders and mercenary commanders. Additional checks exist to prevent usurpers such as the royal forts in each satrapy, the royal couriers, spies and assassins. As the Surena incident demonstrated though, the feudal system did not prevent the threat of rebellion. Of the three types of warfare prevalent in Iranshahr, internal dissension counts for the first two.

REBEL TRIBES

The Persian state does not currently seek expansion. Iranian dynasties have occasionally sought to conquer foreign territories (most noticeably during the era of Achaemenid kings), but ever since that age of splendor each dynasty has usually felt content to rule over Iranshahr alone - a self-contained realm that is easy to defend and hold against an aggressor. The armies have been needed by successive dynasties of rulers to defend their right to rule this land.

The lowest level of conflict that any Persian military force might be expected to experience is also the most common: the rebellion of some local tribe against the authority of the Great Shah or the local satrap. A hill or desert tribe might have a grievance against the local *dihqan* and refuse to pay taxes. Or they might oppose the rule of the satrap, perhaps an unfair law, a heavy tax or a levy of manpower. Many times in Iranshahr's history have tribes on the fringe of society risen up in revolt. Some want revenge for an injustice, but many just want to be left alone. In addition to forts, citadels and troops, they will often attack symbols of authority like tax collectors, royal couriers and other trappings of the power of the satraps and the Great Shah.

Such rebellions do not last long. Almost without fail the forces of the satrap or the shah march in to quell the rebellion, burn down any complicit villages and execute as many real or fictitious ring-leaders as they can find, and then impose heavy levies on the tribesmen. If the group responsible is easily identifiable then the Great Shah may just exile the entire tribe, forcing them to march with their belongings to another part of the empire. This method of relocation has been practiced many times and seems to be very effective at breaking a tribe's morale and will to fight on.

The Daylamite tribes of the Elburz Mountains, the Sogdian horse tribes, the Kurds of Atropatene and the mountain-men of Aria and Arachosia are prone to sporadic rebellions, though only on a very small scale. Note how many of these regions are also prime *kardakes* or *dahae* recruiting areas. The warlike nature of these people is also a blessing, and the Great Shah has good reason not completely to blunt the fighting spirit of these people.

RIVAL CLAIMANTS

A much rarer instance of internal conflict in Iranshahr is the emergence of a rival claimant to the throne. Occasionally satraps war amongst themselves about a satrapal succession or some territorial claim, but the most devastating wars are those waged between shahs. So numerous have these claimants been in Iranian history that they do not appear in the king lists mentioned earlier. Often the pretender is a member of the royal family. At other times he might be a satrap who considers himself entitled to the throne through some obscure blood connection. The claim might not immediately result in open warfare. Both sides may need time to prepare, resulting in a period of tense co-existence and jockeying for power and support.

When battle is eventually joined, each satrap is forced to choose a side and follow the chosen shah to war. Both sides will maintain their own *dahae*, *kardakes*, satrapal forces and whatever other military units they might have associated with their former position in the Persian hierarchy. During these times of strife brothers might fight brothers, fathers make war on their own sons - this type of warfare is the ultimate test of loyalty. Who do you believe is the rightful heir to the throne? Who comes closest in the bloodline? Who has achieved the greatest success for the Persian state? Likewise every *dihqan* and village chief is forced to ask these questions and choose a side - in an instant deciding whether they and their families will either prosper or face death, execution or humiliation. While it rages, a civil war sunders the Persian state and renders it virtually powerless. It is at such times that Iranshahr can fall prey to the attacks of outside forces, to Turanian nomads, to Ionians and Macedonians, and more recently, to the legions of the Eternal City.

The death of Mithridates II in 87 BC inspired such a civil war, with Tigranes the Parthian-installed shah of Armenia declaring himself to be the rightful Great Shah. He seized a number of satrapies further south, including Media and its royal capital Ecbatana. His claim grew stronger when the surviving Seleucid royal family (for decades an impotent minor dynasty living in exile in Decapolis) recognized his claim to the throne of Iranshahr. Orodes I successfully fought Tigranes, however, and quickly recovered the lost satrapies.

LEGIONS OF THE EMPIRE

By far the greatest danger to Iranshahr comes from the west and the Empire. The vast Empire has access to a huge reserve of manpower and is both superbly organized and relentless. Its legions are a serious threat to Persia. To the Imperials, however, the horse archers that make up the bulk of the Persian army seem almost indestructible, posing serious problems for the Empire. While short territorial gains are possible by the formidable legions, the Persian cavalry invariably reforms and launches a counter-attack to force the Imperial infantry to retreat to their former positions. As a result both empires recognized early on in their violent relationship that conquest of the other was not a viable military option. Mere armies were not enough to topple the Emperor or the Great Shah, and even if such a feat were possible, a victor could never hope to hold onto its new territory. Iranshahr and the Mediterranean-focused empire of the Eternal City exist in two different worlds.

Yet conflict between the two great powers continues. The frontier [*limes*] between the two states has been a constant source of friction for over two centuries. For much of this time (prior to the conquests of the Great Shah Shapur) the Persian frontier has lain along the east bank of the river Euphrates, encompassing the satrapies of Chaldea and Osrhoene. Because of this historical fact, Edessa, Hatra and the other great caravan cities of the northern Orient have always looked east to Persia rather than west to the Empire.

A military road was built long ago for defensive purposes that stretches from the Erythraean Sea northwards past Petra, the Dead Sea, Bostra, Damascus and up into Decapolis. This road is the Decapolitan *limes*, and it allows rapid movement of cohorts up and down the frontier and is studded with small forts and watch-towers. The Erythraean Sea Fleet [*Classis Rubrae*] is thus connected to other Imperial military assets.

The *limes* is not a static defensive construction like Hadrian's Wall, instead it is a military 'zone' within which the *auxilia* garrisoned there can monitor the activities of nomad tribes, caravans and travelers and strike out against rebel forces or bandits. The Desert of Lost Souls is an 'ocean' upon which the Saracen tribes navigate with ease, and the best way to tackle such a threat is to copy it. The cavalry units [*alae*] patrol ceaselessly, and long duration maneuvers are carried out by the Imperial *alae dromedariorum* deep into 'bandit country'.

ARMENIA – THE PRIZE

North, amongst the mountains, the kingdom of Armenia gazes down upon the simmering Persian-Roman frontier. It is a valuable strategic high-ground from which a belligerent force can send out scouts, raiding parties and attacks in force. So difficult is the Armenian mountain landscape that the kingdom is essentially a natural rock fortress. Both the Empire and Persia fear that the mountain state could be used as a base of operations, where an army might build up its forces with total impunity. Armenia is therefore a valuable prize and competition for control of this realm has been the end result in the vast majority of wars and skirmishes between Persia and the Eternal City. When one side or the other manages to install a pliant Armenian ruler, the other rarely

wastes much time before it sets out on the road to war. The current ruler is unseated, a puppet king is installed and punishment raids are made on the backer's neighboring territories. The kingdom of Armenia is currently independant, the vassal ruler is a king in his own right. The military forces of the region are constantly probing one another's lines with patrols, raids and counter-attacks.

CHAPTER V

YAZATAS

THOSE WORTHY OF SACRIFICE

"May we not here encounter the bludgeoning of the enraged Lord Ahura whose thousand blows encounter his enemy, he who strong, having ten thousand spies, undeceivable, knows all."

- The Tenth Hymn [*Yasht*] of Ahuramazda

The supernatural world of Iranshahr is rich and teeming with angels, spirits, evil wizards, cultists, demons and gods. Unlike the polytheistic theology of the Imperium, however, most of the inhabitants of Iranshahr sacrifice to only a small number of deities while acknowledging the presence of a wondrous array of lesser spiritual entities. Other religions are recognized (although none officially). There are many Buddhists in Sogdiana and Bactria, and Turanian ancestor worship still persists in the eastern satrapies colonized by Parthians and Scythians. Magic exists and its practitioners are organized into four important colleges: Fire Wizards [*magoi*], who practice the magic of light and truth, Black Wizards [*yatus*], who practice the magic of darkness and falsehood, Chaldean Astrologers [*baru*] who divine knowledge from the stars, and who heal the sick by driving out evil demons.

Iranshahr has been a fierce battleground throughout its entire history. The forces of Light and Truth [*asha*] have fought the forces of Darkness and Falsehood [*druj*] since the beginning of time. Human beings have become mere foot-soldiers within this epic struggle. It is a struggle which continues day after day, year after year. In this chapter the contingents of both sides will be arrayed and assessed.

TRUTH [*Asha*]

AHURAMAZDA

The name 'Ahuramazda' literally means Wise Lord. Although he is the supreme god of Iranshahr and dominates the Iranian pantheon with his great power and omnipotence, he is not quite alone. There are a number of minor gods far beneath him who each have their own areas of responsibility. Some of these deities are actually aspects of Ahuramazda's own personality. In every way, the god surpasses the mundane world; he is eternal, unknowable, invisible, omnipresent and omnipotent. He is a spiritual being, without human emotions or flaws, an abstraction that cannot be bargained with or understood. Mankind can only interact with those majestic angels that surround Ahuramazda, wonderful spirits that are shards of the great god's being. When he appears in stone, human artists depict Ahuramazda as a man with an aristocratic beard and

feathered wings and tail, floating majestically above his earthly representative: the Great Shah. At other times the god appears in sculpture as a glowing sun disc, held aloft by outstretched wings.

RASHNU

The god of judgment is Rashnu, the deity who oversees oaths [*warah*] and ordeals. Oaths are sworn over a sacred fire and in the presence of holy water. Ordeals, used to test the validity of a confession or statement, or to test the faith of a worshipper are carried out with hot oil. Rashnu visits all places in this world and the next, keenly observing the activities of people everywhere. As the supreme judge, Rashnu sits alongside Sraosha as one of the three judges of the dead. Rashnu rides his own chariot, accompanying Mithras across the sky.

SRAOSHA

Sraosha is the god of prayer and the intermediary between Mankind and the gods, and is known as the Lord of Prayer or Sacred Rite. Although the god wields a fearsome bladed club he opposes the daevas with magic and sacred speech [*mathra*]. Sraosha is beloved of the ordinary people, he protects the weak with his incantations. He is a demon-slayer and one of the judges of the dead. The chariot of Sraosha is pulled by four supernatural horses with hooves of gold. They are wise and shadow less and are faster than winged birds, arrows, the wind and the rain.

MITHRAS

In AD 260 there are three mutually exclusive cults of Mithras, each interpreting the god in a slightly different way. In the Empire Mithras is a god of light and the sun, but also of warriors, of manly virtue and brotherhood. In India, across the Hindu Kush, Mithras is known as Mitra, a human being elevated to god-hood. In Iranshahr the god is considered to be a guardian of contracts as well as the deity who presides over light, loyalty and justice. The Iranians accord Mithras great status, and, like Ahuramazda, he is a *yazata*, a cosmic being. The god is a valiant fighter for Truth who stands between the opposing forces of Light and Dark always willing to shed blood to save the souls of Mankind. contracts and oaths are made in the name of Mithras in the presence of a holy fire, the flame conjuring up the presence of the god. Mithras, who never sleeps and who has ten thousand eyes and ten thousand ears, is able to see all and hear all. He is always able to detect the misdeeds of a transgressor. To break an oath that was made in the presence of the god is folly. Mithras then is the upholder of right and wrong, he has a moral cause and a sense of justice. This sets him apart from almost all the other gods being worshipped around the world in AD 260.

Mithras is the champion and lieutenant of Ahuramazda. A veteran campaigner, Mithras leads the hosts of Truth into battle. The Persian nobility look upon Ahuramazda as the epitome of statesmanship, and upon Mithras as the epitome of warrior prowess. Although the Imperial cult of Mithras depicts the god as a young man in Persian garb slaying the Bull of Life with a knife, the Iranian cult of Mithras deigns to depict him at all. This is in keeping with Iranian tradition which rarely sets up statues and carvings of the gods. Those that do exist are merely fanciful representations, for all Zoroastrians

know that these *yazata* transcend physical form. Besides, Mithras shines down upon the entire world, he is the sun and its unconquerable light. He drives his chariot across the sky each day, and along with Rashnu and Sraosha, Mithras is a judge of the dead.

ATAR

Atar is the god of Fire, both the fire that burns on the ground and the celestial fire of the Sun. Fire plays a crucial role in Zoroastrian religion, and outsiders often call Persians 'fire worshippers'. The loyal son of Ahuramazda, Atar is another *yazata* who also fulfills a moral purpose - he provides mankind with its inherent wisdom, he offers it comfort and hope, virility and worthy offspring. Atar is a warrior god ready to defend the universe against the forces of Darkness. Worship of Atar is simply enacted by lighting a fire. All fires are sacred, but the most sacred of all are those fires lit within fire temples, and also those fires found burning on the domestic hearth. At once, meals are cooked on it, and prayers are said to it. To be in the presence of flame is to be in the presence of the god. It is an intermediary between heaven and earth, as well as an expression of faith. Note that it is considered a terrible crime to let the sacred fire of a household go out!

ANAHITA

The mother-goddess of the Zoroastrian faith, Anahita is also a *yazata*, worthy of sacrifice. She is the Heavenly River and represents the importance that the inhabitants of Iranshahr attach to fresh water. She is the waterhole and the spring, the oasis and the stream, the river and the lake. As the Heavenly River she feeds all other sources of water in the world. Without her all is barren and sterile, burned dry by the cosmic ferocity of the gods of Fire and Light: Mithras, Atar and Ahuramazda. Fire and Water - the two interconnected and most holy elements of Iranian religion. Both substances are 'alive'; indeed the Great Shah Xerxes had the waters of the Hellespont chastised and flogged with three hundred lashes after his fleet was wrecked there!

Both the Bactrian capital, Zariaspa, and the mountain kingdom of Armenia promote Anahita as their patron goddess. Her worship has also extended into Decapolis where her cult is known as Anthat, the goddess of love and war, the consort of Baal. In Iranshahr there are no statues of Anahita, but in Chaldea and Decapolis such idols abound. The Chaldean historian Berossos records that his king made a point of manufacturing and distributing Anahita figurines. It might be thought that the goddess appeals more to women than men, but many ancient Iranian heroes were aided by Anahita. Like Ishtar in Chaldea, Anahita is both a protectress and a warrior maiden.

AMSHASPENDS - THE ARCHANGELS

These angelic beings are aspects of Ahuramazda's powerful personality, acting on his behalf and dominating one aspect of cosmic reality. They are servants and messengers as well as the conscious and subconscious of the great god. At creation these archangels were each tasked with creating a part of the universe and they now protect and dwell within them. The six *amshaspends* are:

Ameretat (Life) - Governs immortality and the *haoma*, the beverage of life. Ameretat also rules the world of plants and vegetation. He created Plants.

Aramaiti (Devotion) - Sometimes depicted as the daughter of Ahuramazda and the Sky, Aramaiti governs the fertile soil, earth and rock, as well as the emotions of love and compassion. She created the Earth.

Ashavahishta (Supreme Truth) - This archangel is order and harmony incarnate and also has power over fire. He created Fire.

Haurvatat (Perfection) - The embodiment of achievement, wholeness, health and fullness, as well as the master of waters. He created Water.

Kshathra (Dominion) - Is responsible for leadership and governance, and ensures that the sun and the heavens move as they should. He created the Sky. He also has power over metals.

Vohumanah (Good Mind) - This archangel is the embodiment of good, he is rational and thoughtful, the conscience of Ahuramazda. He also governs the animals of the world. He created Animal Life.

In addition, Ahura Mazda created a Holy Spirit to represent himself on earth and to create Man. This spirit is called Spentamainyu (Holy Spirit). Spentamainyu is the seventh *amshaspend*.

YAZATAS - THE COSMIC ANGELS

The *yazatas* are cosmic angels, spiritual beings that have existed for all time. They were a part of creation - indeed Ahuramazda is believed to be the very first *yazata*. In some ways they overlap with the interests of the *amshaspend*s, but there are many more *yazatas* encompassing every possible aspect of the universe. These primordial beings represent such essential elements as Air, Balance, Obedience, Victory, Justice and Glory. Sacrifices are routinely made to those *yazatas* that affect an individual's life, in fact *yazata* is the Persian term for any spiritual being worthy of sacrifice. As such, all of the gods (including Ahuramazda, Mithras and Anahita), the *amshaspend*s and also the guardian angels (the Fravashis) are classed as types of *yazatas*. They are the beneficent 'old gods'.

FRAVASHIS - THE GUARDIAN ANGELS

The *fravashis* occupy a special position within the army of Truth. They are guardian spirits, each one armed and armored, a warrior spirit that bravely fights evil. Every human being is assigned a fravashi at birth by Ahuramazda and when a devotee of Zoroastrianism dies, his guardian spirit survives him and returns to join Ahuramazda. Priests believe that there are ninety-nine thousand, nine hundred and ninety-nine of these powerful guardian angels, both male and female. Those *fravashis* in heaven awaiting the orders of Ahuramazda form a fierce angelic host that can be dispatched to earth to fight the agents of evil when they molest the Wise Lord's worshippers. In battle the *fravashis* are said to aid those warriors who sacrificed to them first, and so careful attention is paid to such ritual. Clans, families and tribes also have guardian angels, and every tribe and village holds an annual Hamaspath-maedaya festival on the last day of the year during which all guardian angels are honored together and receive sacrifices. The *fravashis* of the dead return to their tombs during this festival, and it is quite possible to honor these *fravashis* as well as one's own.

FIRE WIZARDS [*Magoi*]

The term *magoi* is widely used in the Empire to describe those disreputable individuals practicing magic and sorcery - *any* kind of magic or sorcery. The word is actually Persian and the name of an actual class of Persian fire wizards that continues to dominate the religious affairs of Iranshahr. A member of this elite clan is called a magus. The presence of the clan is often felt beyond Iranshahr - some say that the *thaumaturgus* Jesus of Nazareth actually received his magical powers from three *magoi*, the Wise Men from the East, who visited him soon after his birth.

The *magoi* do not form the priesthood of Zoroastrianism, they are a separate caste, a hereditary clan of powerful magicians who enjoy an exalted status and power. The clan is extremely strict about who may or may not become a fire wizard, admittance into the *magoi* is purely a matter of ancestry. Its lineage stretches back to the era of Median kings, a century before Zoroaster. The *magoi* were originally a Median tribe and their loyalties to the Median throne outlasted the Median Empire itself, as the treachery of the magus Gautama, who attempted to overthrow Cambyses, illustrated.

Following the rise of the Achaemenids many *magoi* fled west into Atropatene and Armenia where they established their own daughter clans. The fire wizards soon came to accept the Persian shahs. A close relationship developed with the Great Shah who put the services of this insular clan to great use. Once won, the loyalty of the *magoi* has proven steadfast. Always suspicious and on the defensive (a result of being on the frontline of the cosmic struggle for a thousand years) the clan faced a second test when the prophet Zoroaster introduced new religious practices to Persia from Zarangia. Rather than fight the popular mood and reject the new teachings, or flee into exile *en masse*, the *magoi* accepted the prophet's religious reforms. It was a matter of expediency, of survival. All that mattered was the fact that the fight against Ahriman would continue and the *magoi* arranged to stay in the vanguard of the fight. Zoroaster, eager to secure the services of the fire wizards, offered to have the entire clan ordained as Zoroastrian priests, giving them a powerful and legitimate place in the new scheme. The *magoi* agreed.

Ecbatana forms the center of the *magoi* organization. An impressive fire temple there acts as both a religious focus, a meeting place, a council chamber and a school. From this temple *magoi* set off on their travels across Iranshahr. Representatives from daughter temples run by the *magoi* arrive and are welcomed with open arms. Some fire wizards are dispatched on special missions, to follow up on rumors of evil cults or black magic, the birth of some new god or the manifestation of a miracle or a prophesy. Fire wizards rarely hide their identity. Honorable, wealthy and proud, the *magoi* wear robes befitting their status and often travel in the company of slaves or servants.

The role of the fire wizards is essentially to guard the holy flames of Iranshahr and to crush the evil forces of Ahriman, whose cruel black wizards [*yatus*] struggle to snuff out those fires. In the fight against the Darkness, the *magoi* have unlocked many arcane powers and holy secrets that they jealously guard. Drujs, rogues and thieves in the service of Falsehood all crave these magical secrets, hence the custom of hereditary membership. A fire wizard commits his life to the service of Truth, is ordained as a

priest of Ahuramazda, Mithras and Atar and vows to die by his own hand rather than give up those secrets. The magical secrets are at once the fiery power of the clan as well as it's weakness.

Creating Attributes for Fire Wizards: The player should use the following values and rolls:

MIGHT	Initial score is 1.
FATE	Roll 1d and re-roll any score of '1'.
HITS	Roll 2d and add 10.
CRAFT	Initial score is 1.
LEARNING	Roll 1d and re-roll any score of '1'.

Previous Experience: Fire Wizard

Wise wizards, Persian fire magicians with amazing powers

Culture Note: All Fire Wizards must be of Persian origin

Money: 250 drachms

Skill: The player receives four powers from the Fire Wizard's power list.

Bonus: Roll once on the Fire Wizard's Treasure Table

Fire Wizard's Treasure Table

<i>1d</i>	<i>Treasure</i>	<i>Notes</i>
1	Firesand	Three handfuls of sand that ignite whatever they are thrown at
2	Pouch of Myrrh	Five pinches of incense that will double the duration of a fire-based magic power
3	Panther Servant	Panther carving that transforms into a full sized big cat once thrown to the ground
4	Leopard Skin Coak	Warns of an attack from behind
5	Khesbed Ring	Ring with 3 HITS used to cast powers or soak up physical damage
6	Khesbed Amulet	Amulet with 5 HITS used to cast powers or soak up physical damage

Fire Wizard's Initial Equipment

Magic Staff* Pack Firebow Torch Waterskin Pouch Drachms (1d x 50 drachms)

* Every Fire Wizard has his own carved decorated Magical Staff, which takes him a week to make. It is sometimes used as the focus of a certain power, and can also extend the range of a power out to 100m. It is traditionally a carved wooden staff topped with a solid silver apple

POWERS OF THE FIRE WIZARDS [*mathra*]

The magical powers of the magoi are associated with light, truth and fire and are called *mathra*.

- Celestial Beacon
- Compel Truth
- Comprehend
- Counter Magic
- Detect Lie
- Flames of the Future
- Gaze of Asha
- Healing Touch
- Hold off the Dead
- Intangible
- Jahangir's Searing Light
- Magic Fire
- Wall of Fire

Celestial Beacon - With this power, the Fire Wizard can follow a sign in the Heavens to lead him toward a specific target. When using Celestial Beacon the wizard must touch the person or object and invoke the divine powers of Ahura Mazda. The spell will last for 30 days, during which time the Fire Wizard can, at any time look Heavenward into the night sky (only) for a sign to show the location of the object or person. He spends a FATE point and a bright star-like point of light will shine in the darkness high above the object or person under the Celestial Beacon's spell. This power is a great tool for tracking someone or something that the wizard has met (and blessed). The disadvantage is that others might see the light in the sky as it briefly shines at the wizard's command.

Compel Truth - Cast on a victim who fails a FATE roll, Compel Truth forces him (unwittingly) to say only truthful things for five minutes.

Comprehend - This power allows a Fire Wizard to study any written text, maps, scrolls, carvings and parchments, and fully understand what is written there. Special signs, codes and ciphers will all be deciphered by the power. It will also reveal if something touched by the caster is magical. The power lasts for 10 minutes, and does not include the translation of *spoken* languages.

Counter Magic - A power of protection against spirits, demons, ghosts and the magical powers of monsters or other Fire Wizards. When attacked by a spirit, magical force or power this power gives the user (only) a +2 bonus on his FATE score (for defensive purposes only). A Counter Magic power lasts for 10 minutes.

Detect Lie - With this power the Fire Wizard can determine if the person he is talking to has lied in the last minute. It does not reveal the truth, however.

Flames of the Future - The power of pyromancy is know to the Fire Wizard. With this spell (and a little incense) he can bless a fire lit just for the purpose and see aspects of

the future within its flickering flames. By burning some item in the fire, he can direct the magical flames to give an image of it in the unspecified 'near future'. This is a possible future should the viewers do nothing at all that may cause the future to become reality. Possible things to be burnt are: a lock of someone's hair, a fragment of an enemy's clothing, and so on.

Gaze of Asha - The wizard can invoke the spirit of Truth [*asha*] and see the invisible or the hidden. Invisible spirits, secret doors, demons hiding inside a possessed victim, illusions and so on. Nothing can deceive the Gaze of Asha!

Healing Touch - This power allows the Fire Wizard to lay his hands on a patient and restore 6 points of HITS. A patient's HITS can only be increased to a maximum of their initial value by this method.

Hold off the Dead - This power can be used against on a spirit, ghost, mummy or demon and 'hold' it in place, preventing it from advancing any further. The target can make a resistance roll. Many spirits will flee once this power has been used against them.

Intangible - The Fire Wizard and anything he is wearing or carrying is rendered intangible (but still visible), and with a little pressure he can push his way through doors, walls ... even floors! While he is in this form only a magical weapon can harm him, although spells directed at him may still take full effect.

Jahangir's Searing Light - The power to send a blinding light toward one's foes. As usual, and of course they must be within range and have eyes that are vulnerable to light. The flash affects a single target if he fails his FATE roll, blinding him for 2d cbt rounds.

Magic Fire - The Fire Wizard can use this power to create a 'magical fire', a fire that burns without fuel (on stone or sand, for example). The fire is the equivalent of a torch, and will illuminate an area 10m across. If cast on flammable materials, the magic fire will begin to spread just as any other fire would. Magic Fire can also be used to extinguish a normal cooking-sized fire.

Anybody on fire (or caught within a fire) will suffer 1-3 points of damage every round. If a victim's clothes are on fire (the target can make a resistance roll to prevent a Fire Wizard casting Magic Fire onto his clothes!) the victim can try to make a Might roll to put out the fire. Anyone can come to his aid and put the fire on the victim's clothes out automatically.

Wall of Fire - The wizard can create a wall of flame that is cool and harmless on the side facing him, but burning hot and dangerous to anyone on the other side. The length of the wall is determined by how many points of FATE the wizard spends when he casts the spell; 1 FATE point for every unit of length (about the height of the Fire Wizard himself). One 'length' of the Wall of Fire might block a doorway or corridor, 2 units will surround the wizard in a circle of flame. As a rule of thumb, add +1 FATE point for every person enclosed within such a circle (wizard alone costs 2 FATE, two people costs 3 FATE, three people costs 4 FATE ... and so on).

FALSEHOOD [*Druj*]

AHRIMAN - PRINCE OF DARKNESS

Iranshahr and the world owes its existence to Ahriman. It was to defeat the Prince of Darkness that Ahuramazda actually created the earth and its inhabitants - as a battlefield upon which the armies of light and dark might war. The creator might be wise and good and just, but he has a cosmic rival - Ahriman, demon lord, cruel ruler of the darkness, death, the destroyer, the liar and perverter of justice. Ahriman is the evil nemesis of Ahuramazda, a lesser being, but still remarkably powerful and resilient; so powerful, in fact, that the creator god himself cannot defeat the Black Lord alone. He needs an army.

DEMONS [*Daevas*] - THE DARK ANGELS

As Ahuramazda created the *amshaspendas*, so Ahriman created their evil counter-part, the *Daevas*. They are cosmic beings, foul spirits of unutterable evil. Their mission is to destroy or corrupt the work of Ahuramazda and especially the thoughts and deeds of his last creation – Mankind. The *daevas* move about invisibly and totally unnoticed by humans, however sensitive animals may detect their horrible presence. *Daevas* can often manifest as a human being for a short period of time each day. In this way they can step inside the lives of oblivious humans to stir up trouble and chaos. Pain, death, grief and woe are the goals of every dark angel. Just as Western demons are known to possess their victims, Iranian demons, too, can step inside a human victim to control their actions, words and behavior. Such possessions (once common in the days before Zoroaster) are now difficult to maintain and rarely last more than a few hours. *Daevas* dwell in vast underground palaces [*vars*] with many wondrous lights and effects and a staff of enchanted servants and guards. The entrance to a *var* is secret and only the most fool-hardy person would dare to venture into one. See the Monsters section for more information.

WATCHERS

The Chaldeans have had many dealings with demons [*galla*] whom they believe are the offspring and servants of the Chaldean underworld deity Nergal. Out in the wilderness of the Desert of Lost Souls, however, are other demons known as Watchers that have been exiled by the gods and goddesses of Decapolis. Their tale is called the Story of the Watchers, the germ of which is found in the Iudaeian Book of Genesis, but which is told at length in the Book of Enoch. “And it came to pass when the children of men had multiplied that in those days were born unto them beautiful and comely daughters. And the dark angels, the children of the heaven, saw and lusted after them, and said to one another: Come, let us choose wives from among the children of men and beget us children.” These angels were known as the Watchers, or the Sleepless Ones. Their leader was known as Semjaza, or alternatively, Azazel. Two-hundred of these Dark Angels descended to earth at the site of Mount Hermon, and they took wives “and began to go in unto them and to defile themselves with them”. They taught their wives charms and enchantments, botany and the cutting of roots. Azazel taught men to make weapons of war, swords and knives and shields”.

The human wives of the Watchers had children - great demonic giants called Nephilim who consumed all the possessions of men. "And when men could no longer sustain them, the Nephilim turned against them and devoured mankind. And they began to sin against birds and beasts and reptiles and fish, and to devour one another's flesh and to drink the blood". The city of the Nephilim and their mortal wives was called Irem, the City of Pillars, a fabulous walled city in the depths of the Arabiyan Desert. The high god sent down a minion to imprison Azazel in this desert until the last judgment, when he was to be hurled into eternal fire. The other Watchers were forced to look on as their own children, the evil Nephilim, were killed, and Irem laid waste. Then the creator god bound the dark angels in the valleys of the earth because as demi-gods, they could not be slain. But the earth was still not yet purged of evil. Demons issued from the bodies of the dead Nephilim deep in the desert, and by possessing the bodies of wandering goats, made their way into the lives of men and women. They have remained in this world ever since, possessing human bodies and reawakened as terrible blood-drinking cannibals, an undead race, almost indistinguishable from normal men, causing wickedness, destruction and oppression.

Today the Watchers, the Sleepless Ones, are still active. Although physically imprisoned in the lost valleys and canyons of the Stone Desert and Desert of Lost Souls the intangible spirits of the Watchers constantly haunt the living and create pain, mayhem and anguish. And through their human minions, organized into sinister cults large and small, each Watcher fights to be released and to once more hold dominion over the human race. Who can stop the Watchers and their evil plans to control humanity and regain their loyalty of their sons and daughters, the undead Nephilim? For the dark powers that the Watchers display, they pay a price in human sacrifices, often provided by their secret cults.

A Partial List of Watchers

Samlazaz, Araklba, Rameel, Kokabel, Tamlel, Ramlel, Danel, Ezekeel, Barakijal, Armaros, Batarel, Ananel, Zaqllel, Samsapel, Satarel, Turel, Jomjael, Sariel.

The Cults of the Watchers

Many people living on the fringes of the Saracen deserts say they have seen a hideous race of goat-demons there, that are the living embodiments of the survival of the Nephilim. These Serim, a union of human and beast, symbolize the union of the divine and the mortal. They cannot enter the cities of Man, but haunt the wilderness, stalking the hills and crags as bestial goat-men. Details of the Serim goat-men can be found in the Monsters section. The desert tribes have a ritual called the scapegoat, in which they bind a blessed he-goat with red-cords and send it into Azazel's desert wilderness to die - any curses or evil magic laid upon the tribe by demons will be carried with the scapegoat.

This union of goat and god is a metaphor for the debauched acts of the Watchers and this goat symbolism is carried on within their human cults. Just as the lustful Watchers took mortal women for wives, several of the Watchers' cults seem to involve the union of priestesses with he-goats. Perhaps the greatest such cult is at the Ægyptian city of Mendes. Once occupied by the Persian Empire, Ægypt was thrown open to many foreign

influences. There, a divine he-goat (the Goat of Mendes) couples with a woman especially chosen by the high priest for her beauty.

BLACK WIZARDS [*Yatus*]

The *yatus* are evil and twisted sorcerers devoted to the path of darkness and pain. Traditionally the very first *yatus* were a group of holy men in India who conspired against the Hindu god Indra and whose bodies were thrown to the jackals after Indra had slain them all. However, the sons of the first *yatus* survived and fled across the Hindu Kush into Iranshahr where their descendants continue to practice foul and hateful magics in the name of Ahriman.

Unlike the magoi, who practice the art of light and fire magic, the black wizards devote their studies to the creation of darkness and fear. Creation of Black Wizard characters should be as NPCs, not adventurers. These fellows make wonderful bad-guys!

Creating Attributes for Black Wizards: The referee should use the following values and rolls:

MIGHT	Initial score is 1.
FATE	Roll 1d and re-roll any score of '1'.
HITS	Roll 2d and add 10.
CRAFT	Initial score is 1.
LEARNING	Roll 1d and re-roll any score of '1'.

Previous Experience: Black Wizard

Evil wizards, devotees of darkness and pain

Culture Note: All Black Wizards must be of Persian or Turanian origin

Money: 250 drachms

Skill: The player receives four powers from the Black Wizard's power list.

Bonus: Roll once on the Black Wizard's Treasure Table

Black Wizard's Treasure Table

<i>1d</i>	<i>Treasure</i>	<i>Notes</i>
1	Firesand	Three handfuls of sand that ignite whatever they are thrown at
2	Pouch of Myrrh	Five pinches of incense that will double the duration of a fire-based magic power
3	Panther Servant	Panther carving that transforms into a full sized big cat once thrown to the ground
4	Scorpion Ring	Ring that counters any poisons
5	Khesbed Ring	Ring with 3 HITS used to cast powers or soak up physical damage
6	Khesbed Amulet	Amulet with 5 HITS used to cast powers or soak up physical damage

Black Wizard's Initial Equipment

Magic Staff* Pack Firebow Torch Waterskin Pouch Drachms (1d x 50 drachms)

* Every Black Wizard has his own carved decorated Magical Staff, which takes him a week to make. It is sometimes used as the focus of a certain power, and can also extend the range of a power out to 100m. It is traditionally a plain wooden staff.

POWERS OF THE BLACK WIZARDS [*Sihr*]

The magical powers of the *yatus* are associated with darkness, deception and hate.

- Agony
- Charm
- Comprehend
- Eye of Ahriman
- Hold off the Dead
- Infernal Vapors
- Living Shadows
- Raise the Dead
- Ritual of Cinders
- Sleep
- Song of Druj-i-Nasush
- Staff to Snake
- Tapestry of Lies

Agony - This power causes a living target within 10m to double up in pain for 1-3 rounds, and suffer 1-3 HITS. The target can make a FATE roll to resist.

Charm - This power brings a target (human, monster or animal) that is within 3m under the influence of the caster. The caster must be able to first engage his target in conversation. The target can make a resistance roll, and if failed will loyally agree to any proposition the caster puts to him. He will not harm the caster, but equally, will not harm himself, or his loved ones. Most charmed victims will have no compunction about turning against their friends and colleagues, however. The power could last forever, but can be negated by another Magician reversing the Charm power. Note that if the caster ever turned against the victim, the power would be broken.

Comprehend - This power allows a wizard to study any written text, maps, scrolls, carvings and parchments, and fully understand what is written there. Special signs, codes and ciphers will all be deciphered by the power. It will also reveal if something

touched by the caster is magical. The power lasts for 10 minutes, and does not include the translation of *spoken* languages.

Eye of Ahriman - The Black Wizard's face takes on the fierce cast of Ahriman and his eyes fill with evil hatred for all living things, he can direct this energy toward a target with a simultaneous clap of thunder. The target can make a FATE roll to resist. If he fails he is thrown backwards 1-6 metres and suffers an equal number of HITS.

Hold off the Dead - This power can be used against on a spirit, ghost, mummy or demon and 'hold' it in place, preventing it from advancing any further. The target can make a resistance roll. Many spirits will flee once this power has been used against them.

Infernal Vapors - Opening his mouth wide, the foul vapours of Hell [*Dozakh*] spew out and boil towards a nearby target. They are green in colour and stink, rolling up to 3m from the wizard and affecting up to three adjacent targets (each extra target costs an additional point of FATE).

The poisonous cloud will do 1 HIT when it first enters an adventurer's lungs, and he must make an immediate FATE roll or suffer full damage (maximum potency). If this is the case, each round after it enters his body it will do a HIT of damage up to a maximum of its potency, which is 1d+4. While he takes this damage a victim is blinded and choking. If the FATE roll succeeds then the victim only suffers one more point of damage and is blinded and choked for one round.

Living Shadows - This terrifying power allows the Black Wizard to give life to his enemy's own shadow, the malign shadow turns on its owner and must be fought! It has the same MIGHT as its owner, but only 1 HIT per FATE point spent on the spell by the wizard. Ignore any additional bonuses for weapon or shield. The shadow vanishes after 6 rounds if it has not already been killed. The GM may rule that a character who kills his own shadow loses his shadow forever!

MIGHT as target HITS 1 or more 1 Attack Intelligent No Armour Terror 2

Ritual of Cinders - The Black Wizard can extinguish one large fire or several torches from a distance. Blessed fires are invulnerable to the dark magic of the *yatus*, however.

Raise the Dead - This power allows a wizard to make contact with the spirit of a deceased person. The power can only be successfully used if one of the following is present, either a) the body of the deceased, b) the location of the deceased's death, or c) a cherished belonging owned by the deceased in life. The spirit has a chance to resist the power, and if overcome will be forced to answer up to three questions of a yes/no nature for the caster. Sometimes an evil spirit can accidentally appear (especially if the spirit successfully resisted the power) and could cause considerable problems for the caster, trying to possess him or his friends, or causing other problems.

Sleep - This power sends a target (human, monster or animal) that is within 10m to sleep. The target can make a resistance roll, and if failed will fall into a magical (very

deep) sleep that lasts for 1-6 hours. Anyone under the influence of this power can be woken by very vigorous shaking.

Song of Druj-i-Nasush - This power allows the Black Wizard to animate a corpse or skeleton to carry out a service such as lifting, carrying, fighting etc.

MIGHT 3 HITS 5 1 Attack Not Intelligent Terror 1
The animated corpse/skeleton needs a weapon to fight with and will grab something useful nearby. It can only be damaged properly by crushing weapons; bladed weapons do a maximum of only 1 HIT to them.

Staff to Snake - This power allows the user to turn a Magical Staff into a deadly cobra, simply by throwing the staff onto the ground while reciting the words of power! The snake will fight for the user until dead, until the fight is over or after 10 minutes, whichever comes first.

Tapestry of Lies - The Black Wizard has the power to assume the form of another person for a few minutes at a time. A basic cost of 1 FATE point is needed to affect the change, and it requires at least an hour to create a suitable potion. This basic spell allows the wizard to appear to be someone of the same ***gender, race*** and ***age*** as himself. If he wishes to change any of these then he will need to spend additional FATE points. Clothing suitable to the disguise magically appears during the transformation. The disguise lasts only an hour, after which the wizard reverts to his natural form (and costume). For example, our Black Wizard (a slender Persian sorceress) might want to look like the captain of the guard at Isfahan to gain entrance to the prisons. The gender must be altered as must the age, resulting in a total cost of 3 FATE points. The potion is concocted and drank in an alleyway near to the prison gates. Shazam! Instant disguise!

BLACK PRIESTS [*Kavis*]

The *kavis* are black priests, once honorable and upstanding mobed that are now in the service of Ahriman. They are rare, but devious, foes. In ages past the Prince of Darkness dispatched a *daeva* to corrupt the Saracen shah Zohak. He uses the same techniques to turn normally honest and righteous priests into servants of Ahriman. A *daeva* is dispatched, and in the guise of a friendly worshipper, will insinuate himself into the priest's life. He is able to poison his food and bit by bit he corrupts the mind of the cleric. The twisted conversion always remains a secret, and his foul rites to Ahriman are held at night in basements and caves. During the day the *kavi* retains his respectability, and he scours the faithful carefully, searching for any weak-minded individuals who might be easily converted.

The rites of Ahriman honor his foul nature. They are held at midnight within a dark basement or cave. Priestly robes of white are exchanged for black, and an *Atesh-Gah* is lit. Prayers are said to the Black Lord, and he responds by sending down a *daeva* to watch over the ceremony and protect the worshippers. The rituals of Zoroaster are corrupted and twisted, and begin with the burning on the fire, not of incense, but of

human hair, cut from the head of a corpse. This defiles the holy flame. Next the victim is sacrificed and the *kavi* steal children during the day for this part of the ceremony. The blood of the victim becomes an unholy version of haoma, used to bless the participants and mark out the ritual areas. For the climax of the ceremony the victim is burnt on the fire, further defiling it, and the lights and *Atesh Gah* finally extinguished by dousing them with the urine that has been blessed by the *kavi*. To create a *kavi* read about the Zoroastrian priests [*mobeds*] but consider their twisted nature. The animal familiar of a *kavi* is a scorpion or snake and their common form of divination is through the use of black smoke and glass mirrors.

Why do *kavis* exist? Ahriman creates *kavis* to keep alive the seeds of suspicion and mistrust. Can a priest be trusted? Is he a *kavi* in disguise? The greatest concentration of *kavi* exists in the region of northern Iranshahr called Mazanderan. It is a land steeped in irreligion and Falsehood, where rumors abound of evil *dihqans* bound into the service of their *mobeds* who are all murderous *kavis*; a land of missing children, forgotten villages and of open reverence for the Black Lord. Mazanderan is the mountain territory surrounding Mount Demavand, that mysterious mountain that is the eternal prison of the demon Zohak.

WHISPERERS [*Karapans*]

While the sinister cult of Ahriman is propagated by his faithful Black Priests, other cults are at work in Iranshahr. These cult members are called Whisperers. Like the *kavi* many retain a respectable front but they are secretly bound into the service of a *daeva*. Each cult worships and promotes a single demon, and its members become human agents of that *daeva's* cruel nature. Sauru, for example, is the *daeva* of anarchy and tyranny, and his cult followers might be directed to foster support for a weak shah, to undermine the activities and respectability of a strong dynasty, and foment anger and bitterness amongst the people. At times the *daeva* is able to enter the body of a Whisperer and walk the earth in human form. This reflects the initiation ritual of a cult, a ceremony in which the *daeva* is summoned and claims the new cultist by temporarily possessing his body.

Whisperers can enter an *Atesh Gah* and go through the motions of fire worship, but everything is a sham. Their religious fervor is instead released during cult ceremonies to honor the group's *daeva*. These ceremonies are not the reversed rituals practiced by the Black Priests, but more simple affairs where human fat is burnt over a holy fire to create a foul smoke. Typically the *daeva* appears within this black cloud and takes on an indistinct shape. The Whisperers enumerate their deeds to the demon and in turn receive new instructions from their master. Any Whisperer who has acted against the demon's wishes will be punished; commonly the *daeva* forces the Whisperer to hold a part of his body in the flame, at once disfiguring the transgressor and defiling the flame. These ceremonies take place wherever the Whisperers can find a secure and private location. Sometimes, however, the *daeva* demands that the worship be conducted in a place befitting the nature of the demon. Sauru might insist on being summoned within a court-house, while Zairisha, the demon of old age and sickness, might demand to be summoned within a hospital. When a demon is able to manifest in this way, it is able to leave behind an aura and effect in keeping with its nature. Arguments begin to flare up

in the court-room, patients on the mend lapse into sickness once again, etc. These corrupting influences quickly fade unless the cult carries out the ceremony once again. See the list of *daevas* for the possible Whisperer cults at large in Iranshahr.

The most notorious *karpan* was Durasrobo, the Turanian Whisperer who was commanded by his *daeva* to find and kill the newly-born Zoroaster. Durasrobo sent out his cult-followers out into the Eastern Satrapies, but to no avail.

IN THE BEGINNING

The duration of the universe was set at its beginning at twelve thousand years, divided equally into four eras. Throughout the first era Ahuramazda, alone in the cosmos, merely considered his creations. He foresaw the creation of Ahriman, and the Black Lord instantly emerged from the darkness to challenge the creator. Ahuramazda proposed peace between the two entities but he did not obtain it. He then declared war on the Prince of Darkness, a war that would last for the remaining nine thousand years of time and end in the victory of Light and Truth over Darkness and Falsehood.

The world was created by Ahuramazda step by step during the second era. First he created a huge empty stone shell, then he created water that filled the bottom of this shell. He then made the earth which floats on top of the water like a great flat dish. At the center of the earth grew the original Plant and nearby Gosh, the Bull of Life, and Gayomart, the first Man. Finally the deity created the sun, which sat overhead. Ahuramazda's enemy, the evil demon Ahriman, cruelly slew the creator's works. He killed the Plant and both Gayomart and the Bull of Life; but from their deaths new life blossomed. The remains of the Plant were pounded to create haoma, and from the seed all three creations the other forms of plant, animal and human later sprang up.

Following this destruction a ring of huge mountains sprang up around the rim of the earth and a fantastic mountain, the Peak of Hara, rose up at its center. The sun began to circle the peak (creating day and night) and rain began to fall so heavily that parts of the land became permanently inundated. There remained seven continents [*karshvars*] above the waves, and Mankind continues to live on the central continent, cut off by the great ocean Vourukasha from the other six. The seven continents are Aruzahi (west), Sawahi (east), Fradadhafshu (south-east), Vidadhafshu (south-west), Vourubarushti (northwest), Vourujarushti (north-east) and Kwaniratha (the central region, home to Iranshahr and the other human-habited lands). Vourukasha is fed by a never-ending river of heaven that pours down the side of the Peak of Hara.

As already noted, Ahuramazda created the earth as a battleground, a place he might be able to counter the evil forces of Ahriman. The Amshaspendes, the archangels, were instrumental in the creation of this world. Within his new creation he gathered together an army of light and truth, valiant gods such as Mithras, Sraosha, Rashnu, Atar, and the six Amshaspendes who would form his powerful lieutenants. These archangels evoked the *yazatas*, the lesser immortals, and recruited their services for the cause of Truth.

Ahriman, infuriated by this call to arms, began to establish his own infernal army. He created the daevas, ancient immoral gods of war, death, Falsehood and misery. These evil demons began to harry the forces of Truth. Everywhere these daevas sowed the seeds of disunity, hate, murder and death. The battle had begun. Sraosha, Mithras and Rashnu donned armor and took up arms to fight bitterly against the demons. All earned the epithet 'demon-slayer'. While the forces of Falsehood spread death everywhere, the forces of Truth countered by creating more life from death. Their mission was clear - to fight evil and promote good.

Ahriman struck back. When Ahuramazda created the Gardens of Ghaon, the Prince of Demons created insects to despoil it. When he created the just city of Muru, Ahriman brought in liars and wicked counselors. When Ahuramazda created the fertile grazing lands of Bashdi, his adversary created lions and wolves to devour the cattle there. Every good deed was countered by a wicked one. Nissa was established by the god as a place of devout prayer and faith, and Ahriman introduced doubt into Nissa. Finally Ahuramazda created glorious Haraju, a golden city of palaces and nobility, but the Black Lord cultivated sloth and soon the city was poverty stricken and slid into ruin.

Mankind, caught in the middle of this eternal war is not bound to one cause or another. The third era began with the rise of Man and the rule of Hoshang in Ecbatana. It lasted until the appearance of Zoroaster into the world. At his death the fourth and last era began. In this crucial final era every person makes his own way through free will, in the light of Zoroaster's divine revelations. At death the soul of a Zoroastrian is judged - the soul walks across Cinwat - the Bridge of Judgment. Good deeds, words and thoughts are weighed against the bad and determines the very width of the bridge. For a pious soul the bridge is broad and easily traveled and leads to the House of Song [*Garothman*]. For the murderer and drujwant the bridge is a narrow neck of rock that is impossible to traverse, he will tumble into the abyss and land in Hell [*Dozakh*]. This human battleground will mark the victory of Ahuramazda and the last judgment over the forces of darkness and deceit.

The first man was Gayomart and his companion was Gosh, the Bull of Life. From these two beings sprang all fruitful life. Although both were slain by the minions of Ahriman, the seed of Gayomart lay in the earth for forty years. From it grew the first human couple, named Mashya and Mashyoi. They were the creation of Ahuramazda and he instructed them in the ways of the world, and commanded them not to worship the daevas. Ahriman attempted to sway them from the path of Truth, but the creator watched over Mashya and Mashyoi. They soon gave birth to seven couples and from one of these Siyamek and Siyameki were born. Siyamek was cruelly slain by a daeva. Hoshang, the first king, was the son of Siyamek and he began his reign by avenging his father.

ZOROASTER

"You, O Zoroaster, made all the daevas go into underground concealment who formerly roamed about this earth in human form - "

- The Ninth Passage [*Yasna*] of the Haoma

Zoroaster is the esteemed prophet of Ahuramazda who lived at the time of the Median kings. He assimilated the worship of a number of Iranian deities and virtually created and then codified the basic tenets of this worship (named Zoroastrianism, in his honor). Light and dark, Truth and Falsehood - powers in eternal opposition, but Zoroaster made the people of Iranshahr aware of this struggle, and established the correct rituals and customs for supporting Truth and fighting Falsehood. Zoroaster was originally a humble priest of Ahuramazda. He lived and worked in Zarangia far to the East, well away from the lands of the Fire Wizards who dominated the religious observances of the court at Ecbatana. The prophet's profound teachings spread quickly, everyone desired to know how they might play their part in this eternal battle. Zoroaster opened their eyes and put a sword and shield into their hands. He revealed Man's place in the struggle.

Zoroaster was born in 649 BC amid celebration and hope for the future since his birth had been prophesized. But cunning *kavis* and *karpans* were already conspiring to ensnare Zoroaster and pervert the boy. It was a malign Turanian *karpan* named Durasrobo that overshadowed Zoroaster's early years, and who vainly attempted to 'turn' the young man away from the path of Truth. Nevertheless he grew up unscathed in Zarangia, the son of Pourushaspa, a horse and camel trader. Troubled by dreams and portents, Zoroaster left his family home at the age of twenty and went in search of the man on earth most in love with Truth and charity. On his quest he discovered a magical cavern within the Peak of Hara (found in the Elburz Mountains). For seven years Zoroaster meditated on the nature of god and the universe. Finally, he was visited in this remote retreat by Vohumano, the Archangel of Wisdom, who brought him into the exalted presence of Ahuramazda. Zoroaster had literally 'seen the light'. He left the mountain and began to wander Iranshahr, preaching to all who would listen and to some who would not.

He was introduced to the priesthood and rose to become a senior priest [*zaotar*] who officiated at sacrifices. Zoroaster composed many unique songs [*Gathas*] and was struck with an intellectual, philosophical and spiritual vision of Man's relationship with Ahuramazda. The god had revealed to him a grand scheme of things, a battle-plan to defeat Ahriman and his legion of demons. Man's place in this struggle, and the customs and rituals needed to fulfill his destiny, were also revealed to the prophet. He became the founder of a new religion.

Throughout the eastern satrapies Zoroaster traveled purposefully, and from time to time other archangels would visit him and reveal to him their secrets. In this way he gained skill and knowledge and uncanny power over the six aspects of creation. Demons whom he encountered along the way were unmercifully dealt with. Many were stripped of

their deceitful human forms by the divine powers of the prophet and their insubstantial spirits were sent back to Ahriman.

In an attempt to prevent Zoroaster from wiping out his demon army Ahriman plotted to corrupt the prophet one last time. Zoroaster was also reaching out to perfection of thought, of word and of deed, and had to be stopped! Final Truth was almost upon him when Ahriman dispatched his most capable daevas to tempt Zoroaster. He was offered a vast earthly kingdom over which he might rule as an emperor in the service of Truth, the fate of everyone's lives in his hands. It was more power than any human had ever wielded before and Zoroaster would be able to use this power for good. Of course the prophet was not tempted by the Black Lord and, using his powers of banishment and exorcism, dispatched the sweet-tongued daevas back to their master.

In his later years Zoroaster settled in Bactria. The hordes of Turania were pushing into this and other easterly satrapies, goaded by Ahriman. In addition, evil *kavis* and *karapans* moved like shadows from valley to valley, the human agents of the Prince of Demons that were weaving a web of deceit and Falsehood. Zoroaster befriended and converted Vishtaspa, shah of Bactria. Together they fought the Turanians, the daevas and the dark conspiracy all around them. An apocalyptic battle was approaching. In 572 BC it seemed as if Ahuramazda's cosmic battle was about to reach its bloody climax, undoubtedly a victory for the forces of darkness. But the daevas were banished once again, the *kavis* and *karapans* temporarily routed and the Turanian nomads were pushed back across the Syr Darya river.

The cost, however, had been high. The battle had been won, the life of Zoroaster had been lost. The brave seventy-seven year old was brutally cut down by a Turanian champion that some witnesses say wore night-black armor and who had no face. Engulfed by a magical fire summoned by the defiant Zoroaster, the Turanian warrior managed to impale the prophet on his barbed spear. The Turanian was roasted and collapsed onto the desert sands beside the dying prophet. Zoroaster lived just long enough to see Vishtaspa's forces peel away the armor to reveal the empty space inside. Ahriman had stepped onto the battlefield himself - and been defeated! It had been a close call. Without Zoroaster the forces of Truth would in future have to depend on the hearts of men. How long would they have to prepare for the next (and possibly the last) battle? Only Ahriman knows.

Soon after Zoroaster's death in 572 BC, Cyrus the Great created the awesome Persian Empire. This vast political entity opened up Iranshahr to armies, traders, craftsmen - and to missionaries. The prophet's loyal priesthood took the faith from satrapy to satrapy building up a considerable Zoroastrian network across the land. However, Media, the seat of royal power, proved resilient. Ahuramazda was the patron god of the Median kings and they were proud and jealous of his attentions, refusing to acknowledge his role as savior of all Mankind. The Fire Wizards [*magoi*] cultivated this belief since they were the privileged priesthood of the crown and saw Zoroastrianism as a threat. The situation could not last, however, and when the Fire Wizards fell out of favor with the Great Shah Darius I (following a *magoi* plot to unseat him) the Zoroastrian *mobeds* seized their chance. The royal court at Ecbatana became Zoroastrian converts and the *magoi*, still bitterly opposed, were forced to accept the new religion. This was a matter

of political survival, they converted to the Zoroastrian religion, and in doing so, clung on to their powerful position within Media. Old beyond reckoning, the *magoi* adapted and soon came to dominate the new religion.

The holy book of Zoroastrianism is the *Zend-Avesta* which contains the hymns [*Gathas*] composed by the prophet, as well as priestly rituals, liturgies, treatises on scholastic learning and law, prayers and instructions. It was originally handed down by word of mouth until the end of the Achaemenid period when it was written down in an ancient Eastern language called Avestan, one that is not well understood today except by the expert priests which decipher it. One important part of the Avestan is the Vendidad, a book of anti-demonic lore that was only compiled in the last hundred years.

MANI – THE CHRISTIAN *MOBED*

Mani is a 32 year-old Chaldean *mobed* who has converted to the cult of the Anointed One. He has adapted the beliefs and theology of a Christian mystery cult called Gnosticism, and combined them with the dualistic Zoroastrian faith that continues to burn within him. Mani is currently establishing his own Anointed One sect and intends to use this as a vehicle to continue the struggle between Light and Dark. Zoroastrian gods like Mithras still feature in his new faith.

This determined priest has already proclaimed himself the ultimate spokesman for Jesus Christ and his twelve disciples are beginning to propagate the Gospels and the Epistles of St. Paul. His sect will follow the hierarchy of the established Anointed One church with bishops, churches and priests, but he is intent on introducing a culture of severe hardship and asceticism for the initiated.

Naturally the Manichaeans are opposed by the Christian bishops in Chaldea as well as the local Zoroastrian *mobeds*. Nevertheless Mani's devotees are actively working to spread his prophetic and apocalyptic revelations along the caravan routes into Iranshahr and west into the Imperium. The cult of Mani is forced into secrecy to protect itself from a belligerent and hostile world.

WORSHIP & PRAYER

As in ZENOBIA, FATE can be used to resolve incidents that rely on luck, fate and the unknown 'will of Ahura Mazda'. Leaping a chasm, surviving poison, spotting an ambush in the desert - all are dependant on a FATE roll. Roll 2d and add the FATE attribute - on a 10 or more the attempt succeeds.

Calling on the Gods

FATE can also be used to call on the gods for divine aid. A prayer uttered in an instant to a deity can result in an action succeeding *automatically*. However the adventurer's FATE attribute is then temporarily lowered by 1 point. In addition, only non-combat actions can be rendered automatic in this way. When FATE reaches 1 the adventurer cannot make anymore further appeals.

Recovering FATE Points

To recover FATE points lost through appeals to the gods, an adventurer can make a sacrifice of incense or firewood at an *Atesh-Gah* (fire temple). The sacrifice must be made at a sacred fire and be conducted by a priest of Ahura Mazda [*mobed*]. The cost of such a sacrifice will usually be 25 drachms. Once completed (an hour long ritual is common) the adventurer's FATE attribute is restored to its original level. If the adventurer is in disfavour with Ahura Mazda or the cult of Zoroaster then he cannot approach any fire temples to carry out a sacrifice.

PRAYER [*Yasna*]

A Zoroastrian will usually pray five times a day (at sunrise, noon, sunset, midnight and dawn) and he prays always in the presence of fire - the divine element. In front of the altar the worshipper will have first prepared a seat of soft grass [*barezish*] for the god or *yazata*. Animal flesh or fat is offered to the fire and this element transports the sacrifice up to the divine sphere. In addition, a specially prepared ritual drink [*haoma*] is often offered to the god. It is said that the entire Avestan once existed, written in gold upon ox-hides, in a marble hall at Istakhr until Alexander found them and burned them.

The Zoroastrian prays while standing up and he utters appropriate prayers which are often verses from the *Gathas*. While he prays he ties and unties the sacred cord [*kusti*] that is wound three times around his waist and knotted over the sacred shirt [*sedra*]. *Kusti* and *sedra* are worn when attending a fire temple on holy days, they are not everyday garb. Before he prays, a worshipper performs a ritual cleansing of either the exposed skin [*padyab*] or a ritual wash of the entire body [*nahn*]. To be unclean is to be impure, to be impure is to be tainted by evil. It is for this reason that non-Zoroastrians are prohibited from entering fire temples or watching Zoroastrian ceremonies.

The most holy prayer of Zoroastrianism is *ahunwar* which uses consecrated bull's urine, it's ritual intonement begins "*yatha ahu vairyō ...*". Other prayers are also recited, depending on the occasion. There is a prayer of penance [*patet*], a prayer of exorcism [*kem na mazda*], the prayer for the dead [*satum*] and a short prayer of homage [*namaskar*].

Under-pinning the Zoroastrian faith is the belief that light is good and darkness evil. Every light is sacred; a prayer is said each time a lamp or fire is lit and housewives sprinkle incense on embers and carry them around the house at dawn or sunset to purify and bless the house. Flames are never blown out but always allowed to die, and it is an ill omen should anything be spilt on to a fire. Other elements, too, are revered by the faithful. Water, earth, plants and animals are all considered to be divine. Prayers are said and offerings made at water sources, for example. Tall and majestic trees are venerated, and saplings (as well as young animals) are left unharmed by the pious. Neither have yet fulfilled their part in creation. All animals are treated well, but dogs are especially revered. It is common for dogs to be fed bread before any member of the family!

Yazatas are frequently worshipped, for the *yazatas* are everywhere. These cosmic angels are venerated individually at their own small shrines, and on great holy days the devout travel from one to another in the locality lighting fires and lamps in their honor, offering

incense and prayers. The *yazatas* are best worshipped with song and dance, since they enjoy gaiety and happiness. In return these angels can heal sickness, recover lost objects, help women conceive or bless the devout and thereby remove any impurities. Each shrine is ended by a local priest who recites prayers from the Avesta during the ceremonies. Often, however, village women carry out their own sacrifices to the *yazatas* without priestly approval, such rites border on witchcraft and are discouraged by the village elders.

FIRE TEMPLES [*Atesh-Gah*]

For the Zoroastrian faithful, fire is the embodiment of life itself. It is the physical manifestation of the divine fire burning unseen within human beings, within plants and animals and within *yazatas* and *amshaspend*s. As such fire is central to Iranian worship. There are three types of sacred fire found in shrines and temples, which are all wood fires atop stone pillars or held within metal vessels. The greatest is the *Atash Bahram* ('Victorious Fire') which is consecrated with many rites and kept continually blazing. A lesser fire is the *Atash-i Aduran* ('Fire of Fires') which is allowed to burn down, but lies dormant beneath hot ashes. The third type of fire is the *Dadgah* (Appointed Fire) which is essentially a common hearth fire lit in a consecrated building. The *Dadgah* may be tended by non-priests and is allowed to die after use.

A devout Zoroastrian is not compelled to visit a fire temple, he may pray at any 'pure' fire, but the sacred fires are well maintained, and the faithful are able to worship together as a community. The individual decides - he may visit regularly, or only on special holy days. Visitors always leave an offering of wood or incense for the fire, along with gifts of money for the priests. The young are taken to the fire temples for an early age, and men and women have equal access to these sacred sites.

HOLY DAYS

Zoroaster established many holy days that are still recognized and celebrated by Persians today, but seven in particular are especially well observed. These *gahambars* celebrate different aspects of creation, with each holy day being dedicated to a different *amshaspend*. A host of other sacred days exist, observed by different communities at different times, including *Aban Jashan* (Waters Day) and *Adar Jashan* (Fire Day) during which time worshippers go to rivers, streams or fire temples to pray to the element concerned. Sacred sites in the mountains might also be the focus of some holy days, with the community making an annual pilgrimage up there.

The Gahambars

The *gahambars* are the most important holy days in the calendar. They are seasonal festivals known as the seven Holy Days of Obligation, and it is believed to be a sin to neglect any one of them. Each addresses one of the creations presided over by the *amshaspend*s (with Ahuramazda making up the seventh unofficial *amshaspend*). The seven festivals are :

New Day Festival [*Noe Ruz*] : Ahuramazda Day/Farvardin

Associated *amshaspend* - Ashavahishta; Associated creation - Fire

Midspring Festival [*Maidhyoizaremaya*] : Aban Day/Ardibehisht
Associated *amshaspend* - Kshathra; Associated creation - Sky

Midsummer Festival [*Maidhyoishema*] : Adar Day/Tir
Associated *amshaspend* - Haurvatat; Associated creation - Water

Bringing in Corn Festival [*Paitishahya*] : Bad Day/Shahrevar
Associated *amshaspend* - Aramaiti; Associated creation - Earth

Homecoming of the Herds Festival [*Ayathrima*] : Dai-pa-Din Day/Mihr
Associated *amshaspend* - Ameretat; Associated creation - Plants

Midwinter Festival [*Maidhyairya*] : Khorshed Day/Dai
Associated *amshaspend* - Vohumanah; Associated creation - Animals

All Souls Festival [*Farvadigan*] : Ashtad Day/Spendarmad
Associated *amshaspend* - Ahuramazda; Associated creation - Man

Note that each festival normally lasts for five days and begins on the date given (the exception being *Noe Ruz*, which lasts only one day). Because the Zoroastrian calendar has only 360 days and needs frequent adjustment, the dates given are approximate. *Noe Ruz* ('New Day') is the first day of the year and it looks forward to the eventual triumph of good over evil. Across Iranshahr *Noe Ruz* is the greatest festival of all, with private and communal prayers and sacrifices, gift-giving, feasting and much family celebration. It is always preceded by the five day festival of All Souls where spirits of the departed are remembered and dutifully honored.

INITIATION

The birth of a child is a time of great concern for the Zoroastrian priests, they must ensure purity and guard against demons. They do this by firstly giving the new born baby a drop of cleansing *haoma*-juice, and then by segregating mother and child for forty days. The baby naming ceremony is called the *nama karana*. When the child grows up, the family begin to think of initiating him (or her) into the faith. Boys and girls are initiated into Zoroastrianism in the same manner, usually at the age of between twelve and fifteen. The occasion is called *sedra-pushun* ('putting on the sacred shirt') and is a grand family event held at the home or in a public space such as a garden or hall. The child bathes and puts on the *sedra*, after which a priest invests the child with his or her *kusti*. There are prayers, presents and general rejoicing. It is during the *sedra-pushun* that the child takes a *fravashi* as a life-long guardian angel. Through-out his life he will light a flame to this angel and offer incense and prayers on that *fravashi's* feast day.

Unlike in other Desert Kingdoms, initiation into the cult of Ahura Mazda is automatic. If one is Persian, one has been initiated. There is no test.

The benefits of initiation include:

- | | |
|------------------------------|---|
| <i>1 - Board and Succour</i> | The initiate can seek temporary shelter and food at any <i>Atesh-Gah</i> . |
| <i>2 - Use of an Amulet</i> | Initiates can purchase a cult amulet from a temple that is crafted in the shape of a winged solar disc (Ahura Mazda). These can carry a number of sacrifice 'charges' to be used away from the temple. Normal sacrifices can be made in the presence of the amulet and the 'charge' that would normally restore the worshipper's FATE is stored within the amulet. This can be done a number of times until the amulet has a maximum of 8 'charges' in it. To make use of a 'charge' the worshipper spends one round clutching the amulet and reciting a prayer to the god. Other people can use these charges if the worshipper wishes to give the amulet away, or sell it. Amulets are useful to those who travel and cannot always get to a temple. Amulets purchased from the temple typically cost 50 drachms. If more than one amulet is owned by a worshipper, none will work. |
| <i>3 - Favours</i> | An initiate who travels around can carry out a favour for one fire temple and then request a favour in return at another fire temple (or the same temple, it doesn't matter). A favour requested will be well matched in proportion to the favour the character initially did for the faith. |
| <i>4 - Banking</i> | Many temples have funds and resources. The initiate can deposit treasure or coinage at one temple and quite easily request a sum of money up to that value from any other fire temple. Ahura Mazda is all-knowing and the <i>mobeds</i> can easily detect a fraud or trickster. . . Alternatively, the initiate can borrow a sum of money up to 100x his FATE score at zero interest. |

rites of passage

Weddings also takes place in public places, and, just as with initiation, the couple undergo ritual purification prior to the ceremony before donning new wedding garments. A priest officiates, and the ceremony is witnessed by friends and family. Festivities for both initiation and marriage often continue for several days.

The greatest threat of spiritual pollution comes from the dead. Of course when a Zoroastrian dies there is mourning and sadness, but the body must be quickly handed over to professional undertakers who live segregated lives and who undergo frequent (and complex) purification rituals. The corpse is wrapped in a cotton shroud and, following the blessings and prayers of priests, is carried on an iron bier to a stone funerary tower [*dakhma*]. There the corpse is exposed to the elements, to be dried by the sun and devoured by the vultures and crows. Most *dakhma* stand near to a small shrine

[*sagu*] within which a fire burns for the period of exposure. Cremation and burial are both shunned, since the sacred elements of fire and air respectively, would be polluted. Mourners who have followed the bier at a respectable distance two-by-two must carry out ritual bathing after the ceremony before they can carry on with the tasks of daily life.

The disposal of the body atop the *dakhma* is not the end of the process, however. Although the funeral must take place within twenty-four hours, the spirit of the deceased lingers on earth for exactly three more days. The local priests perform ceremonies and say prayers to help the spirit reach the next world and just before dawn on the fourth day the family and friends of the dead man gather together to bid the spirit farewell. Gifts are given to the temple or to the needy and prayers are recited. This ceremony of remembrance is repeated each month for a whole year, and then once a year for the next thirty years. After that the dead man's spirit [*anosharawn*] is considered to have joined the company of all-souls and is therefore remembered and honored by name at the annual all-souls feast [*Farvardigan*], held on the last five days of the year. Village priests go from house to house to bless the offerings that have been made by the families for their ancestors. In the cities the offerings are usually left at the fire-temples where the worshippers gather together to pray for the souls of the departed.

PRIESTS [*Mobeds*]

The Zoroastrian religion has both 'inner' and 'outer' ceremonies. The outer ceremonies can be performed in any clean place by a priest or trained layman. The inner ceremonies are performed within the fire-temple and can only be carried out by a purified priest. The purification ritual [*barashnom*] is complex and involved, and is followed by nine day's retreat from the impurities of the world. Most ordinary Zoroastrians, whether rich or poor, try to undergo the *barashnom* at least once during their lives as an act of faith and a sensible precaution against spiritual pollution. The priest must undertake the ritual once a year at the anniversary of his investiture.

Priests are allowed to marry outside of the priestly class. They wear long white robes, complete with tall white hat and (during ceremonies) a veil over the mouth to prevent the priest's breath inadvertently polluting the sacred fire.

Becoming a Mobed

To become a priest a candidate must have been an initiate in good standing for at least ten years and also donate 2500 drachms in ornate goods as a sacrifice. He must also pass a test. This test varies from city to city, temple to temple, but will often involve some journey, some physical test or hardship or a test of loyalty. A candidate for the priesthood [*osta*] will undergo some schooling prior to being sent to assist and learn from a *mobed*. Once completed satisfactorily, the candidate is ordained as a junior priest of Ahura Mazda. Temple priests must be able to read and write (exactly which language depends on the individual temple). This means that every candidate must first have LEARNING of 2 or more. Once the adventurer has become a priest, he cannot sacrifice to any other deity but his own. However he does enjoy all of the benefits of the initiate (see above) as well as the ability to carry out cult rituals. He begins with one ritual - Sacrifice, and must gain knowledge of the other rituals through the use of Experience Points.

There are a number of different grades of priest. The *erbad* is a newly ordained fire priest. The *raspi* is an assistant priest. The *dastur* is a high priest, and the *yozdathregar* is the priest who organizes the purification ceremony. The *hawan* is a priest with a special function – he must maintain the holy haoma-press [*hawana*] which produces all of the haoma juice for the local fire-temples. The workers at the *hawana* are all junior priests, not slaves or commoners.

At each sacrifice a number of priests will be in attendance, but the *zaotar* is the principle priest who leads the ceremony. Any other priest participating is called a *zot*. A *maratab* is a ceremony which allows a junior priest to begin performing the higher rituals. Therefore a *maratab* priest is a fully-ordained *mobed*.

Priestly Rituals

To perform a priestly ritual, a *mobed* must be ‘pure’ and in favour with Ahura Mazda. If he performs the ritual within the fire temple it succeeds automatically. If it is performed outside of the temple precinct then the priest must make a FATE roll for it to succeed. Rituals take about an hour to perform and require concentration and much gesticulation and chanting of formulae. Like powers, rituals cost the priest a number of HIT points. The five rituals are:

Divination (*cost 1 HIT*) - Pyromancy, divining the will of Ahura Mazda in the flickering flames of a holy fire. Through the use of this ritual the priest can divine the will of Ahura Mazda. One question can be asked of the god, although as normal in *ZENOBA*, he cannot see into the future. Questions must refer to the present or the past.

Holy Healing (*cost 1 HIT*): The priest can ask his god, through this ritual, to heal a friend or colleague. Ahura Mazda can restore 6 HIT points. A patient can only be so blessed by the god once per day.

Haoma (*cost 1-3 HITS*): Central to this Zoroastrian ceremony is haoma, a holy plant imbued with hallucinatory and spiritual powers. The *mobed* can purify himself (*cost 1 pt*), other people (*2 pts*), or even places (*3 pts*) with it. He uses haoma juice that he must first bless. The plant is crushed and the bright yellow juice fermented to form the holy liquid used to purify altars, temples and worshippers. Incantations and prayers recited during the haoma ritual exorcise evil spirits and drive away ill fortune. In ages past haoma conferred immortality on those who drank it. It was the ambrosia of the *yazatas*, the living embodiment of the fire spirit, the fabled First Plant and the only one in which golden fire flowed like sap. The haoma of the gods became the progenitor of all other plant life. So important was the First Plant that he became a *yazata* himself. Haoma became a god. He proclaimed his role in the universe, could state the names of the first humans to crush him and create the first holy haoma juice, and he oversaw the proper rituals and ceremonies for the preparation of the sacred plant.

Only a purified person may enter a fire temple or other holy area without incurring the wrath of the god, and this purification is done by *washin*. This ritual also imbues a person with an aura of divine protection. A person purified with haoma is immune to attacks from demons and spirits as well as the magical powers used by magicians or

monsters. Places that are purified are protected by an invisible ward or barrier that prevents spirits and demons as well as hostile magic from passing across. By 'place' an area roughly 5m square is meant. Purification will only last till sun-down or sun-up, whichever comes first.

Sacred Animal (cost 1-3 HITS): This is essentially three rituals in one, all of which allow the priest to interact with the *vareгна*, sacred falcon of Persian myth.

Speak To Birds (cost 1 HIT): The priest can understand the bird's speech and speak a rough approximation of that tongue. Many birds are of limited intelligence however, unless they are sacred individuals uplifted in intelligence by the Ahura Mazda. The ritual takes only one minute to perform.

Call Falcon (cost 2 HITS): The priest can summon an large falcon to aid him, carrying messages, scouting terrain, reporting back, even attacking. The best will do what it can to help the priest once called, but is limited by its very nature. The ritual takes 10 minutes to perform.

Shapechange (cost 3 HITS): The priest can change himself into a proud and powerful falcon. He retains his intelligence, memory and personality, but his clothing and equipment magically vanish until the priest returns to normal. A transformed falcon cannot speak human languages or use human tools. The ritual takes ten minutes and lasts up to 3 hours.

Sacrifice (cost 1 HIT): The priest can perform a sacrifice at a cult altar, taking incense from Sabaea, such as myrrh or frankincense, and burning the remains as an offering to the holy flame. Worshippers pay 25 drachms for this service. It does mean that the mobed can perform his own sacrifices and need not approach another priest to perform them for him. He may also build a temporary fire altar and sacrifice to the god wherever he desires (but must roll FATE for the ritual to succeed). Such an fire altar can only be used once.

EXPERIENCE & IMPROVEMENT

It is common for inhabitants of Persia to give thanks to the gods following a successful expedition, journey or experience of any nature. This display of gratitude usually takes the form of a bronze plaque dedicated to the god and both purchased at and deposited at one of the fire temples. Only an initiate can dedicate a plaque. The character must pay the fire temple 1000 drachms for this service.

In game terms Ahura Mazda (in the form of the referee) bestows on the character wisdom and experience relating to the adventure or scenario just played out - whatever the outcome. The inscribing of the bronze plaque requires three days, and the dedication a one hour ritual, led by a priest of the temple. At the conclusion of the ritual the character gains 1 Experience Point. The referee actually awards the Experience Point at the end of the adventure if he believes the characters have earned it, and the Adventurers receive the Experience Point by dedicating a bronze plaque.

An Experience Point can be spent immediately to improve a character, or can be saved

and used to better effect later. Experience Points can be used in the following ways:

Increase an Attribute - To increase an Attribute (other than HITS) by 1 point, the player needs to spend a number of Experience points equal to the character's current Attribute value. MIGHT, FATE, CRAFT, and LEARNING can all be increased in this way.

Increase HITS - To increase the HITS score by 1 point, the player needs to spend 1 Experience point.

Learn a New Skill - To learn a new skill, a player needs to spend 3 Experience Points. See the 'Resolving Actions' chapter in ZENOBIA.

Learn a New Priestly Ritual - To learn a new priestly ritual and advance further into the Zoroastrian cult, the player needs to spend 2 Experience Points.

Learn a New Wizard's Power - To learn a new magic power, the player needs to spend 2 Experience Points.

CHALDEAN GODS

Of all the cultures that have had an influence of Iranshahr, Chaldea has by far had the greatest. Its wealth and splendor attracted the attention of all the early Great Shahs, and they took back to their desert palaces some of the imagery, myths, rituals and customs that they had encountered. So important is Chaldea to the Persian Empire, and so important is religion to the Chaldeans, that a detailed look at the Chaldean pantheon (the Anunnaku) is warranted.

History

The Anunnakku are the Great Gods that are venerated with much splendor and ceremony throughout Chaldea and Osrhoene. Their worship has spread far beyond those kingdoms, however. The deities originate from the mixing of the Ocean Below [*Abzu*] and the bitter waters of the Chaos Dragon Tiamat. First came Mummu (the tumult of the waves) then a pair of monstrous serpents, Lakhmu and Lakhamu who then gave birth to Kishar and Anshar, gods of earth and heaven respectively. To these gods were born the all-powerful An, Ea the Wise and many other gods. Soon, the gods became so numerous that the sleep of the *Abzu* was disturbed. The *Abzu* complained to Tiamat, but the Chaos Dragon counseled inaction. Wise Ea heard of the grumblings of the *Abzu*, however and seized him and his child Mummu. Enraged, Tiamat gathered about her a formidable army of hideous monsters, led by her son Kingu. The old god Anshar sent Anu against Tiamat, but he could not face the fight and so the warrior-prince Marduk took up the challenge. In their desperation the Anunnakku promised Marduk the kingship if he could defeat the dragon-goddess Tiamat. This he did, sundering her in two and creating first the Heavens and then the Earth from her body. The blood of her demon son, Kingu, he mixed with clay to create men and women. These first humans would do the work of the gods, toiling ever-after on their behalf. These were the forebears of all humanity.

As Mankind multiplied, the gods taught them the arts of civilization and their duties in respect to the temples and cults. The gods taught men the secrets of divination and ritual magic. Mankind then began to build a great city called Babel, with a tower stretching up toward Heaven. In consternation the gods realized they had created a creature with ambition and boldness and decided to do something about it. The single tongue spoken by Mankind was turned into many tongues and the builders of Babel abandoned their task in confusion and frustration. No longer would men work together as one. The first city to be created and inhabited was Eridu. Soon they began to create another four cities under divine guidance and the gods gave to men kings to rule over them. The world was wealthy and fruitful, and food could be raised easily with very little work. This was a golden age lasting 64,800 years.

There soon came a time when Mankind became very numerous, and the noise it made was so great that Marduk called a meeting of the gods. The gods decided that this cacophony could only be quietened by thinning out the number of men. At first the gods sent a plague, but the king of Shuruppak, Ziusudra, led his people in lamentations and prayers. The gods relented. Soon the problem arose once more and this time the gods sent a drought, and in this way killed many people. King Ziusudra once more led his people before the gods, and again turned aside their wrath. Finally, Marduk determined to put an end to Mankind once and for all, he determined to raise a flood to destroy every human on Earth. Ea was against destroying man utterly, so he visited Ziusudra, and warned him of the impending disaster. Ziusudra followed Ea's command to build a great ship, in which he placed many animals, his family, and a team of craftsmen. The sky opened up, and a rainstorm swept the land for six days and six nights.

When the rains ended, and the waters receded, Ziusudra and his fellows left the ship, and made sacrifice to the gods. Marduk was enraged that humans have escaped the Deluge but the other gods criticized him for leaving them with no-one to make sacrifices on their behalf. Marduk relented, and because of their piety, granted immortality to Ziusudra and his wife. They and their band of loyal followers sailed in reed ships beyond the Eastern Sea, and there discovered a magical island called Telmun. Marduk caused the water of Telmun to be sweet, and turned the island into a paradise for Ziusudra and his followers. To help with the rebuilding of the world, Marduk induced Ninhursag to create more people out of the primeval clay. In this way all the races of the world were created.

Members of House Anunnakku

ADAD

The god of storms, a very popular deity, since rainfall is welcomed. A son of An. His wife is the goddess Shala whom he stole from Dagon. He has two loyal ministers: Shullat and Hanish. Deity of winds, storms, lightning and flood. His beneficent attributes include fruitful rain and mountain streams, especially in hilly areas. Storm clouds are called Adad's 'bull-calves'. Cult Symbol: Forked Lightning, Ring Staff.

AN

An was the supreme leader of the Anunnakku until Marduk took over. His domain is heaven and he rarely ventures from this distant realm. He is the father of all the gods and

married to Ki - the earth. These two gods created Asag, king of the Stone Giants, later slain by Ninurta. An is rarely represented in art and has no earthly cult or temples. Cult Symbol: None.

ASSHUR

Asshur is the god of the Adiabene city of the same name, and also of the kingdom in general. He is married to the goddess Mullissu and seems to be shadowy lesser brother of Enlil, with many of the same features and attributes. His cult is almost unknown outside of Adiabene, but there it virtually supplants the cult of Enlil. Asshur is a powerful god of war and rulership. Cult Symbol: Horned Cap.

DAMKINA

Damkina is the wife of Ea, and the center of her cult is at the city of Malgum. As well as being a mother goddess, Damkina is known as the mother of Marduk and has some of her son's great status. Fish offerings are made to her at Lagash and Umma. Cult Symbol: Lion.

DUMUZI

Dumzi is a shepherd god with a tragic past. He opposed the god of irrigation and farming, Enkimdu, in a long-running feud. He was married to the goddess Ishtar who was brave enough to enter the Underworld, but when she tried to leave demons came to drag her lover Dumzi there to take her place. In this way he died. There is widespread ritual lamentation for the death of Dumuzi - the fourth Chaldean month is named after him. Dumuzi represents the annual passing of the seasons and the farming calendar, and not just shepherds but cultivators too. With Ningishazd he is a gatekeeper of the Heaven of An. He is worshipped as the son of Ishtar at Uruk, at Kuara and at Batibira. Cult Symbol: Tree of Life.

EA

Enki is the god of the freshwater *Abzu*, and is especially connected with wisdom, magic and the arts of civilization. Ea is the son of An and the twin brother of Adad, the storm god. His wife is Damkina and their children include the sage Adapa, and the gods Asarluhi, Enbilulu and Marduk. His minister is a two-faced god called Usmu. The temple of E-abzu (House of *Abzu*) at Eridu is the center of Ea's cult. He has always been on good terms with Mankind, providing civilization, freshwater and fore-knowledge of future events. He helped Mankind to escape the Deluge. Ea is depicted as a seated bearded man with a cap of many horns and streams of freshwater cascading from his shoulders. Cult Symbol: Vase with Flowing Water, Ram-Headed Staff.

ENKIMDU

A rival of Dumuzi, and the god of dikes, canals and cultivation in general. Cult Symbol: Plough.

ENLIL

Enlil is one of the most important gods of House Anunnakku. His father is An, his wife Ninlil and among his children are Ishtar, Adad, Sin, Nergal, Ninurta, Pabilsag, Nusku, Shamash, Urash, Zababa and Ennugi. His minister is his own son Nusku. The center of Enlil's cult is the E-kur (Mountain House) at Nippur. The god is sometimes called the

Great Mountain, and is also described as a 'wild bull' or 'raging storm' but is also known as 'merchant'. Enlil is king, creator and father and he has a splendid temple to Enlil at Dur Kurigalzu. Cult Symbol: Horned Cap.

ERESHKIGAL

The Queen of the Underworld, Ereshkigal gave birth to Namtar by the god Enlil, and he serves as her loyal messenger and minister. Ereshkigal is married to the dark god Nergal, Lord of the Underworld. Ereshkigal dwells within a vast palace situated at Ganzir - the doorway out of the Underworld and protected by seven gates, each with a gate guardian. Ereshkigal has no earthly cult, no temples and no worshippers. Cult Symbol: None.

GULA

Gula is a goddess of healing. Also called the 'Great One', she is worshipped by all physicians, healers and midwives. Her principle shrine is the temple of E-galmah at Isin, but she also has temples at Borsippa, Nippur and Asshur. Strangely for a god of healing, her husband is Ninurta, the war god. Her sacred animal is the dog and small model dogs are dedicated to her. Cult Symbol: Dog.

ISHTAR

Ishtar is the goddess of human passions, of warfare and of love and prostitution. She is the most important goddess of House Anunnakku. She is also the Lady of Heaven and the Lady of the morning and evening star. She is the daughter of Enlil and closely connected with the city of Uruk, the home of her principle temple, the E-ana (House of Heaven). Other important temples are found at Zabala, Agade, Kish, Nineveh and Arba'il. She is often depicted attended by a band of sacred harlots and her handmaiden Ninshubur. Ishtar is a woman of many lovers, with neither husband nor children. Her female initiates all have to spend a period within the temple as prostitutes. Warriors as well as prostitutes worship Ishtar. Battle is termed the 'playground of Ishtar'. Cult Symbol: Star Disc.

MARDUK

Marduk is known simply as 'lord' (Bel), but has been titled the Bull-calf of the Sun. The god is a son of Ea the Wise and has some of his father's wisdom and magical skills. He also has power over vegetation and water, as well as rulership and judgment. His great temple, the Esagil (Lofty House), stands at Babylon and Marduk is venerated there with great fervor. He is the patron god of Babylon and of Babylonia. In addition, there are shrines to Marduk's wife, Sarpanitu, and his son, Nabu, within the precinct of the Esagil. Marduk is powerful and mighty in war, and a god that the Assyrians venerate for that very reason alongside Asshur. Cult Symbol: Triangular Spade, Rod and Ring.

NABU

Nabu is the son of Marduk and the venerable and wise scribe of the gods. His cult center is the temple of Ezida (Righteous House) at Borsippa, near Babylon. He is the patron god of writing and record-keeping. Nabu is also associated with agriculture and irrigation due to his ability to keep records and organize the lives of gods and men. Nisaba is his wife. Cult Symbol: Writing Stylus.

NANSHE

A goddess of dream interpretation, and also of birds and fishes. She watches over the poor and disadvantaged as well as checking the accuracy of weights and measures. She is a daughter of Ea, and married to Nindara. Her minister is Ishum. Nanshe's great temple is in a small town outside of Lagash. Cult Symbol: Bird Looking Backwards.

NERGAL

Lord of the Underworld, Nergal gained his position by force, threatening Ereshkigal with his fourteen demons. His main cult center is the temple of E-meslam at Kutu, but he also had a temple at Mashkan-shapir (Tell Abu Dhawari). Nergal is the son of Enlil and Ninlil and associated with warfare and bloodshed, plagues, forest fires, and destruction. The god is often portrayed stepping on a victim with a bared leg and clutching a scimitar and a lion-headed staff. Nergal is a very feared deity. Cult Symbol: Lion-Headed Staff.

NINHURSAG

A mother goddess, known as the 'Mother of the Gods' because she gave birth to so many of them. It is said that she was originally called Ninmah, but when her son Ninurta built the mountains from the Stone Giants, he renamed his mother also. Ninhursag means 'Lady of the Mountain'. Her cult center lay at Adab in the temple of E-mah, but she also had a great temple at Kesh. Cult Symbol: Omega Symbol.

NINURTA

Ninurta is a war god, a destroyer of evil creatures, but also a deity connected with agriculture and farming. Another child of Enlil, Ninurta's cult center lay at Nippur in the temple of E-shu-mesha. His wife is the goddess of healing, Gula. There are several legends about Ninurta's warlike campaigns against the wild tribes of the Mountains of Kur. He is also the god chosen to fight the terrible Imdugud demon when it stole the sacred Tablets of Destiny from his father, Enlil. Ninurta also slew an army of demons of monsters on behalf of the Anunnakku. But Ninurta is also a farmer - when he slew Asag and his Stone Giants he used their bodies to build the mountains in such a way as to send streams and rivers in directions useful for the first farmers. Assyria always favored war-like Ninurta. Cult Symbol: Double-Headed Lion Staff.

NUSKU

Nusku is a god of light, fire and protection. He is both the son and minister of Enlil. He has passed on his fire attributes to Gibil, the fire god. Nusku aids the gods in the burning of witches and necromancers. His cult center is at Harran. Cult Symbol: Lamp.

SHAMASH

Shamash is the sun-god of House Anunnakku, representing both its brilliant light as well as the fertile and beneficial rays. As he crosses the land he sees all and so is a god of truth and justice. He is a light bringer who destroys evil and makes war on evil-doers. Shamash has been known to regularly intervene in the affairs of the legendary heroes. He is a son of Enlil and married to the goddess Aya. He has two major temples, both called E-babbar (White House) at Sippar and at Larsa. There is also a joint temple of Shamash and Sin at Asshur. A minor god called Bunene is the charioteer and minister of Shamash. The god emerges from the doors of heaven at dawn and rides in his chariot

across the sky to enter heaven once more at dusk. He brandishes a great key that he uses to unlock the doors of heaven. Cult Symbol: Solar Disc.

SIN

Sin is the male god of the Moon, and also known as 'He who shines forth' and 'the Fruit'. Sometimes his name is written with the sign for the number 30, the number of days in a lunar month. The god was born after Enlil raped the goddess Ninlil. Enlil was banished but Ninlil followed him, already pregnant with Sin. Sin married the goddess Ningal and one of their children was the goddess Ishtar. His greatest temple is the E-kishnugal at Ur, but he also has a powerful cult presence at Harran, further north. Sin has never been as popular as some of his peers, once traveling by barge to Nippur to gain the blessing of Enlil. Cult Symbol: Crescent.

CHALDEAN SORCERY

"If the sun stands above or below the moon, the foundation of the throne will be secure. When the moon and sun are seen together on the sixth day of the month, war will be declared on the king"

- astrological omen from the *enuma Anu Enlil*

Chaldea has been a satrapy for many centuries and a crucial part of the Persian empire. When Cyrus the Great conquered Chaldea, the skill and excellence of the astrologers and demon-slayers who lived within the cities greatly impressed him. The astrologers [*baru*] had invented the art of divination by means of observation of the heavens. All were accomplished masters. Likewise, a peculiar type of temple priests called *mashmashu* served as faith healers, medicine men and magicians, but their greatest role was that of temple exorcist. With invisible demons threatening city-folk at every turn, the *mashmashu* were able to cure many ills and solve many problems. Just as the influence of Chaldean magical rituals and knowledge traveled westwards into the Empire to become an important influence on the development of Imperial magic, it traveled eastwards into Iranshahr.

Chaldean magicians have found employment at the courts of countless Great Shahs over the centuries, and they continue to advise and assist the current Great Shah, important nobles, satraps and lesser shahs and tribal chiefs. Unlike the *magoi* and the *yatus*, Chaldean practitioners do not follow one moral path or another. Light and dark, truth and falsehood are all ambiguous terms to these men and women. They may be found in the service of a pious satrap, or assisting the evil machinations of the Whispering Cult. Chaldeans follow their personal beliefs and the religious and moral precepts they brought with them from Chaldea - and sometimes these beliefs don't sit easily with those of Zoroastrianism.

ASTROLOGERS [*Baru*]

Astrology was first practiced in Mesopotamia and perfected as a science during the glory days of Babylon. Observations of the heavens were carefully recorded, constellations and planets identified, celestial phenomenon noted. The great

achievement of Babylonian astrology was the creation of the Zodiac and of the twelve houses which make it up. The knowledge gained and recorded has been passed on to the current generation of astrologers. Their skills include the reading of omens in the night-sky, the analysis of an individual's personal horoscope in order to tell their future, and knowledge of the multitude of earthly correspondencies (certain gems, parts of the body, herbs and colors, for example) which can affect one's approaching destiny. The movement of the heavens portends all.

DEMONOLOGISTS [*Mashmashu*]

In a world plagued by evil demons, spirits and wraiths, the demonologist is Mankind's only hope. He or she studies the arcane Chaldean arts and attempts to master these sinister forces, to bind them and send them back from whence they came. It is a dangerous profession full of unknowns and unknowables, but their skills are in great need. *Dihqans* and satraps send for demonologists when their children are sick, priests call on their services to protect their temples, and hire them to fight demons that are loose in the world. Some demonologists find permanent jobs, but most are perpetual wanderers - traveling from city to city in search of greater magics and more powerful rituals. Their foes too, the demons, ghosts and the evil summoners [*yatus*] who call them into this world, must be sought out before they can be defeated.

Use the Magician character type already described in the ZENOBIA rules to portray a *mashmashu* as a character.

CHAPTER VI

ZANTUMA

THE SPIRIT OF COMMUNITY

VILLAGE LIFE

For the majority of the poor life is basic. Dressed in just a simple kaftan and trousers, the day starts early for the peasant and involves long hours in the fields under the burning sun, plowing, sowing, harvesting, threshing, winnowing, digging irrigation ditches and tending cattle or sheep. For others the day is spent sat outside the workshop crafting pots, clothing, iron tools or whatever. Everyone owes a responsibility to the *dihqan* who runs the local territory from his villa or palace. His tax-collectors come around twice each year, first to assess the taxes, and then to collect. But he also demands that all able-bodied males be ready and able to pick-up their spear and shield to join him after the seeds have been planted if he marches to war with the satrap or the Great Shah. This ritual is repeated every few years - all the village men-folk turning out and being waved goodbye by wives and sweethearts.

Almost everyone lives in a village on top of a small hill [*tepe*] formed from earlier ruined villages on the same site. It is a collection of little white-washed mud-brick houses with flat roofs and steps leading up to them. There will probably be one house that is bigger and more luxurious than the rest that will be the home of the richest family (the head of whom is the village headman). Houses in the villages of the East, from Decapolis to Sogdiana, tend to be simple and utilitarian. Commonly available materials are used for construction, sometimes stone or wood, but most often sun-dried mud brick. Everything from donkey sheds to fire temples, city walls to ziggurats have been built from baked brick. It is an easy material to work with and can be painted or decorated with glazed tile or intricately molded stucco. Chopped straw is added to provide some strength, and in massive constructions straw or reed mats are laid between some layers of brick to help bond the structure together. The typical house is finished with a coat of mud-plaster and given a flat roof of branches and matting covered with packed earth that is all supported by a number of timber beams.

Several generations will live in only one or two rooms, and the flat roof provides extra living, sleeping or storage space. The family animals will be kept outside, and stores of oil and grain will be kept in large jars within the house. The men gossip every day at the wine-shop, the women at the well. Villages rarely have any need of silver coin - everything is paid for in kind. Most villages are inhabited by poor farmers, with usually one wealthy family in charge. Law and order is kept by the most senior man of this

respected family - he will liaise with the tax-collector and his men and be invited to the *dihqan*'s court. Iranian settlements cluster around oases and the minor river valleys which flow out of the mountains, while shepherds tend flocks in the scrubland and on the bare mountain slopes. In Chaldea the great rivers Tigris and Euphrates provide a fertile environment for the farmers, water for irrigation is plentiful.

URBAN LIFE

City-dwellers live a more crowded life. Like a village, every city in the East sits atop a *tepe* formed from previous incarnations of the same settlement. At the base of the *tepe* lay farms and pastureland. If it is sited on a river the city might have a wide sloping beach that will be backed by a long line of warehouses, merchant halls and trade agents' houses. From the main thoroughfares of a town lead the narrower side streets for the specialized crafts and trades. In most towns people engage in a craft rather than farm. Many craftsmen work for the huge palaces or (in Chaldea) the temples, while the rest have little shops - town houses with large ground-floor windows opening onto the street. Goods are displayed outside or hang up within.

Most cities of Iran and Chaldea are encircled by fortified walls built of mud-brick with gateways through which merchant caravans pass. More houses, shops, shrines and temples, warehouses and other buildings cluster outside the walls on the lower walls near the gates. The Parthian city can be viewed as a body and its gateways [*bab*] as the body's orifices. The splendor of the gates tells the traveler something of the city's wealth and prestige. The watch-towers set high above the gate are the eyes and ears of the city. A gateway represents transition and is both a beginning and an end. In fact the word *bab* means both a city gateway and also the start of a chapter. Larger buildings such as fire-temples and palaces incorporate porches [*eiwan*], high barrel-vaulted chambers that are wide open at one side for access and to allow breezes to circulate. Symbolically the *eiwan* separates the world above from the world below by its high roof, just as the porch separates the outside world from the inside. An *eiwan* represents connection.

Despite the symbolism attributed to many elements of Parthian architecture, the cities of Iranshahr (and of the East in general) show few signs of ordered planning. Within the city walls, streets, avenues and alleys form a confusing urban conglomeration broken only by public gardens and squares, as well as the main avenues that lead toward palaces or important fire temples. Horses, oxen, donkeys, camels and bearers always crowd the narrow streets of any city - along with petty traders and many others trying to make an honest living. From every city comes the fresh smell of donkey and camel, of dung, human sewage and cooking fires.

Cities will have one or more bazaars that are usually a permanent feature of city life. The bazaar is customarily a place of many sights and smells where established traders sell wares that they purchase from the caravans and where local craftsmen sell their own local wares. Fresh in from the fields would be farmers and their families selling any

surplus vegetables and fruits they might have. These travelers, and others besides seek shelter, entertainment, gossip and the chance to pray at a fire altar.

The poorest dwell in mud brick hovels, others might rent rooms or a house. The dwellings of the rich might still be made of baked brick, but they are more spacious and usually finely decorated. Like all homes in the East there are no windows facing outward to the street; instead the rooms face into a courtyard which is tiny and dust-strewn if poor, or laid out as a garden in the houses of the more well-off. These gardens feature water (running if possible!), flowers and plants and a little shade from which to admire the greenery. The garden paradise [*firdaus*] is a powerful symbol to Iranians whose heritage as steppe nomads led them to place spiritual value on the concept of a permanent place in which flowers and trees are planted to be enjoyed year after year. The *pardis* represents a 'sense of place' [*makan*] and a human reflection of the cosmos. In addition, many of these finer houses will boast mosaic floors and exquisite wall paintings for the enjoyment of guests and owners alike.

Of course the villas of *dihqans* and the palaces [*kushk*] of the satraps and Great Shah overflow with decoration. They usually feature a great barrel-vaulted hall [*iwan*] as well as multiple audience chambers, guest rooms, offices, a hareem, slave quarters, one or more courtyards, each with a differently themed garden, private rooms, shrines and banqueting halls. At this date there are no real domes in Persia; this architectural wonder will be introduced by the later Sassanian shahs and exploited to the full by the Muslim invaders. It is common practice for palaces to be raised up onto a platform just as the fire temples are. This raising up firstly symbolizes the elevated status of its occupants, and secondly acts to preserve the purity of the place - much like a Persian funerary platform. The palace is cut off from the impure world beyond.

Fantasy & Reality

Life in the ancient Near East is not like life today, like life in fantasy novels or even like the 'epic' films of Hollywood. If anything, the daily life of village people more resembled that of people in the Third World today. Life revolved around crops, livestock and the potential loss of either. Village life was a self-contained soap-opera painted onto the larger backdrop of historical events. Remember that villages and farms far outnumbered the cities. And they were, collectively, far more important.

PASTIMES

The Persiann elite is fond of hunting, hawking and horse-racing. In fact the breeding and trading of horse-flesh is an obsession as well as a recreational pastime with village headmen, *dihqans*, courtiers, satraps and shahs alike! Anyone of good standing (or pretensions to good standing) can pass an opinion on current breeds and blood-lines, the strengths and weaknesses of different horse breeds, and so on.

Hunting is both a peasant's necessity and a rich man's sport. A *dihqan* or satrap will assemble an aristocratic hunting party to accompany him, perhaps including guides,

physicians, servants, grooms and guards. Hunting is considered a fine training for war and an enjoyable excursion away from the pressures at court. An interesting fabula might take place on a hunt where palace politics have followed the hunting party into the wilderness, resulting in murder, intrigue and suspicion.

An expedition could last for days, even weeks, and luxurious tents provide accommodation for the lord and his friends. The hunt pursues antelope, wild boar, lion, and deer (and especially stags) across country, aided by lures or beaters and finally killed with arrows, javelins and the Persian sword [*shamshir*].

An aristocratic hunter will have horses bred for a cross-country chase, as well as highly-trained hunting dogs, loyal and eager to please. A number of Persian satraps (and certainly the Great Shah himself) own trained cheetahs! A mark of extraordinary wealth, a cheetah is the ultimate status symbol that requires its own specialized handlers. Many are trained to also wear a decorative hood, much like a bird of prey, and also to sit on a moving horse behind their handler as he rides on the hunt.

Satraps enjoy such omnipotent power over the slave-bondsmen in their fiefdoms that some might crave the ultimate hunting experience - the hunting of men. *Bandaka* who have committed some offence or just happen to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, or perhaps Imperial characters who have come into conflict with the satrap, could find themselves the victim of such a hunt!

Archery on foot or horse-back is another sport of those Persians with any spare time (a legacy of the culture's nomad days). Other manly sports include wrestling and polo [*sholegan*]. The lower classes often stake money on animal fights, mainly between cocks or dogs.

Indoor pastimes include the refined game of chess [*shatrang*] and backgammon [*newartashir*], the less refined can always scratch out a board for a game of checkers. Chess players in Iranshahr recognize the queen as the 'general', the bishops as 'elephants' and the rooks as 'chariots'.

STORY-TELLING

In the Persian Empire the art of story-telling is greatly valued, as it once was in ancient Greece. Epic tales [*dostan*] are told of Hosheng and Yima, or Mithras and the first couple, of Darius III and Alexander. Local communities gather around the local poet or storyteller [*gosan*] as he relates a well-known epic one more time. For popular tales the *gosan* has a painted parchment backdrop, and he narrates the story with energy and passion, acting out dramatic speeches, sword blows and emotional events himself.

Other tales are also told, folk tales of daevas and pairikas, witches and curses. This communal entertainment is also enjoyed at court. New tales might be sought after as valuable treasures, full of mystery, insight and power. Grand tales may be related over several nights in front of a noble audience.

Gosan are not only found at court or in the villages, but also in the streets and bazaars of the cities. The wandering poet entertains the crowd for a few silver coins and then moves on to find new tales. Hopefully one day he may be lucky enough to be summoned to court. Imagine a campaign in which a down-on-his-luck *gosan* is invited to entertain the satrap for an evening of story-telling, but is never seen again ... where is he now? Which story did he tell? Does it matter?

Some of the more unusual stories told to audiences at court are the *andarz*, full of advice and morality lessons for those in power. The most famous work of this kind is the *Mirrors for Princes*, which sets examples for a wise ruler to follow and illustrates the pit-falls that he must avoid. It would be a brave *gosan* who recites an *andarz* before the throne of a tyrannical satrap...

HONOR & HOSPITALITY

Every inhabitant of Iranshahr follows the same codes of honor and hospitality. In such a land of baking deserts and rugged mountains, hospitality and guest friendship become a measure of a man's trustworthiness. Honor is an extension of this. An Iranian (who does not follow Druj) will not break his word and will not ignore an insult to himself, his family, his tribe or to a lady of standing. Each man and woman wants to be seen to follow Asha (Truth). Trickery, falsehood, meanness and bad manners are considered to be tools of Druj.

The stain of dishonor can be removed by forcing an apology or a duel. Entire families and clans sometimes assist the victim in his attempt to regain his honor. The family wants to protect its own honor and reputation.

At the heart of personal honor is the obsession with Asha – the desire to be seen as truthful, honest, good, right-thinking and loyal. A Persian's honor is his integrity, the public recognition of his righteousness. Honor is the defense of Asha. Likewise, hospitality and guest-friendship is honor put to the test. The persona displays to the world, to Ahuramazda and to his guest, how well he follows the principles of Asha. Nobody wants to dishonor themselves.

The principle of hospitality means that food, water and shelter cannot legitimately be refused to a stranger who asks. The character must be polite to his guests (or hosts if he is the guest) and must be willing to let them stay for up to three days without obligation. After this time the guest [*mehman*], in turn, is obligated to move on, help with household tasks or provide for his upkeep. He could be considered a lodger and begin to pay rent. There is no shame in moving on to another friendly household, moving from contact to contact, city to city is the standard method of travel in the Parthian Empire.

Before a guest leaves, he traditionally exchanges gifts [*pishkash*] with his host. Usually these are mere token gifts, but the *azata* often use the gift-giving custom to out-do one another with flamboyant presents. Traditionally, however, it is considered a terrible faux

pas to offer a gift that is obviously beyond that person's capacity to match. Dishonor and shame will result.

PERSIAN CARPETS

Even today Persia is renowned for the quality and magnificence of its rugs [*tanfasa*] and carpets [*qali*]. They play an important role in nomadic society, and not just as an impromptu tent floor. The use of the carpet was introduced into Iranshahr by the Parthians. A *qali* can be used as a bag, as a blanket, as the ad hoc 'door' to a tent, and as a saddle-cloth. On the ground, the *qali* becomes a piece of essential furniture – the owner will sit on it to eat, to talk and relax, usually with a few cushions [*nam*] if they can be afforded. At a feast several carpets are arranged into an empty rectangle with the food spread out several large communal plates in the middle. Only beggars, criminals and the utterly desperate eat while squatting on the bare earth.

As with all aspects of Persian life, the quality of one's *qali* reflects on one's status. Some of the better *qali* are extraordinarily beautiful, decorated with intricate patterns and vivid colors. Different regions of Iranshahr have their own distinct weaving patterns and one can often identify the origins of a *qali*, sometimes down the exact village in which it was produced. Weaving workshops tend to have a private pattern book and they combine these patterns in different ways to create a unique style of carpet decoration.

Of course traditional tales tell of magical carpets – more of which later. In a typical campaign, adventurers will be (literally) tripping over Persian carpets. Travelers carry them, nomad society is based on them, peasant households treasure them and hand them down through the generations, meals are eaten while sat on them, *azata* will draw one's attention to the opulence of their *qali*, an investigation might even hinge on the origin of a particular weaving pattern. Inventive GMs might easily base an entire campaign on a secret that is actually woven into *qali* (a little bit like a code), enabling that secret to be smuggled across Iranshahr without raising suspicion. The secret might be the location of a lost tomb, the route through the mountains to Kazgar and the Silk Road, or even the secret of Greek Fire, smuggled from Decapolis into the Persian heartland.

APPEARANCE

A Persian face is distinctive, lean and intense, with wide expressive eyes and a firm chin. It burns with an inner energy. The typical Persian, Decapolitan and Saracen sports a beard and moustache and wears his hair long. In the mountains of Cappadocia, Armenia and Daylam, the tribesmen forgo the beard and lavish attention on their magnificent moustaches! Meanwhile, the horse nomads of Sogdiana, Bactria and Turania prefer to grow short, well-trimmed beards.

Women of the East also wear their hair long, sometimes enhancing the look with braids or beads. Most Easterners have black hair and brown eyes, and they are generally of dark complexion (at least compared to an Imperial or Ionian). Due to the great influx of northern steppe nomads over the centuries, Persia *does* see lighter colors in hair and complexion than elsewhere, especially in the eastern satrapies. Light brown, red and

even some blond hair is not unheard of, and neither is the appearance of blue or green eyes.

Persian costume for men usually consists of a kaftan (a long-sleeved wrap-over belted tunic) and baggy trousers [*sarawil*]. They will also wear soft boots or sandals and a soft felt hat [*kolah*]. Cloaks are a common accessory, worn to keep the chill out during the cool desert nights. The poor have plainer and less well made clothing (of wool or cotton) than their richer counterparts. If the kaftan is everyday wear, then the knee-length tunic or coat [*sarapis*] is the dress of officials, aristocrats and people of importance and status. These garments are often elaborately decorated and held at the waist either by a sword-belt or a knotted sash [*kamarband*]. Coats can be richly embroidered and decorated with beads while matching hats can include colorful feathers and be made taller and more impressive.

With its prime location on the Silk Route, the rich and powerful of Persia have easy access to this luxurious fabric and a nobleman may own several sets of diaphanous silk costume. Anyone holding a position of importance will display his rank in the finery of the clothes he wears, whether they may be a palace scribe, a royal courier or a lowly army officer. Smartness of appearance is equated with efficiency. Those flaunting such standards may be scorned or ejected from office.

Persian women, like their male counter-parts, wear *sarawil*, with slippers or sandals, and a long-sleeved *sarawil* that falls to the knees. A turban-like head-dress is always worn, and this is decorated with a wide, tasseled fringe wound around it. All classes of Persian women dress in this fashion – it is the quality of the dress and the value of the jewelry worn that identifies a woman's status.

Clothing styles have altered radically throughout the East during the past few thousand years. Today Persian fashions dominate the clothing styles in every satrap and also in neighboring territories. Persia is seen as the epitome of sophistication, culture and opulence. Travelers will see the baggy leggings, long coat and knotted sash of Persia in Armenia, Osrhoene, Palmyra, Decapolis and Chaldea (Mesopotamia).

Note that the flowing robes and turbans of the Saracens are also represented within these territories, but such styles are not quite as common as those of Persia. Of course the Palmyrenes, Nabataeans and desert Bedouin all have a long tradition of wearing the turban and the loose-fitting robes of the Saracens. Such clothing is not considered to be very sophisticated.

ART

The Persians have rekindled a fierce Iranian artistic tradition that had lapsed during the Seleucid era. As would be expected the empire's artifacts are exported to neighboring lands who in turn copy the styles of this most sophisticated of peoples.

SCULPTURE & PAINTING

Although the Seleucid shahs had introduced naturalistic techniques to Persian sculpture, the Parthians re-introduced more traditional Iranian styles. Figures face forward and stare straight ahead, drapery and jewelry is laboriously and pedantically carved in place. Persian wall-paintings and carvings are very distinctive wherever they are found. Much use is made of an enclosing medallion in which a motif might sit, but symmetry is also important. Animals, birds and floral motifs often appear as a 'heraldic pair'. The best examples of this symmetry occur at every major gateway, where a pair of huge stone-carved bull-genii [*shedu*] guard the entrance with a supreme physical and supernatural presence.

POTTERY

A common type of household pottery is a hard-red ware which 'clinks' when tapped. For the better-off, pottery is available with an attractive bluish or greenish lead glaze, and is decorated with motifs inspired by Ionian art. Silverware is naturally owned mainly by the wealthy, and the Persian silversmiths have truly mastered their art. Dishes, cups, plates and jugs of silver are always decorated, either by enameling, engraving or gilding. Popular motifs include heroes from Iranian myth, lotus flowers, radiating rosettes and of course mythical animals (such as the griffin). Gold plate is a little less common but decorated to the same splendid standards.

JEWELLRY

Jewelry is worn by both men and women of all ranks. Even some *bandaka* may have a little gold jewelry (perhaps a neck-ring, bracelet, anklet or ear-rings). Animal motifs are again quite common, and some items are richly inlaid with precious stones. Both gold and silver vessels are collected as tribute by the Great Shah and given as gifts [*pishkash*] to ambassadors, relatives, foreign guests and to his aristocracy. Precious metals passed around Iranshahr (and beyond) in this way serve as a form of high-level currency. Game Masters should note that items imbued with magical power are often pieces of jewelry, especially rings, necklaces and gems of all kinds. The western paraphernalia of magical staffs and wands is unknown.

Iranshahr is the source of two precious stones: turquoise and lapis lazuli (known to Egyptians as 'khesbed'). Turquoise is mined in the hills and mountains of Aria. Lapis lazuli, a gorgeous night-blue stone flecked with white, is mined in the Badakhshan mountains. These remote highlands in northern Arachosia form the southern slopes of the mighty Pamir range. Lapis lazuli is considered a holy stone both throughout the East and throughout history. The long-dead Babylonians traded for it and the mighty Egyptian Pharaohs craved it.

MUSIC

Music in Iranshahr is rich and varied, befitting a land of so many different cultures, but even so a recognized Iranian style has developed. Regional styles are reworked with religious chant and popular melodies by the master musicians who teach their unique repertoire [*radif*] to their students. The melodies [*gushes*] created form a base upon

which the musicians improvise wildly. The overall contour of the melody is arch-shaped, both in pitch and in emotional tension and is supposed to take the listener away from his daily concerns into the realm of the mystical. Lines of poetry [*bayt*] are often interspersed throughout the performance.

The most common Persian instruments include the *chang* (harp), *tar* (double-bellied, long-necked lute), *santur* (hammered dulcimer), *nay* (end-blown cane flute), *kamanchih* (spiked fiddle), *tumbak* (goblet-shaped drum), *sitar* (long-necked lute, usually played solo) and, to a lesser extent, *dayirih* (frame drum) and *`ud* (lute). Ensembles will usually include a singer, one or two melody instruments and perhaps a drum.

ECONOMY & TRADE

When the Parthian shah Mithridates I took the throne of Iranshahr, he understood immediately that his empire embraced a diverse array of cultures, from peasant fishermen on the fringe of the Makran Desert to horse nomads in Aria, sophisticated city-dwellers in Chaldea to vine-growing agriculturalists on the Hyrcanian coast. As long as the taxes could be gathered and peaceful co-existence assured, the Parthian shahs made no attempt to centralize or unify the disparate portions of the empire. The new Sassanid Persia kings continue this policy.

Since the Great Shah technically owns everything and everyone within the Persian Empire, he also owns all of the land. In practice his aristocratic vassals manage the productive land of the kingdom, and estates are parceled out to favorites, army officers of high rank, members of the shah's family, satraps and various officials of the *dippana*. In return the shah requires the land-holder carry out services to the crown and pay it a portion of every harvest.

Banking flourishes, but is more widely in use in the western satrapies, close to Chaldea where the concept was first invented. Banking houses have made good use of the kingdom's communications to establish offices in different cities, so forming a network of banking houses that pass credit and underwriting insurance losses.

Ringed by wonderful natural defenses, Iranshahr enjoys both internal security and good communications, allowing trade to flourish. Local goods need to reach the bazaars and long distance trade passes from settlement to settlement on its way to the intended destination. The kingdom acts as the gateway into Asia and goods from one continent to another must flow through Persian bazaars. A nation of shepherds has become a nation of canny desert-wise merchants. Trade routes lead out of Iranshahr in every direction, north to the forests beyond the Turanian steppe; east to Kazgar, Khotan and distant Serica; south-east into India; south across the Tigris and Euphrates to reach the wealthy kingdom of Sabaea; west to Decapolis and the Empire. Luxury goods in precious metals, fine pottery and glass are manufactured locally and then exported out of Iranshahr, but the empire gains much of its foreign coinage from the importation and resale of commodities passing through Persia, ivory and carnelian from India, Silk from Serica, gold from Bactria, lapis lazuli from the Pamir Mountains, furs from the

Turanians. All these goods are transported by caravan (typically camel caravan, although donkeys are more commonly used in harsh terrain).

TRADE WITH THE EMPIRE

On the Empire's eastern frontier there is a 12 and a-half percent duty charged on imports from Persia. In addition there are a number of prohibited Imperial exports, notably bronze and iron. Care is taken by the imperial administration to regulate what types of goods leave the Empire. The official responsible for enforcing the custom laws is the Minister for Trade in the Orient and Egypt [*comes commerciorum per Orientem et Aegyptum*]. He used to control all Imperial trade south of the Taurus mountains with the help of two deputies [*commercarii*], one covering Mesopotamia and one covering Iudaea and Nabataea. The minister currently resides in Alexandria.

The task of policing trade between Persia and the Empire was, until the recent war, made easy by the use of control posts, agreed by mutual consent. All trade had to be channeled through these special trade cities. On the Imperial side they were Callinicum on the Euphrates and Nisibis; the only Persian control post existed inside Seleucia-on-the-Tigris.

The Eternal City craves Persian exports; from pearls, musk, ivory, furs, hides, mother of pearl, lac (red dye), exotic birds (as curiosities), to Kashmir wool and of course silk. Cotton, precious woods such as rosewood, sandalwood and ebony and a host of spices and foods, like cloves, spikenard, nutmeg, cinnamon, cardamom, ginger and pepper are also in great demand. Slaves (especially eunuchs and girls) are also exported to the Eternal City.

Raw silk usually ends up in the silk workshops of Tyrus or Berytus, where silk merchants [*holosericiprata*] organize the dyeing, processing of the fabric and the manufacturing of the silk garments for sale to other merchants.

MERCHANT CARAVANS

A properly organized caravan is more than just a few camels being led across the desert. A merchant caravan is a traveling community of camel drivers, guides, armed guards, merchants and their wives and children. Often they will be related, perhaps the extended family of the head merchant. A family-run caravan might consist of forty people and own about twenty camels. Not every camel will carry a cargo, instead they are simply hitched behind a loaded camel, allowing them to remain fresh. The camel leaders double as cargo packers and on-the-spot vets. They are often younger members of the 'clan' who aspire to become one of the caravan's money-making merchants.

Not all merchants are free-spirits. Some are bound into the service of a satrap or even the Great Shah himself. Such caravans can be huge and are dispatched to acquire specific commodities for their lord. By trading in this manner the nobleman is able to increase his wealth and gain the luxury items he needs to maintain his exalted status. It was to promote these sponsored caravans that the Achaemenid shahs constructed a network of rest-houses [*caravanserais*] throughout Iranshahr.

REST HOUSES [*Caravanserais*]

The *caravanserais* are an integral part of Iranian life and are used by all kinds of travelers, as well as the camel and donkey caravans that they were originally intended for. The typical layout of a rest-house focuses on a spacious courtyard (for animals, cargoes and slaves) surrounded on three sides by a shady colonnade. The fourth side contains the gateways that allow access into the yard. There are private rooms on the second floor which are intended for royal couriers [*pavarnak*], priests and wealthy travelers. The airy first floor rooms are communal halls intended for dining, drinking, rest and recreation, with alcoves leading off that are used for sleeping. It is a fact of life that women and children will probably be left behind in the courtyard with the guards and the slaves, and be forced to sleep within the tents. Meanwhile, the men-folk gossip, socialize, relax and make new contacts. Larger *caravanserais* do operate rest-rooms for the women and children, and these become temporary hareems. No man is allowed entrance into this room. Likewise no woman (or child for that matter) will be allowed inside the same hall as the men folk.

The running of a *caravanserai* is a family concern, and the manager is actually an agent of the *dippana*, but paid by the local satrap. Many women have become *caravanserai* managers, running their rest-houses like busy households. Some offer dancing girls, some offer courtesans. Of course, free entertainment also comes from whatever talents fellow travelers can provide. There may be a juggler or a story-teller, a priest with a morality tale to tell or a talented chess player in the room. All rest-houses charge a fee for staying the night, but drawing water from the well in the courtyard is always free. Only the very poor, the criminal or the hurried traveler will pass up the chance to stop over at a *caravanserai*. Wild animals and bandits prey upon unwary travelers in the dark...

Expect to pay 1 Chalcous for every pack animal you bring into the courtyard, and then 1 Drachm to enter one of the rest halls and be fed, watered and rested overnight, or else 1 Tetradrachm to take a private room upstairs.

CURRENCY OF PARTHIA

Coinage has been in use for several centuries, and the economy of Iranshahr has proved to be very stable, displaying none of the inflationary tendencies of the Empire. The basic coin of the Persian economic system is the silver drachm, a continuation of the Ionian coinage issued by the Seleucid shahs. A higher value coin, the tetradrachm, is worth four drachms. The lowest denomination coin is the bronze chalkous, typically worth one-quarter of a drachm. All coins display the head of the shah, and the dynastic name ARSAKOU (Arsaces). The drachms feature an archer on the reverse (giving rise to this coin's nickname of 'archer'). The reverse side of the tetradrachms feature a scene or symbol relevant to the year of issue.. They are minted exclusively in the city of Seleucia, giving rise to their common nickname of 'seleukid'). Bronze chalkoi are simply referred to as 'bronzes'.

Coin	Metal	Value
Tetradrachm (seleukid)	Silver	4 drachm
Drachm (archer)	Silver	1 drachm
Chalkous (bronze)	Bronze	¼ of a drachm

FOOD & DRINK

Iranians eat with their fingers, and exclusively with their right hands, reserving the left for washing. Anyone eating with their left hand will cause great offence to his fellow diners. Dishes are spread out on a mat on the floor with the diners gathered around on carpets. The poorest slave and the richest shah eat in the same fashion, but they will have very different diets! Breakfast [*nashtayi*] is very light, while lunch [*nahar*] will often be a relaxing and unhurried affair in the cool shade out of the sunlight. Dinner [*sham*] is a more communal affair eaten as the sun goes down with friends and family.

Flat un-risen bread [*nan*] forms a big part of a Persian meal. Nan might be plain, spiced with coriander or garlic or filled with fruits and nuts; they are cooked in a dome-shaped clay oven and are stuck inelegantly onto the inside roof of the dome.

Rice is also popular and often eaten with fish, lamb, chicken or goat. Beef is not very popular and horse eaten only amongst the Turanian tribes. Dishes are often heavily spiced with garlic [*sir*], coriander [*geshniz*], onion, pepper [*felfel*], ginger [*zanjabil*], mint and rose water. Persian dishes are famed for two essential ingredients: lemon and saffron. Both are fragrant and beautiful. Many of these spices are imported from India and Sabaea. The staple ingredients of most meals, however, will be vegetables such as chickpeas, carrots, eggplant, leeks, onions and beans. The most popular meat is lamb, cooked on skewers and served with yogurt. In fact a whole range of based-based dishes exist, called *borani*. A dish for all occasions is Chelow Kebab, composed of lamb and yogurt. The emphasis on lamb and yogurt reflects the importance of sheep to the Persian economy – this is a land with little good farmland, but plenty of dry scrubland suitable for grazing sheep.

The date palm is known throughout Iranshahr. Dates are an important ingredient in pastries and also used as the prime ingredient in date wine. Because of their ubiquity it is more often the common folk who eat dates. Richer folk enjoy deserts that may feature dates, but alternatively they might include honey, nuts, sugar and rose water as well as sherbet (a drink of watered fruit juice with added sugar). The wealthiest satraps also enjoy the refined pleasures of gazelle milk.

Persian cuisine is more than just nutrition, it is a part of the Iranian tradition of hospitality. Serving a meal is the giving of a gift and a host will often remain standing, serving his guests while eating nothing himself. Local dishes (such as the unique fish dishes along the Hyrcanian shore and Persian Gulf) are proudly served, and a host

ensures that every meal is a work of beauty, whether it be lamb stew or a pilaf rice. It must be fragrant, attractive and of course taste good too.

The dualistic nature of Zoroastrian philosophy also has a part to play in Persian cuisine. This philosophy rests on the belief that the four elements of the universe (Fire, Earth, Water and Air) are reflected in the humors of the body. These humors should be in balance or illness will result. Zoroastrians believe that a properly balanced diet can bring the humors into balance also. There are hot, cold, wet and dry foods, each one containing varying levels of energy. Your health, the season, or your own personality dictate what kinds of foods you should be eating. But balance is important – the reason that Persian meals can mix walnuts with pomegranates, or cherries with chicken. Fruit is often blended with meat to create sweet and savory or sweet and sour dishes. These combinations may taste strange to Imperial or Ionian palates.

THE BAZAAR

Every town and city can boast the presence of a permanent market [*bazaar*], and the larger cities (such as Ctesiphon, Isfahan, Istakhr and Ecbatana etc.) often have a number of bazaars scattered throughout the city districts. Trade is fundamental to the Persian economy; the flow of goods through the city gates and into the maze of narrow, winding streets that make up the bazaar can enrich a city, or at least keep it running. At the local level the bazaar provides a place for locals to gather, sell their commodities, barter, buy and gossip. In-between shops and stalls selling brassware, cloth, silk, leather goods, all manner of food-stuffs, pottery, jewelry, shoes, tools and everything else, are tea-houses, wine-shops and barbers – places for men folk to gather and swap news.

By tradition, the bazaar is not controlled by the ruling authorities or the city elders – it enjoys a tolerated autonomy. All merchants doing business in the bazaar have a stake, and all have a say in their irregular meetings. Together they constitute a guild [*anjoman*] which enforces fair play, encourages trade and looks to protect its members from threats or intimidation. The *anjoman* must work with a local city official (from the administration of the local satrap) who will oversee the activities of the bazaar and keep it running.

It is likely that many fabulae will enter the bazaar at some point. It provides an earthy counter-point to the refinement of court. Prepare to be bombarded with sights, smells, shouts, chatter and the sweaty company of Iranians from all walks of life. Deals can be done here, contacts can be made, information bought and sold like fresh eggs. The GM can depict a bazaar as exciting, dangerous, mysterious, seedy, colorful, exotic and more – just not all at the same time.

THE CALENDAR

It is said that Zoroaster established the calendar that is now in use across Iranshahr. It has twelve months to the year, and each month has exactly thirty days each. With only 360 days in every year the calendar needs frequent amendment by the priesthood. Every day is devoted to a different divine being, with four days being devoted to Ahuramazda the Creator [*Dadvah/Dai*]. The first of these days is named Ahuramazda, the next three occurrences use the word *Dai*, coupled with the name of the following day (e.g. *Dai-pa-Din*). The thirty days of the month are:

1. *Ahuramazda*
2. *Bahman*
3. *Ardibehisht*
4. *Shahrevar*
5. *Spendarmad*
6. *Khordad*
7. *Amurdad*

8. *Dai-pa-Adar*
9. *Adar*
10. *Aban*
11. *Khorshed*
12. *Mah*
13. *Tir*
14. *Gosh*

15. *Dai-pa-Mihr*
16. *Mihr*
17. *Srosh*
18. *Rashn*
19. *Farvardin*
20. *Bahram*
21. *Ram*
22. *Bad*

23. *Dai-pa-Din*
24. *Din*
25. *Ard*
26. *Ashtad*
27. *Asman*
28. *Zamyad*

29. *Mahraspand*

30. *Aneran*

Likewise the twelve months are named after divine beings, and where the name of a day and month coincide (*Tir* day in *Tir* month, for example) the day is held to be a holy day and a feast is held. Thus there is one such feast day in every month, except the month of *Dai* (the Creator), when of course there are four '*Dai*' days and therefore four holy days. The twelve months are:

1. *Farvardin* (equivalent to late March and April)
2. *Ardibehisht* (equivalent to late April and May)
3. *Khordad* (equivalent to late May and June)
4. *Tir* (equivalent to late June and July)
5. *Amurdad* (equivalent to late July and August)
6. *Shahrevar* (equivalent to late August and September)
7. *Mihr* (equivalent to late September and October)
8. *Aban* (equivalent to late October and November)
9. *Adar* (equivalent to late November and December)
10. *Dai* (equivalent to late December and January)
11. *Bahman* (equivalent to late January and February)
12. *Spendarmad* (equivalent to late February and March)

A single day is divided into five watches or periods of the day [*gah*] and these are named *ushahin*, *hawan*, *rapithwin*, *uzerin* and *aiwisruthrem*. *Ushanin* is from midnight to daybreak; the second watch of *hawan* is from daybreak to midday; *rapithwin* is from midday to mid-afternoon; *uzerin* is from approximately 3pm to sunset; and the final *gah* of the day is *aiwisruthrem*, from sunset to midnight.

THE NEW YEAR [*Noe Ruz*]

The end of one year and the beginning of the next is a very important point in the Persian calendar and deserves its own detailed description. The rituals and customs practiced at this time are many. Firstly, the traditional herald of *Noe Ruz* appears in communities. He is Firouz, the rebirth of the old Chaldean god of sacrifice (Dumuzi), who was ritually killed at the end of one year and reborn at the beginning of the next. Firouz sings and dances through the streets in his distinctive red costume and black make-up. He is accompanied by the sound of trumpets and tambourines and he spreads happiness and good cheer wherever he goes.

The next part of the build-up to *Noe Ruz* is actually called the All-Souls Festival [*Farvadian*] and takes place over the last five days of the previous year. Ancestor spirits visit the living; children wrap themselves in shrouds in honor of the dear departed and play pranks on the local community, banging on doors and making a racket in the streets.

The next part of the *Noe Ruz* build-up takes place on the last Ashtad Day of the year. The ritual is called Chahr Shanbeh Soori and involves the lighting of bonfires over which families leap shouting: “*Sorkhi-e to az man, zardi-e manaz to!*” (“Give me your vibrant red hue and take my sickly yellow pallor!”). Thanks is thus given for good health and any sickness in the body is exchanged for the health and vitality of the fire. In the last three days of the year three other rituals are carried out. In the ritual of *Fal-Gush*, one’s fortune for the coming year is interpreted by secretly listening to the conversations of passers-by.

The *Kuzeh Shekastan* ritual involves shattering especially made earthenware jars which symbolically hold one’s bad fortune for the coming year. Finally, the ritual of *Gereh-gosha-ee* involves tying knots in the corner of one’s garments and asking passers-by to unravel them., thereby removing any curses, ill omens or black magic that may be troubling the family. All of these rituals are done with much good humor and community involvement. This is a fun time for many Persians. It will soon be a time of family visits and get-togethers as well, and partly because of this, and partly because of the overtones with rebirth and fresh starts, every household is cleaned from top to bottom – tent, hovel, house and palace. For the same reasons it is customary for every Persian to purchase a new set of clothes; in poorer families this might be the only time that new clothes are ever bought!

Families dress up in their new clothes on New Year’s Day and start the twelve-day celebrations by visiting the elders of their family, then the rest of their family and finally their friends (of course gift-giving is obligatory!). On the thirteenth day (*Seezdah Bedar*) families leave their homes and picnic outdoors. The twelve day festival represents the twelve houses of the Zodiac (each house ruled for one-thousand years). The thirteenth represents the chaos that followed the 12,000 year period. To avoid the chaos and bad luck of this day families live and eat outdoors with picnics and games until nightfall.

A few hours before the New Year, the family lays out a carefully prepared ‘spread’. This is the *Haft Seen*. Ritual items are spread out upon a prepared table to represent the *Amshaspend*s, which are the seven archangels of Ahuramazda. The seven items must begin with the letter ‘S’ and can include: *sekkeh* (coins representing wealth), *sonbol* (the hyacinth flower with its strong fragrance heralding the start of spring), *sabzeh* (wheat or lentils growing in a tray to represent rebirth), *seeb* (an apple to represent beauty and health), *sir* (garlic to represent medicine), *sumac* (sumac berries which are the color of a sun-rise), *samanu* (a sweet pudding of wheat germ to symbolize affluence), *serkeh* (vinegar – to represent age and patience) or *senjed* (the dried fruit of the lotus tree to represent love). In addition the following items are *always* included in the *Haft Seen* spread: painted eggs (representing fertility), a mirror or piece of glass (representing a reflection of creation as spring approaches), rosewater (thought to have cleansing powers), a goldfish in a bowl (representing the Zodiacal sign of Pisces as well as life), candles (representing enlightenment and happiness) and finally sugar pastries called *shirini*.

The family gathers around the ‘spread’ to say prayers and hear readings by the head of the family. At midnight he hugs everyone present, wishes them all well and then gives out coins and pastries. Later that day the traditional New Year’s meal of Sabzi Polo

Mahi (rice and fish with green herbs) is served, along with Reshteh Polo (rice cooked with noodles in a sauce).

ORGANIZATIONS [*Anjoman*]

Persian society is criss-crossed with organizations [*anjomans*] of many different sizes and purpose. They cut through the rigid stratification of Iranian society allowing more social interaction, giving struggling commoners a voice, and power to minorities. There are a dozen priestly *anjomans*, societies of mobeds headquartered in a particular town or city that look to local issues, and follow certain theological issues. There aren't heresies

BARGEMEN OF THE TIGRIS

The Tigris river rises in the Armenian mountains, flows south through Decapolis and into Osrhoene before 'crossing the frontier' into the Persian satrapy of Chaldea. The bargemen who work on the wooden ships and enormous reed-barges of the river ply their trade between these two warring powers. Mostly Chaldean by birth, they struggle to remain neutral while they ferry goods from city to city. However, this *anjoman* is a hot-bed of smugglers, spies, warriors and other heroes.

Bound together by a fierce loyalty to one another and to the satrap of Chaldea (who is himself a local Chaldean nobleman from Uruk), the Bargemen of the Tigris work secretly against the ex-Imperial government of Osrhoene. They play a dangerous game and risk capture, torture and execution. The Bargemen smuggle out dissidents, smuggle in rebels, spies and assassins, steal horses and supplies from under Osrhoene noses and occasionally engage in outright piracy. The *anjoman* does not represent all of the sailors and bargemen on the river which keeps the current king of Osrhoene guessing and his secret agents hard at work ... Historically, an auxiliary infantry unit called the Tigris Bargemen [*Barcariurm Tigrisensium*] turns up on Hadrian's Wall in the late 4th century AD. Perhaps the Bargemen of the Tigris get caught out by the Empire in the end ...

BROTHERHOOD OF ISKANDER

Five hundred years ago Alexander the Great led his army of Macedonians deep into Iranshahr and out again. Many garrison soldiers remained behind and an *anjoman* based in Samarkand claims a direct ancestry to these Ionian warriors. In fact this society of guides, caravan leaders and mountaineers claims descent from the hardiest scouts and mountain troops of Alexander's army that forged through the Hindu Kush and into India. The Brotherhood of Iskander looks after its members; they carry out a difficult and dangerous job, escorting merchant caravans over the mountains to and from Kazgar. In an environment where entire caravans, camels and all, can vanish without trace, the brotherhood provides reliable guides with a superb knowledge of the weather and terrain.

FIST OF HALDI

This is a martial brotherhood formed of high-ranking Armenian noblemen and their bodyguards who survived the Persian invasion and take-over of their kingdom. They

fled to remote sites in the mountains and have waged a campaign of resistance against the Persian forces ever since. Armenian peasants are forced by weight of past loyalties to perform acts of resistance in support of the Fists of Haldi, but it is the peasants which suffer the Persian reprisals. The satrap of Armenia, Virdushir, sarcastically refers to the Armenian peasantry as the 'Neck of Haldi' (meaning it always gets 'the chop').

The Fist of Haldi has supporters in the villages and towns who provide intelligence as well as much needed supplies. It's operations have had little real success so far, but the members of this *anjoman* continue the fight out of sheer desperation. Many of the organization's secret hideouts lie in the mountains on or just over the border in Cappadocia. The king there must play a careful diplomatic game, not wishing to show full support for the *anjoman* and drag Cappadocia into a war with Persia!

Depending on who you talk to, the Fist of Haldi is either a band of heroic freedom fighters, a disillusioned and spiteful gang of warriors out for revenge, greedy bandits, or holy warriors fighting to reclaim the temples of Haldi, ancient mountain god of Armenia. The GM should decide.

JIE-LU

The Jie-Lu hail from Serica, that distant and exotic empire of silk that lies beyond the Taklamakan desert. It is a fighting unit of tough mercenaries, hiring out to the Emperor of Serica or to the Great Shah, or to the profiteering middlemen in the intervening wilderness. Jie-Lu is a Serican phrase meaning "prisoners taken in storming a city". The city in question was Carrhae, three hundred years ago, a city laid to siege by the Parthians that fell, resulting in 10,000 Imperial legionaries being captured and marched out to Bactria to defend Parthia's eastern frontier. A group of these prisoners escaped and fled into Turania where they became mercenaries in the pay of the Hunnish chieftain Jzh-Jzh. After fierce fighting in 36 BC these legionaries were captured by the Serican army and installed as border guards at a new town called Li-Jien (the Serican name for the Empire of the Eternal City) in Gansu Province. These lost legionaries continued to practice Imperial ways, Imperial culture and Imperial religion, they spoke Imperial and ate Imperial foods. Of course they inter-married with the local Serican women, and so the Jie-Lu (as they became known) began to lose their Italian looks.

Today the Jie-Lu still hire themselves out as mercenaries for caravans, mountain warlords and the frontier governors of the Persian and Serican empires. Nothing remains of the original Imperial equipment, but Jie-Lu craftsmen still copy the traditional patterns and styles, giving these warriors an archaic look. They wear long mail coats and carry curved rectangular shields emblazoned with four lightning bolts. They wield javelins and gladii rather than pila. Fighting methods have also been passed down, Jie-Lu are tough and disciplined, they are prepared to wait out a recalcitrant enemy and are able to perform a number of sophisticated Imperial maneuvers. The appearance of these exotic misfits should certainly add interest to a scenario set in the Further Satrapies!

PEACOCK SOCIETY

Formed in 221 AD, the Peacock Society is a brotherhood of aristocratic thrill-seekers. In the past decades a number of other *azata* have joined, lured by the dangerous duels and

frenetic hunts enjoyed by society members. Local chapters of the *anjoman* meet at night behind locked doors to plan their activities. There is a lust for something new and exciting, and every member pledges to seek out some new danger or experience so that the others might enjoy it. The *dippana* and the inner circle of the Great Shah frown upon the Peacock Society but it seems a harmless concern and so far they have left it's members in peace.

WOMEN OF PARUNDI

In the reign of Shah Vologases I two wealthy widows from the oasis town of Parundi in Aria joined forces to start a trading enterprise. Both were educated and intelligent and feared that if they did nothing, the predatory satrap of Aria would force a marriage and seize their wealth. Quickly there were able to recruit other minded-minded females in other cities and soon in other satrapies. Today the *anjoman* is a profitable enterprise, headquartered in Artacoana, but with agents, merchants and trading houses across Persia. It may not be the wealthiest merchant house, but it is the only one run by women. Of course most of the caravan drivers shipping the goods are still male.

THE DESERT KINGDOMS

The Desert Kingdoms, west of Persia, comprise a huge desert-fringed region with a number of different terrains. A narrow strip of land along the Middle Sea supports agriculture and wealthy ports like Tyrus and Caesarea. Mountain ranges rise up to the east of this fertile strip, from north to south they form a physical barrier between the coast and the desert interior. The most impressive of these mountains are the Amanus, the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon, and the lower hills of Solyma and Samaria. Passes allow access to the east and allow a number of rivers to flow to the sea. Beyond the mountains the land is dry steppe, suitable only for the pasture of sheep and goats. This quickly turns to gravel desert as one travels east and continues, interrupted only by the occasional oases (Palmyra and Azraq), right up to the lush river valleys of Chaldea in Persia.

In the far north the grasslands of Decapolis, Osrhoene and Mesopotamia do not give way to desert, and the region benefits greatly from the Tigris and Euphrates rivers which flow through it. A fertile ribbon of land either side of these mighty rivers is farmed and settled extensively. Each is, in effect, a vast extended oasis trailing like a ribbon across the dusty landscape. Ancient cities like Edessa, Carrhae and Hatra punctuate the caravan routes of this area to form a civilized bridge between the Empire and Persia.

The other great cities of the region are located within the fertile strip adjacent to the coast. Antioch, Laodicea, Apamaea, Seleucia, Berytus, Tyrus, Sidon, Caesarea, Hierosolyma – all are situated on or near the coast. Two cities, Damascus and Palmyra, have been able to grow and develop around oases actually within the desert, but they are the exception.

Who lives in the Desert Kingdoms? The region has been a cultural crossroads for thousands of years and there are many different groups here. Beginning in the south-west, settled Saracens, called Nabataeans, have established a semi-nomadic culture.

Their oasis settlements include Bostra and rose-red Petra. It is a culture of caravan leaders, merchants and traders who import luxury items (myrrh and frankincense, for example) from southern Sabaea. There is a significant Saraceni presence in the civilized regions of the Desert Kingdoms. These hardy and spirited people have led a nomadic goat-and-camel-herding existence in the deserts for generations. But the lure of the city has always attracted Saracen tribes - into Decapolis, into the Lebanese principality of Iturea, and into Charax at the mouth of the Euphrates.

North of Nabataea, between the Dead Sea and the Middle Sea, sit the quarrelsome Solymans. These people, independently minded and free-spirited, have been a thorn in the Empire's side for centuries. The Solymans are united by a strong religious tradition of obedience and struggle against oppression, they are undaunted by persecution and invasion and draw power from their one god. Solymans now live in many of the large cities of the region but Hierosolyma is their religious center; it has been besieged and destroyed many times in Solyma history.

Much of the Desert Kingdoms is dominated by the Aramaean culture. The Aramaeans came out of the desert long before the rise of the Median dynasty, and they have lived in the villages, towns and cities of the region ever since. They are a quick-witted and adaptable people, farming, herding and trading with equal skill, organizing themselves into city-states that have stood the test of time. Their gods are Baal, Astarte and Adonis. The Aramaic language is a *lingua franca*, understood throughout the region. Syria (Decapolis) is the heartland of Aramaean culture.

From Aradus to Akko, the cities on the coast are dominated by the Phoenicians, a hard-working and enterprising group of Aramaeans who have become successful through maritime trade. Phoenicians founded Carthage and colonized the western half of the Middle Sea. Their skilful navies took part in some of the greatest naval battles in history. Today, the Phoenicians ply the galley routes as peaceable traders. Perhaps their greatest export is expensive purple dye, manufactured from the local murex shellfish. Satraps and shahs, governors and Caesars all wear robes colored with Phoenician purple. The language of Phoenicia is Aramaic.

The Euphrates and Tigris river valleys were once the home of the cultured and sophisticated Babylonians. Over-run by an Aramaean tribe called the Chaldeans almost a thousand years ago, the land has since been divided into Osrhoene and Persian-controlled Chaldea. The Chaldeans did not obliterate the culture they found but assimilated it. Although Babylonian language might be a scholarly oddity, many aspects of the ancient culture still survive, including the gods. Marduk, Ishtar and Ereshkigal are still venerated in magnificent temples and atop towering ziggurats.

Scattered throughout all of the urban areas are other peoples, descendants of earlier immigrants and travelers. There are many Ionians in the towns and cities, a hold-over from the days when the Desert Kingdoms were the heart-land of the Seleucid Empire. There are even Persians and Parthians – the descendants of colonists, refugees, merchants, travelers and statesmen from days of glory long ago.

And then of course there are the Imperials. Although they are latecomers to the Desert Kingdoms, they have, like others before them, marched in to take over large areas and then established colonies. Imperial settlers farm the land, engage in business, manage the provincial administration, garrison the legionary forts and camps and produce goods for sale. A citizen of the Empire from Tarentum or Londinium can rub shoulders with Solymans, Aramaeans, Saracens and Persians.

The kingdoms are a fabulous melting of pot cultures, and this mix can greatly enhance the atmosphere of a campaign set here. Rather than suffer the potential blandness of a uniform culture, the GM has at his disposal a wonderful tool for creating competing factions, rivalries, hatreds, conspiracies, misunderstandings, misguided loyalties and more. It means that the adventurers don't have to actually travel to Ionia to enjoy a campaign that features the (supposed) Nemean lion-skin of Hercules. It could legitimately be in the possession of an Ionian wine-seller in *any* city from Hierosolyma to Seleucia-on-the-Tigris.

LANGUAGES IN THE KINGDOMS

Imperial is little used outside of the legionary camps and the governor's administrative staff in the Desert Kingdoms still occupied by the Empire. Amongst urban populations Ionian is the language of choice. For many it is a second language, but a valuable one in business dealings as well as everyday life. A person's first language (and probably only language if they live in a rural area) will be some dialect of Aramaic or Saraceni.

CHAPTER VII

GAYOMART

THE FIRST MORTAL

What do Persian characters actually do? This question needs to be answered by the Game Master before the character creation process gets underway. If the Empire is a mosaic of opportunities and situations ripe for adventure, then Persia resembles a finely embroidered carpet full of detail and color. There are plenty of options which means that the GM's first job is to decide what role the characters will play. Who are they? What types of stories will they become embroiled in? Where will they be set? Once the GM has give you some idea of the campaign he has created, you can get to work.

There are plenty of character ideas in PERSIA, from Treasury Archers to Cataphracts, scheming *azata*, wealthy silk merchants, hareem slaves, shepherd boys from Armenia, Chaldean astrologers ... but try to ensure that the characters can all actually interact in a meaningful way. Use common sense.

The character creation rules below are only suitable for the creation of adventurers. Detailed crafters and learned folk can be created using rules given in the ZENOBIA rulebook. Do not think that the characters created here are typical folk. They are not by any means!

As in the main book, there are six main steps to character creation, but each step is very simple and quick to resolve.

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| STEP I | Select a Culture of Origin |
| STEP II | Roll the Attributes as directed in the relevant section |
| STEP III | Select a suitable Previous Experience for the character |
| STEP IV | Note down his skill. Make a MIGHT roll (roll 2d, add the MIGHT score for a result of 10 or more) to determine if the character receives the specified bonus |
| STEP V | Select or roll the Social Class of the character |
| STEP VI | Allocate initial equipment and decide on any purchases before the game begins. |
| STEP VII | Select a Guardian Angel, every Persian has one of these. |
| STEP VIII | Decide on a background details such as a name and a brief character history. A description of the character's appearance will help too! |

Step I - Cultural Origins

In PERSIA are a number of major cultural groups that a character can come from. The use of these cultural labels is entirely optional, but should give the character a little more definition. The dominant cultures in and around the Persian kingdom are Median Persian, Sogdian Persian, Armenian, Chaldean and Characene. A culture of origin provides the character with his native language, an idea about his general outlook and also some minor bonus.

Median Persian

Persia Proper is a sophisticated region of cities, cultivated valleys and orchards. Neighbouring satraps, such as Media, Hyrcania, Carmania, Elymais and Isfahan all share this rich sumptuous culture. Like all Persians they are true of word and deed and devoted to fire cults and to the veneration of fravashis or guardian angels.

Language: Aramaic

Character Bonus 1: Guardian Angel [fravashi] see Guardian Angels, later.

Character Bonus 2: +1 LEARNING

Sogdian Persian

The Further Satrapies of the Persian kingdom (Aria, Arachosia, Zarangia etc.) lay to the east of the Iranian plateau and are dominated by the horse culture of the Sogdians. Sogdian colonists have been settling in the eastern satrapies for centuries. The Sogdian Persian is much more used to sun and snow, mountain and desert than those further west. Like all Persians he is true of word and deed and devoted to fire cults and to the veneration of fravashis or guardian angels.

Language: Aramaic

Character Bonus 1: Guardian Angel [fravashi] see Guardian Angels, later.

Character Bonus 2: +2 HITS

Characene

The satrapy of Charax at the mouths of the Euphrates and Tigris river is a merchant stop-over, and a commercial paradise. Centuries ago the region was settled by Saracens from the Desert of Lost Souls. It remains a very Saracen-dominated satrapy. The Characene live in cities, but others trade camels on the steppe, still others live within the marshes. The Characene are hardy desert nomads.

Language: Saraceni

Character Bonus: Desert Travel

Armenian

Armenia is an exotic eastern kingdom established in high mountains and fertile valleys. Its people have been fiercely independent for a thousand years, although Armenians have been greatly influenced by Persian culture, warfare, government and society.

Armenia is famous for the wonderful horses which are bred in the river valleys, and every Armenian is an adept rider.

Language: Armenian

Character Bonus: +1 any action on horseback

Chaldean

Chaldea is an ancient land of vast fertile rivers winding through deserts to the sea. The Chaldeans have lived in immense walled baked-brick cities for as long as records tell. They are incredibly urban and sophisticated people, with a knowledge of astronomy, mathematics, medicine and much more besides. Outside of the huge cities farmers negotiate flooded fields and swamps on reedboats, maintaining complex irrigation works to keep the crops watered. The Chaldean culture maintains a class of exorcist (ashipu) and every Chaldean has had some encounter with a spirit, demon, angel or ghost in the past. These things hold little terror.

Language: Aramaic

Character Bonus: +2 in spirit combat, and halve any hostile Terror scores

Step II - Attributes

To create an adventurer for the PERSIA, players roll six-sided dice to come up with random numbers. These are used to stand for various attributes of the adventurer, his strengths and weaknesses. The primary attributes are: MIGHT, FATE, HITS, CRAFT and LEARNING. There are also two other attributes which will be dealt with later on in the chapter on fighting battles - COMBAT and ARMOUR.

MIGHT

A measure of strength, physical prowess, and fighting ability. Roll 1d and re-roll any score of '1'.

FATE

Luck and the will of the Gods. Fate is also a measure of the adventurer's inner power. Roll 1d and re-roll any score of '1'.

HITS

The adventurer's toughness, endurance and bodily health. At 0 HITS he is dying. Roll 2d and add 10.

CRAFT

A measure of the adventurer's ability to perform basic manual tasks, to repair or construct items and work as a craftsman. Initial score is 1.

LEARNING

A measure of education, book learning and social skills such as persuasion and leadership. Initial score is 1.

Over time these attributes may increase, and the procedure for this is given later on in the game (in the Religion chapter). Note, here, however HITS may never rise beyond 30 and other attributes may not rise beyond 10.

Step III - Previous Experience

It is likely that the character has already been pursuing some sort of profession for a few years before he actually begins his adventures under the control of the player. Such professions give the player an idea about his character's personality and behaviour and might spark useful ideas about his background.

Previous Experience and Skills

One of the main benefits of a past profession is that it gives the adventurer a skill that can be used during adventures. Professions also give a chance to start the game with some money and equipment. All characters receive a basic set of equipment (with money), but they also receive an additional sum, depending on which profession they have chosen. In addition, by making a successful MIGHT roll (roll 2d and add the character's MIGHT score for 10 or more), the character receives a bonus. Again, check the relevant profession.

Archer

A skilled Eastern warrior - an expert shot and a professional mercenary.

The Empire has its legionnaires - clad in plate and wielding shortsworads; Persia has its archers. Archery is a skill given great status by Persian culture. While most eastern armies are composed of cataphract cavalry or horse archers, the infantry they do have is usually made up of bowmen. Archers are the only really experienced infantrymen, in the Persian kingdom they are professional warriors. These act as mercenaries, moving from kingdom to kingdom clutching their bow and quiver, as bodyguards, policemen, . An archer is a self-reliant fighter, able to make his own bow and arrows.

Culture Note: -

Money: 180 drachms

Skill: Killing Shot

Bonus: Bow, Quiver and 12 Arrows, Helm.

Thief

One of the clever thieves, burglars and con-artists that live in most cities

These gangsters are opportunistic burglars and hold-up men who operate amongst the twisting alleys of the larger cities. Others work in teams or brotherhoods, and in this way are able to carry out more elaborate scams. A player character rogue is possibly one of the many freelancers who wander from city to city, parting fools from their silver

through deception, trickery and theft and then moving on before the authorities can catch him.

Culture Note: -

Money: 200 drachms

Skill: Open Lock

Bonus: Two daggers and two phials of Aqua Noxious (deadly poison).

Bandit

Desperate men living in the wilderness and preying on merchants and other travellers

When times are hard, farmers give up on the crops and take to the forests and hills.

There they use whatever weapons they can find to steal from others. They raid caravans, attack travellers and even plunder lonely villas. It is a precarious life, living hand-to-mouth with other bandits, dodging the legions and with only the fate of a public beheading to look forward to. Bandits are free to live how they want and travel where they want. They develop into tough and combat-hardened mercenaries able and willing to fight for their own survival.

Culture Note: -

Money: 1d x 25 drachms

Skill: Hiding

Bonus: Roll once on the Random Treasure Table.

Cataphract

Heavily armoured warrior-nobles of Persia, 'knights of the desert'

When Persian lords ride into battle they ride on impressive warhorses and wear complete suits of chainmail or scale mail. They make an impressive sight as they complete their cavalry manoeuvres on the field. Out of the saddle, a cataphract is a wealthy noble (or not so wealthy, perhaps he has been impoverished or forced to take up mercenary work), and he has an estate to run, slaves to command and a villa to inhabit.

Culture Note: only Noble

Money: 400 drachms

Skill: Mounted Combat

Bonus: Mail Armour, Horse, Helm, Spear

Horse Archer

Adaptable shock warriors, skilled with bridle and bow

Eastern noblemen learn to ride horses and shoot bows from a young age. In battle they form a huge arm of light cavalry used for scouting, raiding, patrols and shock missile attacks. The very rich nobles don heavy armour and a lance to charge the enemy full-on (but still carry their bow with them into the fray). Most eastern armies contain very few infantry, but simply masses and masses of horse-archers. Not all are poor noblemen, many are mercenaries, or nomads, or caravan guards or policemen.

Cultural Note: -

Money: 180 drachms

Skill: Parthian Shot

Bonus: Bow, Quiver, 12 Arrows, Horse

Hillman

Hunters, wildmen, mountaineers, living in harsh conditions and forever on the trail of their prey

Most societies have hunters, men on the fringes who are independent, who search the wildlands for game to bring to the table. These men live on the slopes of the Taurus, Zagros, Elburz and Celestial Mountains, and are shepherds, hunters, guides and scouts.

Cultural Note: Only Armenian or Sogdian Persian

Money: 80 drachms

Skill: Read Tracks

Bonus: 2 Javelins, Sheepskin Tunic, Hill Boots

Spy

Shadowy figures in the alleyways and palace courtyards, assassins and deceivers

Every culture has spies. The Persian kingdom has many spies, organized into an official cadre called the *askadar*. They resemble a unit of secret police. But spies proliferate everywhere that rumour, information, gossip and mistrust flourish. The professional spy can fight, too, and has been known to conduct assassinations on his employer's behalf.

Cultural Note: -

Money: 1d x 50 drachms

Skill: Silent Movement

Bonus: Dagger, False Papers, Stolen Key (see your referee!)

Desert Warrior

Camel-riding bedouin of the desert. Fanatical warriors and raiders - often fighting as mercenaries or desert scouts

Desert warriors are the muscle of a nomad tribe, they protect the tribe and form the sheikh's bodyguard. Most of the men can fight, but the warriors are the 'braves' who lead the battles. Nomads trek from one waterhole to another with their camels, sheep, tents and families. They know the ways of desert survival. They are honourable and utterly loyal to their clan. A nomad's word is his bond. Many are hired by the Persians as desert scouts, a desert police force keeping watch over caravans, merchants and caravanserais on the western frontier.

Culture Note: Characene only

Money: 1d x 25 drachms

Skill: War Cry

Bonus: Roll once on the Random Treasure Table

Slinger

Skilled troopers with little or no fear in the face of death.

Although mostly auxiliaries, slingers are used to a good effect by the Sassanid Persians, and even the Empire recruits them. Some of them are clad in leather cuirasses, although the best part of them wear no armour at all, which makes them highly agile and manoeuvrable. Due to the fact that slingers only make up a small number of the troop total, they are mostly mercenaries, offering their combat skills and their fighting know-how to the best paying lord, king or chieftain. That's also the reason that most of them

are always “on the move”, wandering around the many Desert Kingdoms to offer their services and their fighting skill to anyone who has a job for them. Most of them are only loyal to themselves and to the man who pays them their wages.

Culture note: -

Money: 1d6 x 25 drachms

Skill: Evade

Bonus: Sling, dagger, loot bag

Free Trader

The free trader is a merchant adventurer who takes big risks in travelling from settlement to settlement in the hope of making his fortune from trade and speculation. The most powerful group themselves together into merchant guilds that put up enough money to sponsor huge trade caravans, money lending houses and foreign trading posts. Less well financed free traders own a handful of camels and go wherever their goods can make a profit, hiring staff, replacing camels and buying more trade goods along the way. Free traders are great travellers and pick up rumours, stories and useful information. Sometimes free traders follow rumours of great treasures lost for centuries, perhaps the tomb of a god, an elephant’s graveyard or some other such opportunity. Some adventurers use all their skills to organise such treasure hunting expeditions. They are used to fights and other dangerous escapades - but then if there is no danger, then there is no reward!

Culture note: -

Money: 1d6 x 100 drachms

Skill: Turn A Profit

Bonus: Staff, Hill Boots, Pack, Bedroll

Random Treasure Table

<i>1d</i>	<i>Treasure</i>	<i>Notes</i>
1	Bow	A standard bow, with quiver and 12 arrows
2	Cataphract Helm	An ornate cataphract’s helmet with full mask protection.
3	Mithras Amulet	Bronze amulet showing Mithras, glows in the dark at a command
4	Jewelled Ring	Golden ring with stunning gem, worth 350 denarii
5	Aqua Somnus	A potion of sleep that lasts for eight hours
6	Aqua Vitae	A healing potion with a store of 30 HITS that can be portioned out

Step IV - Skills

A skill has no number attached to it, like FATE, LEARNING or MIGHT. A character either possesses a skill or does not. The use of each skill is different and both referee and player must determine the exact use of a skill by checking the descriptions given below.

Carry Burden: The character has plenty of hard experience as a bearer - someone who carries around loads on his back. It means he can comfortably carry far more than his body size would suggest. A strongman might be able to lift the weight over his head,

but only a bearer could carry it across the desert all day! A proficient Bearer has double the load capacity of an unskilled character see Initial Equipment, later in this chapter).

Desert Travel: Travel through desert terrain can prove deadly to the unskilled and lack of water will slowly kill a traveller, day by day. The character with Desert Travel knows about the dangers of heat stroke, heat exhaustion, sunburn, sand storms, lack of salt, sand blindness and a host of other problems including the chances of floods in dry desert valleys and the value of wearing desert clothing. A character with Desert Travel suffers minimal damage when in desert terrain and knows where and how to find waterholes or likely spots to dig for water in stony desert each day. See the later section on deserts in the Adventure Tool-Kit.

Evade: The character can avoid and flee violent confrontations and attacks very easily. If he spends 1 FATE point he gains a +4 bonus on his COMBAT roll to avoid combat. And he only needs to make this roll once to retreat (see Retreating). Evade only works if the PC is not wearing metal armour and is not carrying a weapon heavier than a dagger or club, or a shield.

Evaluate: The character can immediately assess the worth of an item of trade or an item of treasure. He knows what this item should be worth on the open market in a typical city or town. It does not apply to one-of-a-kind items, exotic, magical or previously unknown items, but only typical, commonly known, trade or treasure goods.

Find Direction: The character is always sure from which direction he has just come, can retrace his steps perfectly, and has an uncanny knack of being able to determine the direction north, with only the minimum amount of observable clues.

Hiding: The character is expert at concealment and ambush. He is able to literally cover his tracks to prevent pursuit and can hide behind or within many different features to avoid detection. When someone attempts to spot the character that searcher gets an automatic -2 to his roll. A common use for Hiding is to ambush passing characters and gain complete surprise.

Killing Shot: The character has trained to hit certain parts of a target's anatomy in missile combat. He knows just where to strike for most damage, whether throat, eye, groin or heart etc. This precision attack costs 1 point of FATE, but provides the adventurer with +4 on the damage that he inflicts (if the attack is successful). This bonus is good only for that single attack.

Mounted Combat: The character is trained to fight hand-to-hand from horseback and gains a +2 bonus to hit, regardless of what hand-to-hand weapon he uses or whether his opponent is on horseback or not. Normally an unskilled rider would be at -2 to any attack!

Open Lock: The character is an expert at picking locks. Locks are very expensive in the Desert Kingdoms, used only by noble families, some very rich merchants and royalty. Locks are big and heavy. To use this skill a tool is required, either pre-prepared or improvised. A CRAFT roll is required to successfully pick a lock.

Organise: The character is trained to solve problems, to be efficient, to maximise resources and minimise waste! The Empire trains an army of scribes with the ability to organise and many consider this army more potent than its legions! A character with organise can always seem to speed up any team effort, always find a way to stretch resources just enough, can scrounge desperately needed items, and always find some way to cut corners. It may take some thinking time (or calculating time if that is more appropriate) but he can usually do it.

Parthian Shot: Used to shooting arrows from horseback, the character can use his bow without penalty while walking, running or riding. While on horseback he can even shoot backwards - a very useful manoeuvre when fleeing the battle!

Read Tracks: Fresh tracks and spoor can be identified and interpreted, allowing a tracker to assess the possible direction and number of an animal type. Certain terrain, time and bad weather will all badly degrade animal tracks. Humans, too, leave distinctive and tell-tale tracks that can (in ideal circumstances) betray direction, speed, numbers, burden carried and even how long ago they were made.

Seek Audience: The character is familiar with court etiquette and ritual and is readily able to 'play the system' to use the right amount of flattery and demand to get to see a high-ranking personage. A very useful skill!

Silent Movement: The character can creep about in total silence, making him a great thief or assassin! He cannot run or perform any other exertions, but must move slowly and cautiously. Note that this skill is not some magical power. If the character is walking on pebbles then he cannot rationally *avoid* making a noise ...

Streetwise: The character has experience with crime and the criminal underworld in one or more of the large cities of the Desert Kingdoms. FATE can be rolled to establish a contact in a city with members of a criminal gang (perhaps thieves or assassins). Bribes are standard for such contacts. Rolls can also be made to make a variety of illegal deals within this underworld culture, to find certain people or be introduced to an important figure.

Turn A Profit: The character is a wheeler-dealer, a merchant who has plenty of experience in barter and trade. An unskilled character can sell an item at one of two prices: half price if used, or one-tenth if broken and in need of repair. The character with Turn A Profit can usually improve on these prices, and can get full price for a used item and one-quarter of the price for a broken, but repairable, item. When this character tries to sell something as new, he will rarely lose money, nearly always turning some kind of profit or (at the bare minimum) breaking even. Outside events may, however, affect the sale and cost the merchant valuable profit.

War Cry: The character can work himself into a terrible frenzy with a ritual war cry that might scare his opponent and give himself courage. A war cry must be screamed while engaging a fresh opponent, and costs him 1 point of FATE. It provides him with a +2 to hit against any opponent(s) for 1-6 combat rounds.

Step V - Social Class

The Persian kingdom is a feudal aristocracy of great antiquity, a class-based society in which everyone defers to someone of higher status. True freedom is unknown, even for a *dihqan* or satrap. Unlike the much freer society of the Empire, the Persian system is both hierarchical and pyramidal. The various ranks of society are: *Azata*, *Athrawan*, *Bandaka*, *Mariaka*, *Cadorneshim* and *Biruni*. The player can select an interesting social rank that might fit his character's background, or he can roll a die.

<i>1d</i>	<i>Social Class</i>
1	<i>Biruni</i>
2	<i>Cadorneshim</i>
3	<i>Mariaka</i>
4	<i>Bandaka</i>
5	<i>Athrawan</i>
6	<i>Azata</i>

AZATA – The Nobility

The *athrawan* may ensure the smooth running of the Persian Empire, but it is members of the *azata* class that hold the reins of government. The *azata* are the nobles – aristocrats who enjoy great status and privilege. Most *azata* are local landowners (*dihqans*) governing a single district with the villages and strip of fertile valley that lay within it. These poorer members of the *azata* breed horses, practice archery and entertain guests in the manner of the richest *azata*. The richest of the *azata* are the satraps, friends and family, of the Great Shah, and influential and powerful members of the Persian state. The wealth of these satraps is stupendous, often far surpassing the riches of kings of neighboring lands. They own hunting parks, palaces, hareems and vast estates populated by hard-working *bandaka* and slaves [*mariaka*].

ATHRAWAN – The Learned

Above the *bandaka* in this hierarchy is the class of educated professionals called the *athrawan*. This is the priestly class; those families within it train their sons as scribes and who hopefully go on to the priesthood or into the lucrative merchant profession. Many *athrawan* live in well-appointed town-houses and find employment in the temples, government offices and bazaars. They form an educated elite.

BANDAKA – The Workers

At the base of the pyramid exist a vast number of commoners; the workers, laborers, farmers, herdsman and craftsmen of Persian society. They are the bondsmen [*bandaka*] owing allegiance and fealty to the local *dihqan*. The majority are desperately poor and subsist in squalid villages of dry-brick. Some *bandaka* do well for themselves. A goldsmith in the palace of the satrap is better off than a shepherd in Carmania. But both men may be executed on the whim of their lord, both are equally powerless, neither have any democratic rights or role in government.

MARIAKA – The Slaves

Mariaka are slaves. They work ceaselessly and thanklessly on the estates of the *azata*, and also in the houses, fields, orchards and workshops of the *athrawan* and better-off *bandaka*. Persia's slaves are ubiquitous much as they are throughout the Empire. Farmers can afford slaves to help them work the land, city-folk have slaves in their workshops and around the house, and the nobility staff entire palaces with slaves. Obviously the status of a slave very much depends on who his master is.

Mariaka are especially valued as stewards of the hareem, whether this be in a town-house in Isfahan or the Grand Palace of the shah in Ctesiphon. Such slaves are always eunuchs [*shakir*], castrated prisoners from foreign lands, either captured in war, bought in the bazaar or given as tribute by a satrap. Native Iranians are, by law, exempt from castration. Eunuch slaves can enjoy the trust of the *azata* in other ways, too. Without family loyalties to cloud the issue, eunuchs are often entrusted with high administrative office at all levels of the Persian bureaucracy. They are considered trust-worthy servants of the state.

While the ranks of the *mariaka* are swollen by tribute, trade and war (10,000 Imperial soldiers were enslaved in the aftermath of Carrhae), the Persians also enslave *bandaka* and *athrawan* as a punishment for crimes and for non-payment of debt. Sometimes desperate families enslave their own children when times are hard. Although there are officially no Iranian eunuchs, there are plenty of Iranian slaves. Such a tragic beginning to a life would make an interesting background for a character.

Mariaka, once enslaved (through birth, sale or capture) can never be released from slavery by their master. A system akin to the Imperial manumission does not exist in Persia. The slave population grows year after year, and only the terrible treatment and high death rate of *mariaka* keeps them from totally overwhelming the empire. Only an *azata* vested with royal authority (typically a satrap or the shah himself) can release a person from servitude. Such events are not common (these nobles having many other duties and pleasures to occupy their time) and the final status of the freedman remains the whim of the nobleman who freed him or her.

CADORNESHIM - The Nomads

The nomad peoples of Turania, Sogdiana, parts of Aria and the Desert of Lost Souls form a separate social rank. Disconnected from civilized Persian culture, they still interact with settled folk on a seasonal basis as the tribes come to trade, to inter-marry and to farm. Some even give up the nomadic life during drought or famine to become *bandaka*. A nomad has a place in the social ranking below the bondsman, but above the slave. These wandering shepherds or horse-breeders are generally considered to be uncivilized scum, treacherous, unreliable and boorish. The infamy of the Turanians is indeed legendary.

BIRUNI – The Foreigners

Despite the animosity between the Eternal City and Persia, there are many foreigners living and working in Iranshahr. Most are connected to the caravan trade, but others

have settled in the towns and cities to make a living. Solymans, Saracens, Aramaeans and Phoenicians in particular find it easy to adapt to the strange Persian culture.

Imperials are treated with suspicion if they are of senatorial or equestrian rank, represent the legions or government in any way, or even if they are armed. A humble Imperial can pass quite easily into Iranshahr provided he has letters of recommendation or permit [*gozarname*] or if he is part of a legitimate caravan or delegation.

A foreigner within Persia is not a free citizen. He requires a sponsor (often whoever wrote the letter of recommendation) and may have to pay handsomely for the privilege. The sponsor (of *bandaka* rank or higher) is responsible for the foreigner's activities and represents him in any trial. Foreigners can set up in business as long as the sponsor can get permission from the local azata (typically the *dihqan* or city official). This process will probably involve a degree of bribery. Once settled into Persian society, a foreigner will find the Iranians to be a very open-minded and accommodating people who allow gatherings, worship and all manner of strange customs (within the cosmopolitan cities at least ...).

The Class Skills

These different social classes provide different types of training for their children. Even without formal training, a character has picked up a decent amount of information - a skill. A skill is a talent or ability which an occupation, social class or profession teaches. Social class will also have an effect on how educated a character is, or how good they are with their hands. Skill descriptions, attribute bonuses and details of how they can be used in play are given further down.

<i>Social Class</i>	<i>Skill</i>	<i>CRAFT Bonus</i>	<i>LEARNING Bonus</i>
Biruni	Evaluate	5 dice	3 dice
Cadorneshim	Find Direction	3 dice	2 dice
Mariaka	Streetwise	5 dice	2 dice
Bandaka	Carry Burden	4 dice	3 dice
Athrawan	Organise	3 dice	5 dice
Azata	Seek Audience	3 dice	5 dice

Attribute bonuses are rolled once and any '6' result adds +1 to the relevant attribute score. For example, a Biruni character rolls 5d for CRAFT and gets 6, 2, 1, 4, 5. Thus he gets a +1 to add to his initial CRAFT score of '1'. Additional '6' results just add more +1 bonuses to the attribute.

Step VI - Initial Equipment

Any gains made from Previous Experience is added to the character's initial equipment, listed below:

Any gains made from Previous Experience is added to the character's initial equipment, listed below:

Drachms: 1d x 50
 Firebow
 Pack
 Pouch
 Shortsword [*akinaka*]
 Waterskin
 3 Torches

Carrying Equipment

How much can an Adventurer carry? Players have a tendency to overload their characters, picking up equipment, loot, new weapons and so on without any thought. This isn't how we envisage the cool heroes of Conan, Gladiator, Lord of the Rings or Troy. The rule should be '*carry what's valuable and ditch the rest*'. As a rule of thumb assume that an Adventurer can comfortably carry MIGHT + 8 items, this is his Load Capacity. An item is an object that can be held in one hand (like a dagger, quiver, helmet, scroll or a sword). Larger objects, often two-handed objects (such as spears, shields and bows) count as two items. Some items (pouches, hats etc.) are either too small, or counted as being worn. Armour is as heavy as its Armour Value. Being encumbered (ie. going over your MIGHT + 8 maximum) results in half speed and "-1" on all physical actions. No one may encumber themselves beyond MIGHT + 12 items. Those characters with the "Carry Burden" skill get to double their MIGHT when calculating Load Capacity.

Price Lists

<i>Armour</i>		
<i>Item</i>	<i>Armour Rating</i>	<i>Price (drachm)</i>
Persian Helm	1	100
Quilted Tabard	1	300
Short-Sleeved Mail Cuirass	2	800
Long-Sleeved Mail Cuirass	3	1200
Cataphract Armour	6	4200

<i>Fashion</i>	
<i>Item</i>	<i>Price (drachm)</i>
Baggy Trousers [<i>sarawil</i>]	30
Cloak	60
Cloak Brooch	20-120
Cummerbund (Persian waist sash)	15
Gown, knee-length [<i>sarapis</i>]	80
Hairbrush	20

Haircut (barbershop)	10
Hairpin	25
Hat [<i>kolah</i>]	25
Headband	10
Hill Boots	80
Mirror	140
Perfumed Oils (Myrrh)	50
Sandals	50
Turban	35
Decorated Belt	60
Long-Sleeved Tunic [<i>kaftan</i>]	40
Purple dyed cloth	x3
Silk cloth	x10

<i>Other Items</i>	
<i>Item</i>	<i>Price (drachm)</i>
Musical Instrument (<i>chang, sitar, nay, tar, santur</i> etc.)	50-250
Blanket	15
Brass Lamp	90
Chain (10m.)	120
Clay Lamp	20
Cooking Equipment	135
Cushion, Typical Quality	30
Food, Good Meal	1
Food, Trail Ration (one week)	5
Healing Herbs (5 uses)	75
Horse Grain (one week)	10
Horsewhip	25
Ink, Quills and Parchment	90
Knife	20
Lamp (clay)	10
Lamp Oil	4
Pack	10
Panniers and Saddle (for camel)	140
Pickaxe	35
Persian Carpet [<i>qali</i>]	100
Persian Rug [<i>tanfasa</i>]	30
Pouch	3
Rope (10m.)	40
Saddle & Bridle	300
Saddlebags	180
Tent (3 man)	180
Tent (communal, 10 man)	1200
Tool	40
Torch	1
Waterskin	5

Wax Tablet	140
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<i>Travel</i>	
<i>Item</i>	<i>Price (drachm)</i>
Caravanserai/one night (communal)	1
Caravanserai/one night (private)	4
Chariot	1200
Donkey	500
Camel	1000
Horse, Hyrcanian	1000
Horse, Nisean or Turanian	1400
Horse, Heavenly Horse of Ferghana	10,000+
Wagon (2-wheel)	350
Wagon (4-wheel)	500

<i>Weaponry</i>		
<i>Item</i>	<i>Combat Bonus</i>	<i>Price (in drachm)</i>
Bow (2H)	+2	150
Burning Torch	+2	1
Club	+1	5
Concealed Dagger [<i>Xanjar</i>]	+1	50
Dagger [<i>Dashe</i>]	+1	35
Handaxe	+1	25
Javelin [<i>Palta</i>]	+3	60
Longsword [<i>Shamshir</i>]	+2	150
Shield	+1 (defence only)	100
Shortsword [<i>Akinaka</i>]	+2	100
Sling	+1	10
Spear [<i>Neyze</i>]	+3	20
Staff	+1	5
War-Axe [<i>Tabar</i>]	+2	100
War Club [<i>Bashgah</i>]	+2	60
War Pick [<i>Sagaris</i>]	+3	120
Whip	+2 (only stun)	25
12 Arrows	-	24
10 Slingshot	-	5
Quiver (holds 12 arrows)	-	15

Step VII - Select a Guardian Angel

When a Persian is born his or her parents call upon a *fravashi* or guardian angel to guard that child throughout its life. The *fravashi* are grouped according to their nature, and each follows one of the six arch-angels [*amshaspends*]. The nature of that *amshaspends*, passed from *fravashi* to child, becomes an inspirational spark and the way in which that child, once grown, will try to conduct itself in life. When a character attempts a task in line with his or her guardian angel, the referee awards the player a +1 bonus on the dice roll.

The use of guardian angels and the +1 task bonus that they will call for needs to be carefully adjudicated by the GM. Do not let every character action be somehow connected to the character's thirst for truth or glory or whatever. The codes provide a minor bonus to encourage characters to follow one of six paths to god. They provide character flavour, and are not intended to be used by players to maximize their dice roll results! Bear this in mind. Note that only a Persian character can select a guardian angel.

AMERETAT (Life)

The protection of innocent life is paramount to this character, even though this may mean shedding blood. Any task that may save a life or eliminate a danger to innocents will garner the player a +1 task bonus.

ARAMAITI (Devotion)

The character values loyalty to an individual or to a group. Any actions that further this relationship or protect it garner the player a +1 task bonus.

ASHAVAHISHTA (Supreme Truth)

Pursuit of the truth is all important to this persona. If the action will help reveal the true nature of a person, place, item or situation then the GM can award the player with a +1 task bonus.

DRUJ (Falsehood)

A horrible secret to be kept from all right-thinking Zoroastrians, a Druj devotes his life to theft, deception and murder. If the task at hand will help to conceal the true nature of a person, place or item, then a +1 task bonus is gained. Note that any Druj must take another Code of Conduct as a cover for his nefarious nature. Taking this Conduct is accepting that the character is a criminal, hunted and in fear of persecution. Beware!

HAURVATAT (Perfection)

The persona pursues glory and personal achievement. Any action which could challenge or test the character or which might develop his or her skills will garner a +1 task bonus.

KSHATHRA (Dominion)

Mastery over others is all important to the character. If the task in hand will bring him power over one or more people, strengthen his power or defend his power over others, then he will gain a +1 task bonus.

VOHUMANAH (Good Mind)

The character likes to be right. Any action that will prove him or her correct in the face of opposition will result in the award of a +1 task bonus.

Step VIII - Background

There are a host of lesser details that can be created for a player character, details that really bring that character to 'life' in the imaginations of the players. Players needn't write reams of background history - a short paragraph should suffice, outlining the character's upbringing, his early career or life, the changes that affected him and the chain of events that gave him the previous experience selected by the player. Every character really needs some kind of background story. Where are they from? Why have they turned their backs on their old life to adventure in the big wide world?

Use the tables in ZENOBIA to create a backstory, and refer to the sections below for additional information.

FEMALE ADVENTURERS

"Each man has several wives, for the sake of gratifying desire with different objects. They punish no crime more severely than adultery, and accordingly they not only exclude their women from entertainments, but forbid them the very sight of men."

- Justinus, *History of the World*

As might be expected in an ancient feudal slave-owning society, women do not enjoy great freedoms. Closeted in the hareem (female quarter) of the house, a girl would rarely receive an education. Upon reaching marriageable age she would be forced into an arranged marriage. Her concerns are irrelevant. As the mistress of her new household a woman has at least some power. She manages the house and its servants and slaves, but is forbidden from mixing with the men folk. A rigorous male/female division exists in every Persian household that can afford such a luxury. The wife may actually be one of several since monogamy is not a desirable goal for a man seeking status. The master of the house might marry several times, each marriage reinforcing social relationships and his status in society. He might also have slave-wives and concubines if he is wealthy enough. If so, his legal wives and their children enjoy precedent.

Having said all this, we can envisage a number of ways that female character can enter the game. One way is to allow females to live in disguise as men (some families resorted to this stratagem to avoid the stigma of having no sons). This is hardly ideal but does invite some splendid roleplaying opportunities!

Another is to allow female character taught in secret by a strong-willed father or mentor. Such women might be trained as scholars or magicians or even warriors – but with the caveat that they keep such an unfeminine education a secret. A woman flaunting

‘manly’ skills might be considered a freak or a monster by other Persians (both male and female).

There *are* tales of warrior-princesses from more tribal cultures (the Turanians, the Sogdian and horse-rearing tribes from some of the eastern satrapies). These proud female barbarians could legitimately learn the arts of war and accompany male warriors through Persia. The Royal Harem Warriors described earlier on, would make a fine patron organization or background for such a persona.

A more civilized female character could be a traveling merchant, perhaps a wealthy widow who has both the finances and the freedom to live an independent life. Alternatively, the role of a physician or a musician or *goson* might be more appropriate.

PERSIAN NAMES

The following are sample Iranian names for characters, and these names are drawn from across the breadth of Iranian history.

Male Names

Abbas, Abouali, Abtin, Afshar, Afshin, Amin, Amjad, Anoush, Anoushiravan, Arad, Aram, Arash, Ardavan, Ardeshir, Aref, Arman, Armeen, Arsalan, Arses, Arsaces, Artabarnus, Artaxerxes, Arya, Asad, Astyages, Asghar, Ashkan, Azad, Bakabadus, Bardia, Barsaentes, Behnam, Behrouz, Behzad, Bizhan, Cambyses, Cyaxares, Cyrus, Dadarshi, Danush, Dara, Daraba, Darius, Dariush, Esfandiyar, Faramarz, Fardad, Fardin, Farhang, Fariborz, Farid, Farjad, Farshid, Farzad, Farzin, Ferydoon, Firouz, Frada, Ghobad, Gotarzes, Hafez, Hedayat, Heydar, Homayoon, Hooshmand, Hooshyar, Hormoz, Iraj, Iman, Iskander, Jahandir, Jahangir, Jahanshan, Jalal, Jalil, Jamshid, Javad, Javeed, Kamran, Kamshad, Kamyar, Kamal, Karim, Karkish, Kaveh, Khashayar, Kia, Kiyan, Kourosh, Makan, Mahyar, Majid, Manoucher, Mansoor, Mehrab, Mehrak, Mehran, Mehrzad, Mohsen, Mujtab, Morad, Morteza, Namdar, Namvar, Nima, Niyooosh, Nouri, Pacorus, Parsa, Parviz, Payam, Phraortes, Phraapates, Phraates, Phraataces, Puzhman, Rahim, Rakhshan, Ramin, Rashid, Sadra, Saeed, Salar, Saman, Sanabares, Sanjar, Sattar, Shaheen, Shahkam, Shahram, Shahrdad, Shahrokh, Shahruz, Shapour, Shaya, Shayan, Siamak, Siavash, Sohrab, Tooraj, Vahyazdata, Vardanes, Vaumisa, Vivana, Vologases, Vonones, Xerxes, Yashar, Zakaria, Zala, Zamyad, Zariadris.

Female Names

Afareen, Afsaneh, Afsar, Afshan, Afsoon, Aghigh, Ahoo, Akhtar, Akram, Alaleh, Anahita, Anoosheh, Ara, Arezoo, Arghavan, Armaghan, Ashraf, Asa, Asal, Assieh, Atefeh, Atifeh, Atoosha, Ava, Avizeh, Azadeh, Azin, Azita, Azar, Bahar, Baharak, Bahareh, Bahamin, Banafsheh, Banou, Behnaz, Behrokh, Bolour, Bousseh, Chalipa, Darya, Delaram, Delbar, Delkash, Deena, Donya, Dorri, Ehteram, Elaheh, Elham, Elnaz, Fakhri, Farah, Farahnaz, Farangis, Fariba, Farideh, Farkhondeh, Farrin, Farzaneh,

Faranak, Farnaz, Fatemeh, Fereshteh, Firouzeh, Fojan, Forough, Forouzan, Forouzandeh, Gelareh, Ghamzeh, Ghasedak, Ghazaleh, Ghodsi, Ghoncheh, Gisou, Gita, Golbahar, Goli, Golnar, Golnaz, Golnessa, Golpari, Golshan, Gordia, Habibeh, Haideh, Haleh, Hamideh, Hediye, Hengameh, Homa, Homeira, Houri, Iman, Jannat, Jamileh, Javaneh, Katayoun, Khandan, Khatereh, Khorsheed, Khojassteh, Kimiya, Kokab, Ladan, Laleh, Laila, Lida, Lila, Lily, Mahasti, Mahlagh, Maheen, Mahrokh, Mahnaz, Mahnoosh, Mahsheed, Masha, Mahta, Mahtab, Mahvash, Malakeh, Maliheh, Mandana, Manizheh, Marjan, Marjaneh, Maryam, Marzieh, Masoumeh, Mastaneh, Mastoureh, Mehrangiz, Mehrnoosh, Meshia, Mina, Minoo, Mitra, Moneereh, Musa, Nadereh, Naghmeh, Nahal, Naheed, Nastar, Nasreen, Nava, Nayyer, Nazafarin, Nazanin, Negeen, Niloufar, Nikou, Niyoosha, Noushin, Patee, Pateecheer, Pateerou, Pateesa, Pateevash, Parvaneh, Peymaneh, Raha, Ramesh, Ravan, Rima, Reyhanah, Roshanak, Roxanna, Saba, Sadaf, Sahar, Sahba, Salma, Salomeh, Saman, Samira, Sanaz, Sara, Sarvenaz, Sayeh, Seema, Seeta, Setareh, Shadan, Shadee, Shaheen, Shahla, Shahnaz, Sharbanou, Sharhnaz, Shahrzad, Shalizeh, Sharareh, Sheefteh, Shervin, Sheyda, Sheeva, Shima, Shireen, Sholeh, Soheila, Soraya, Soudabeh, Soussan, Tahmineh, Tala, Talayeh, Tara, Taraneh, Tayyebah, Touran, Vanda, Yasaman, Zahra, Zar, Zeeba, Zilla, Zohreh.

CHAPTER VIII

CAMPAIGNS

MONSTERS

The Monster List

Azidahaka

MIGHT 12 HITS 28 3 Attacks Not Intelligent Heavy Armour

This evil creature is a Persian dragon, long and sinuous, able to fly but without wings. The original Azidahaka was the leader of the Persian dragons, a savage and bloodthirsty killer with a twisted personality. Azidahaka was created by Ahriman from the mortal body of the Arabian prince Zohak. This serpent-demon ruled Iranshahr for a thousand years until being defeated and locked within Mount Demavand by Feridun. The Persian dragons that serve this serpent-demon are cunning and spiteful monsters, all known as *azidahaka*, bestial in nature and lacking in the superior intellect and mystical grandeur of their western counterparts. They are fierce forces of nature, violent and untamed. Few can speak, and those that can have little worth listening to. Most dragons live in the East, and Kazgar is home to hundreds of these magical beasts.

The dragon listed above has 3 heads, but some have only 2, a few just one head. The Lotan is a ferocious 7-headed dragon. Simply increase or decrease the 'number of attacks' for these dragons.

Baboon

MIGHT 2 HITS 6 1 Attack Intelligent No Armour

Many baboons in Persia are clever and social animals that are the equal of many humans. Some are even able to learn Aramaic and converse with humans. They dwell in dry flatlands, making camp on easily defended rock outcrops and hills. Some carry slings and spears or clubs with which they fight to defend their tribes.

Daeva

A major daeva is a demon or dark angel that manifests in its natural form as a cloudy mass ten or more feet tall, with glowing eyes and horns, shining fangs, flapping robes and muscled body. Fires are extinguished in the surrounded area and a feeling of dread overtakes all living things. Zoroaster emasculated the daevas, but they are regaining their former strength and pose a threat to humanity. The Saracens call the dark angels

djinni; the greater daevas they call *marid* while the lesser daevas they refer to as *ifreet*. To the Persians the lesser daevas are known as *druj*.

Daevas are master tricksters, able to shift from their normal shape (typically a grotesque humanoid) to that of a human or animal or even object. They often shape shift to gain the powers of the creature or item that they now resemble. Daevas are also able to transform themselves into black smoke in which form they can fly at incredible speeds and remain immune from physical harm. However, in this form they cannot cast use their magic powers or strike in combat. Daevas can (and do) engage in hand to hand combat from time to time. Obviously when in physical form a daeva can be attacked and even slain by a determined person.

Many daevas have a few magical powers that resemble the powers of wizards. A GM can take a power from the wizards' spell lists if he desires.

Major Daevas (Marid)

MIGHT 10 HITS 26 2 Attacks Intelligent No Armour Terror 4

There are some very powerful daevas, lords of their realm that are responsible for certain aspects of pain and misery on the earth. They are clever, wily and evil, terrifying in form and deadly in combat. When killed they simple vanish in a boiling black cloud, to return some days or weeks later. Just like the fravashis adopted by Adventurers, these major dark angels gain a supernatural power associated with their realm of evil. The major daevas and their realms include:

Aeshma - Devastation

Akomano - Evil

Apaosha - Poverty

Anala - Inferno

Asrushti - Disobedience

Astwihad – Death

Az – Greed

Bushasp - Sloth

Dahaka – The Snake

Duzhyairya - Blight

Eshm – Fury

Indra - War

Khesm - Wrath

Nasush – The Dead

Naonhaithya - Rebellion

Sauru – Bad Government

Spozgar - Thunderstorm

Tauru - Debauchery

Tishn - Thirst

Zairisha – Sickness

The GM can give a daeva huge bonuses in that area, a special power or maybe some other affect.

Lesser Daevas (Ifreet or Druj)

MIGHT 8 HITS 16 1 Attack Intelligent No Armour Terror 2

There are many lesser daevas that inhabit the material world, causing mayhem, mischief and magic. Often these minor daevas dwell in out of the way places (wells, ruined towers, ancient trees, caves and so on). These 'druj' are more accessible than the almost god-like major daevas. A persona can converse with a druj, and although bound into the service of Ahriman, they have a will of their own and steer their own path. Some are friendly, some are even trustworthy – but none will ever enter the House of Song.

Whisperers [*karapans*] are cultists who know the secret rituals needed to bind a druj into their service. A druj can make a very useful ally, having magical powers related to shape shifting and transportation. GMs will have to decide for themselves exactly what magical powers a druj possesses, since every one is different. Care should be taken to make druj both fallible and vulnerable. They are deceptive, capricious tricksters never to be trusted, not omnipotent magical beings.

Fravashi

Spirit Form: FATE 4 HITS 16

Material Form: MIGHT 5 HITS 14 1 Attack Intelligent Light Armour

A fravashi is one of the guardian angels, the spirits of truth and light that watch over human beings. They will form the massed army of Ahura Mazda when the great battle against Ahriman is joined. Each fravashi is invisible, but is ever present and ready to receive prayers. Even clans, families and even villages have their own fravashi. A fravashi may become visible in the face of great evil, stepping out in the guise of an armoured warrior to do spiritual battle or speak to those it is watching over. When Ahura Mazda makes a stand against Ahriman, he may summon fravashi to the material world to fight as glowing warriors of light, very real, physical beings nonetheless.

Gandarewa

MIGHT 11 HITS 36 2 Attacks Intelligent Heavy Armour Terror 2

A huge and formidable sea-dragon which terrorizes ships and sailors in the Indian Ocean. A critical attack indicates the gandarewa has dragged the entire ship or unfortunate victim under the water.

Ghul

MIGHT 3 HITS 8 1 Attack Intelligent No Armour

These desert goblins can hold their breath indefinitely, they hate the sun and feast on flesh, dead or alive. They live in the rock and sand wildernesses of the Persian kingdom.

Giant Scorpion

MIGHT 4 HITS 9 2 Attacks Not Intelligent Light Armour

A large and deadly scorpion with an effective armour class equal to Light Armour. When it scores a critical hit, assume that it has struck with its poison tail stinger.

Giant Snake

MIGHT 4 HITS 10 1 Attack Not Intelligent No Armour

Perhaps up to 6m long, this is a huge and dangerous snake! A successful strike by a giant snake will inflict normal damage and will also inject poison into its victim (once per day).

Goatmen [Serim]

MIGHT 3 HITS 8 1 Attack Intelligent No Armour Terror 2

A form of nature creature, the goatman has several variations. Most are human-bodied with a hairy, and primitive, if muscular, appearance. They have the hoofed legs of a goat, a tail and often horns sprouting from their forehead or the actual heads of goats. Goatmen live in dry wilderness areas, in hills and crags. Enkidu was one of these creatures. Some are wise, others are tribal and dangerous to outsiders. All goatmen are prone to emotional fits of rage or depression. They are known as satyrs or fauns to the Imperials, and as serim to the Aramaeans.

Griffin

MIGHT 7 HITS 16 2 Attacks Not Intelligent No Armour

A great lion with taloned feet, an eagle's head and huge eagle's wings. These beasts feast on wild donkeys, goats and horses, as well as human travellers. They inhabit desert wastes and high mountains, living in inaccessible caves and on remote precipices. It is rumoured that griffins have a magpie-like obsession with gold and hoard all that they find. A critical hit indicates the griffin has been able to drag its opponent into the sky with its powerful talons.

Harpy

MIGHT 4 HITS 8 2 Attacks Intelligent No Armour Terror 1

These horrible bird-hags with the twisted faces and necks of old crones but the wings, bodies and talons of vultures can fly, and also spread disease. A critical strike indicates the Adventurer has been lifted into the air by the harpy.

Lionman

MIGHT 5 HITS 81 Attack Intelligent No Armour

The lionman is a leonine-centaur, a lion's body topped with the chest, arms and head of a human (albeit very leonine in appearance). The lionmen live on the dry steppe and grassland, they are hunters and live in extended tribes. They rarely settle in one place for long. Use bows, spears, and javelins.

Manticore

MIGHT 7 HITS 14 2 Attacks Intelligent No Armour Terror 2

A ferocious lion-like creature with a large scorpion-tail and a human head. The manticore might display human-like intelligence, but it is also savage, violent and bestial. Some manticores are also winged. As a breed they are loners, and live by hunting goats and other wasteland game. A critical success during an attack indicates a poisoned tail strike.

Marshahin

MIGHT 3 HITS 12 1 Attack Not Intelligent No Armour

Dragon birds, small hawk-sized dragons with long tails, two clawed legs and bat-like wings are common in the Eastern satrapies. They dwell inside caves and crevices on cliffs, but they are very solitary. Marshahin feed on other birds, on rabbits and small mammals. They can inflict nasty wounds on a human. Some Black Wizards are able to tame these creatures to serve as couriers or spies.

Naga

MIGHT 4 HITS 8 1 Attack Intelligent No Armour Terror 2

The nagas are snakemen, servants of Ahriman that live in desert caves around Persia, but who originally came from over the Hindu Kush. A naga has a humanoid body with a snake's head, complete with fangs and hissing tongue. They are cold, ruthless and evil, preying on caravans and villages. Nagas are effective in combat with their fangs, but they also use slings, axes, javelins and spears. The bite of a snakeman is poisonous, but each has only enough poison for one use each day. It is said that there is a vast city of snakemen in Kazgar somewhere, and that there are thousands of human captives held there as slaves.

Narah

MIGHT 2 HITS 14 1 Attack Intelligent No Armour

The narah is a beneficent spirit, a small metre-high man or woman who can appear and disappear at will. Narah are loners who are on the side of Light, but they rarely fight, their chief method of helping Ahura Mazda is to carry out favours for deserving people. Sometimes they may get swept up on an adventure, but most are timid and want to help by miraculously mending or creating things. In this way they resemble 'elves' or 'dwarves' of Western European folklore. They may give a worthy hero a token by which method they can be called for aid, but a narah will rarely appear more than three times in a day.

Ogre

MIGHT 8 HITS 20 1 Attacks Intelligent No Armour Terror 1

This Persian giant is around 3m tall and eager for human flesh. He often lives in wildlands near to human settlements or trade routes, and will steal sheep and goats, and kidnap humans if he can. His building skills are quite considerable and an ogre may have built himself a hilltop tower, fortified a cave or constructed an underground *var*. Some ride elephants as humans would ride horses.

Pairika

MIGHT 6 HITS 12 1 Attack Intelligent No Armour Terror 1

The pairika (also known as *peri*) are huge snakes with women's heads, upper bodies and arms. They are very intelligent, sophisticated and cunning. They often inhabit swamps and marshes, and have well-hidden lairs deep underground. A pairika is fascinated with magic and lives for the pursuit of magical knowledge and objects. She can use powers as a Magician (in the ZENOBIA rules). Give a pairika between 3 and 5 powers. A pairika can transform into a beautiful woman at will, but is unable to use her magic if she does so. Imperials know the pairika as a lamia, the Aramaeans know her as lilith, the Egyptians call her weret-hekau. The Saracens know the pairika as *si'lat*. Whatever the name, these creatures take the form of attractive women, seductive and erotic. They are in fact shape shifting monsters, ready to deceive and destroy the men they encounter. Some pairika can be friendly, but most are evil and wicked. Shooting stars are pairikas traveling at night.

She will attack with her retractable fangs if she needs to defend herself, but she can also use weapons. On a successful strike, the victim must roll Might and exceed 14 or become paralysed for one hour.

Rakashan

MIGHT 4 HITS 12 1 Attacks Intelligent No Armour

Tigerfolk from the jungles of India. The wicked Rakashans have sharp claws and teeth and a sly cunning temperament to match their origins. They have a love of honour and ceremony, and wear armour and carry bronze weapons in time of war. Many rakashans live in the Eastern Satrapies of Aria, Arachosia, as well as Bactria and the feuding tribes of Sogdiana. They might appear as mountain-top warlords, mercenaries or bandits.

Roc

MIGHT 11 HITS 24 2 Attacks Not Intelligent No Armour

The mighty Persian roc is a vast bird of prey that features in a number of Sinbad's tales. The creature is almost indifferent to human beings and carries off elephants to its nest as if they were field mice. It is also called the *rukḥ*. A critical attack result indicates that the Roc has snatched its prey into the air. It will climb at 6m per round.

Scorpion Man

MIGHT 5 HITS 10 2 Attacks Intelligent Light Armour Terror 2

A large scorpion's body with a human torso, arms and head where the scorpion's head should be. The scorpion men are a bitter and twisted breed, vengeful and nasty and they live in wilderness areas away from humanity. They use slings, spears, swords and javelins. A critical success during an attack indicates a poisoned tail strike. The scorpion man has thick armoured skin giving it the equivalent of Light Armour.

Siltim

MIGHT 4 HITS 15 1 Attack Intelligent No Armour

The siltim are hairy and malign spirits of the forest, typically found in the heavily wooded mountains of the Zagros and the Elburz. They are tribal barbarians with ugly prehuman faces and apelike habits.

Simurgh

Simurgh is the Iranian King of Birds, perhaps related to the Roc in some way. It is god-like and powerful almost beyond measure; it rests in the Tree of Life [*Gayokerena*]. Simurgh is also called Samru or Akra (which some *gosan* say is the same as Zurvan Akarana – the name for Father Time).

Skeleton

MIGHT 3 HITS 5 1 Attack Not Intelligent No Armour Terror 1

The animated skeleton needs a weapon to fight with. It can only be damaged properly by crushing weapons, bladed weapons do a maximum of only 1 HIT to them.

Wind Child

MIGHT 3 HITS 71 Attack Intelligent No Armour

These humanoids live in the mountains of the world, apart from the cities of mankind. They are blessed by the gods, there were originally only seven, the Seven Sages. Wind Children are very wise and learned. Slow to do battle, but ruthless when pushed. They live in small groups. Wind Children use swords, javelins, axes, daggers and bows.

Wild Animals

Bear

MIGHT 4 HITS 15 2 Attacks Not Intelligent No Armour
Bears inhabit the forest-covered mountains and are loners, who may attack humans if roused to anger.

Boar

MIGHT 4 HITS 8 2 Attacks Not Intelligent No Armour
Wild boar are hunted by nobleman for sport, they are vicious wild pigs living in scrubland and forests, and they can kill a man with their long tusks.

Camel

MIGHT 3 HITS 8 1 Attack Not Intelligent No Armour
Camels are invaluable beasts of burden in these dry desert environments. More information on camels can be found in the travel and encounters sections. Dromedaries (single-humped) are most common, although Bactrian camels (shaggy twin-humped camels) are found in eastern Persia. They rarely attack unless severely provoked.

Donkey

MIGHT 3 HITS 6 1 Attack Not Intelligent No Armour
Donkeys can be found wild on the steppe-lands of the Eastern satrapies. They rarely attack unless severely provoked.

Goat

MIGHT 1 HITS 4 1 Attack Not Intelligent No Armour
The wild goat or antelope will only attack in the most unusual of circumstances.

Horse

The Persians are connoisseurs of horses and their breeds are renowned throughout the civilized world as the best. There are four main breeds of horse in Iranshahr:

Heavenly Horse of Ferghana

MIGHT 5 HITS 12 Intelligent +10 km per day in *any* terrain
The most sought after horse in the world, Heavenly Horses of Ferghana are bred high up in the Ferghana valley in a remote mountainous district of Sogdiana. They are descended directly from the chariot-horses of Mithras that pull the sun across the sky and are described as “supernatural, white, radiant, shining, wise, shadow less steeds” in Mithras *Yasht* 10. Indeed they cast no shadow, one cannot pass off a Hyrcanian as a Ferghanan. They are, in addition, almost as intelligent as a human, can talk to their rider and are singularly more beautiful and muscular and graceful than any other breed of horse in existence.

Hyrcanian

MIGHT 3 HITS 6 Not Intelligent
The bulk of cavalry and riding horses throughout Persia are Hyrcanians, bred on the well-watered plains of Atropatene. They are lively and spirited horses, both fast and

quick-thinking – perfectly suited for the twisting maneuvers of the Persian horse archers.

Nisean

MIGHT 4 HITS 8 Not Intelligent

The ideal Persian cavalry horse, bred in the rolling pasture-lands of Media. The Nisean breed is muscular and stoic, perfectly suited as a cataphract mount. Riders like the Nisean's determination, power and fearlessness.

Turanian

MIGHT 3 HITS 8 Not Intelligent +10 km per day on Steppes

A hardy breed of long-distance ponies, used to the baking summers and freezing winters out on the Turanian steppes. Short and stocky, they are identified by their naturally short manes, and tails that nearly touch the ground.

Lion

MIGHT 5 HITS 12 2 Attacks Not Intelligent No Armour

A powerful creature living in the dry steppe-land between the settled land and the desert in small prides. The males are lazy scavengers chasing away other predators from their kills. The females are wily hunters, often teaming up to carry out carefully planned ambushes. Lions were often hunted by kings and their courtiers for pleasure, but today many are captured alive for use as entertainment in the arena.

Scorpion

MIGHT 4 HITS 1 1 Attack Not Intelligent No Armour

A burrower that likes cool dark places (boots, knapsacks, bedrolls, tents...). Check for concealment, rolling the scorpion's MIGHT against the potential victim's FATE. If unnoticed, roll once more to see if the sting strikes home!

Snake

MIGHT 5 HITS 1 1 Attack Not Intelligent No Armour

May be a poisonous puff adder, saw-scaled viper or cobra. Snakes, too, like cool hidey-holes such as tents, caves, bushes, rocks and boots. Check for concealment, rolling the snake's MIGHT against the potential victim's FATE. If unnoticed, roll once more to see if the snake bites home!

Wolf

MIGHT 3 HITS 6 1 Attack Not Intelligent No Armour

Wolves operate in small packs, rarely attacking humans unless desperate.

TREASURES

Anahita's Magical Hoe - A peasant's hoe, that closely resembles an axe but with an iron blade set at right angles. This hoe, when given the command word, can be used to dig for water in the most driest, most barren ground. Only a few cuts into the ground will produce water, which will usually emerge as a trickling stream that flows for about an hour (GM's discretion based on situation and dramatic needs). Like the scrying mirror, the hoe can be called on 3 times before it will not produce water for three days. After this period it can again be asked for help. A GM might want to base a story on the item's misuse, or on some foolish thief using the hoe without knowing the word to stop the water - causing devastating floods!

Black Mirror - The black mirror is made of iron, fashioned in the likeness of writhing snakes and skulls. Its glass is black, reflecting only the face of the observer. Out of the inky dark will emerge a ghostly apparition, appearing just over the watcher's shoulder. It is the face of a victim trapped inside the cursed mirror. The victim can tell the watcher one fact each day (other than his name and the wretched state of his situation), which can conceivably relate to anything earthbound (but not other people's thoughts or intentions, just their actions). It cannot foretell the future or give opinions. Smashing the mirror releases the trapped soul, but who-ever smashes it is dragged inside the mirror and the glass reforms to trap them (the trapped soul might not tell the character this in the hopes he will be freed).

Potion of Diminution - The drinker suddenly shrinks to only 5 cm in height, and can slip through cracks or crawl under locked doors. After 1-6 hours the potion wears off. Some potions of diminution do not wear off, but must be drunk again by the shrunken character to restore the drinker to full size.

Potion of Glowing Cloud - The drinker turns into a cloud of glowing gas and anything he was wearing or carrying turns to gas with him. The drinker navigate at walking speed through keyholes or small holes. He cannot be harmed by non-magical weapons while in gas form (which lasts for 2-12 combat rounds).

Potion of Transmutation [*degrdisandan*]- The drinker turns into an animal of his choice, of the correct size and shape, and without the power of speech. All of the drinker's clothes magically disappear to reappear once the potion has worn off (an hour later). Some potions of transmutation do not wear off, but must be drunk again by the animal (perhaps a phial is worn around the anima's neck) to restore the drinker to human form.

Feridun's Dragonspear [*Marneyze*]- An impressive spear of black wood carved in the likeness of a twisted snake. The spearhead is cast in black iron in the fanciful shape of a dragon's head. It was the spear used by the hero Feridun to kill Azidahaka, the leader of the Persian dragons who ruled Iranshahr for a thousand years until being defeated and

locked within Mount Demavand by Feridun. The spear is instantly fatal to any dragon who suffers even 1 HIT of damage from it.

Flying Carpet - This unremarkable carpet, when given the command word and destination will rise up and fly to that destination. Magical command words for left, right, higher, lower and land are also known by the owner. The flying carpet travels at 30km/hr and can carry 3 people with their equipment.

Boots of Levitation [*parvaz*] - These boots allow the wearer to rise up into the air and back down again. No horizontal movement is permitted.

Boots of Sand Striding - The wearer can traverse sandy, rocky and stony deserts at the normal rate +5 km per day, and never needs to rest while walking in these environments.

Farrah Magas - 'Flying Glory' is a composite bow made from the sinew of dragons and used by King Antiochus III in his conquests of the East. The bow is stunning, with horn knocks, a cherry-red suede grip and wood and sinew limbs carefully and beautifully bound in Kazgari dragon-skin. Arrows fired from Farrah Magas fly with ease, propelled by supernatural force. The GM should double the range of a normal bow for Farrah Magas.

Ring of the Djinni - A minor daeva (called a djinn or a druj) is bound into the ring and will serve the wearer of the ring (willingly or unwillingly). He will answer 3 times before retreating into the ring for 3 weeks, after which time he will again answer the wearer's call. See the Daeva entry in MONSTERS.

Ring of Atar - The wearer of this ring is immune to fire and heat (including the burning heat of the desert, in fact he will consume a normal amount of water while out in the desert sands).

Gong of Statues [*Avaz Tandis*]- A small copper gong suspended from a rope handle with an attached beater (attached by rope to keep it from getting lost!). When held up high and beaten loudly once, everyone within earshot of the gong is paralysed until the gong is beaten a second time (or nightfall, whichever comes first). If the gong is beaten to release the victims, they will not remember anything about the incident. If nightfall comes and the magic wears off 'naturally', all will know what has just occurred. The gong can only be used once per day, further beats of the gong are soundless.

Rope of Command - This 10m long rope can obey command, standing up straight without support, tying itself up and even releasing itself. Any command takes time (1d combat rounds) to be obeyed, however, because the rope moves very slowly.

Scrying Mirror [*Raz-Ayine*] - An ornately designed hand mirror that allows the user to summon up the image of a person or a place he knows well. The image will be in real-time, but last only 1d combat rounds. The scrying mirror will work only 3 times before 'misting over' for 3 days, after which it will again clear and be available for use.

Djinni Bottle - A glass bottle that is home to a trapped daeva (called a djinn or a druj). Once unstoppered the djinni will probably serve whomever released him (willingly or unwillingly). See the Djinni entry in MONSTERS. It is up to the GM to determine the nature of the djinni. Is he bound to answer one wish a day, or three in a row (like the djinni of the ring). Is he not bound to serve the character at all? Or maybe he grants one wish in gratitude for his release. Or the Adventurers might be able to bargain with him.

Lamp of Copper - When lit in dim conditions, the Lamp of Copper produces an eerie green light that renders all those bathed by it invisible to other creatures and humans. The light only extends out to 2m, so a group of Adventurers must stick close together. The lamp holder leads the way. If dropped the flame goes out and the Adventurers are visible once more. Alternatively the owner could light the lamp and leave it near a doorway or treasured item to render it invisible. The lamp can only be used once per day and will burn for up to 3 hours.

Lamp of Brass - This lamp holds a daeva (called a djinn or a druj). When rubbed, the djinni appears to serve the holder of the lamp (willingly or unwillingly). This magical being will answer 3 times before retreating into the lamp for 3 weeks, after which time he will again answer the wearer's call. See the Djinni entry in MONSTERS.

Lamp of Gold - When lit, this lamp gives off the sweet smell of incense and this aroma will cure anybody within 5m of their ills (poisons, diseases, other illnesses). It will also restore 5 HITS per person. The lamp can only be lit once per day and burns for an hour. Characters wanting the benefits of the lamp must stay within 5m for the duration of the flame.

Quiver of Victory - A beautifully made Persian quiver, of stained leather, inlaid with jewels and woven with silken threads. It contains one exquisite arrow and once shot, this arrow will be replaced with one identical arrow. Filling the quiver with other arrows will negate the power of the quiver.

Kazgari Folding Tent - Used by an ancient Kazgari prince, this wonderful royal tent, complete with cushions, carpets, tapestries folds up to the size of a pin cushion with the appropriate word of command and a flash of green smoke. The tent can hold ten people, or five very comfortably. It will not be blown down by even the strongest winds.

The Three Arrows of Zoroaster - Wrapped in purple silk, these elaborately shaped and cast silver arrows were blessed by Zoroaster and are death to any agent or monster of Darkness. If such a creature (druj, demon, whisperer and anyone who devotes themselves to the service of Ahriman) is struck by the arrow for any damage, the arrow catches fire and this magical fire of Truth consumes the creature in an unearthly fireball.

Arrow of Mithras - This arrow is inscribed with all the signs of the zodiac and when fired into the air will explode like a firework, the glittering lights remaining suspended in the sky to light up the ground below for 100 metres in all directions. If it is fired at an object or creature the same occurs, but the area around the target glows with glittering lights instead. The lights should last for around 10 minutes.

APPENDIX A:

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APPENDIX B:

GLOSSARY

akinaka – short sword
amrtaka – the ‘Immortals’; a Persian secret society
amshaspends – the arch-angels, divine forces of Ahuramazda
anarzbad – priests and legal councilors for defendants
anjoman – guild or brotherhood
asapatish – Master of Horse; head of the *asawira*
asawira – elite cataphracts; the horse guards of satraps and the shah
asha – the force of Truth
askadar – spies
astandes –troopers in the road watch
atesh-gah – fire temple
athrawan – the educated urban elite
azata – the Persian nobility
bandaka – Persian commoners
baru – Chaldean sorcerer
bashgah – metal-bound war-club
bashlyk – pointed Scythian cap
basuband – segmented limb armour worn by cataphracts
biruni – the term for foreigners within Persia
cadorneshim – members of nomad tribes
caravanserai – rest-house
chak - documents
daevas – demons
dakhma – tower for exposing the dead

dahae – nomad mercenary cavalry
dashne - dagger
didapatish – royal warden and garrison commander
dihqan – lower nobility, the land-lords of the *kura*
dipir-i-mahist – chief scribe
dipir-i- vuzurg – chief administrator
dippana – the administration of the shah and the satraps
druj – the force of Falsehood; also, the lesser demons
firdaus – paradise
framadar – ministers in charge of departments within the *dippana*
fravashis – guardian angels
gangabai – Treasury Archers; elite treasure guards
gerrhon – leather covered wicker shield
gorytos – combined bowcase and quiver
gosan - storyteller
gyanarspar – ‘Sacrificers’; assassins of the shah
haoma – sacred plant providing juice for rituals
harmakar - accountant
kaftan – long-sleeved felt coat
kamhan – composite bow
karapans – evil cultists; summoners of the *daevas*
kardakes – mercenaries, tribesmen recruited to fight for Persia
kavis – black priests, turn-coat mobeds in the service of Ahriman
kura – local district within a satrapy
magoi – Fire Wizards; a powerful college of Persian magians
mariaka - slaves
mathra – sacred speech; holy magic
mobed – Zoroastrian priest
neyze - spear
pavarnak – royal couriers
qanat – rock-cut underground irrigation channel
sagaris – one-handed war-pick
sarapis – knee length coat
sarawil – baggy Persian trousers
sarkargar - foreman
shakir – eunuch
shahanshai – Royal Guardsmen; the bodyguards and elite troops of the shah
shamshir – long sword
tabar - axe
ushabari – desert scouts; Persia’s own desert patrol
vastrabara – grand vizier
var – magical underground cavern
vareгна – the falcon standard of the shah
vuzurg framadar – the King’s Bodyguard
warah - oath
xanjar – small hideaway dagger
xud – helmet
xyston – cavalry lance

yatagov – priests who advise on legal matters

yatus – black wizards, devoted the darkness and *druj*

yazatas – cosmic angels; the old gods and great spirits

zarathustrotuma - head of the Zoroastrian religion