# XOCHIANS ECCENSION Che Vault of Vigthrabotep

A fantastic adventure for the Barbarians of Lemuria Mythic Edition sword and sorcery roleplaying game 90 varate at 200 at 200



# Xothian Legends: The Vault of Vigthrabotep a supplement for Barbarians of Lemuria: Mythic Edition

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# Che Vault of Vigthrahotep In the jungled bills of Shoma...

"Kull stood alone, his mind a-whirl. Neophytes of the mighty serpent, how many lurked among his cities? How might he tell the false from the true? Aye, how many of his trusted councilors, his generals, were men? He could be certain — of whom?" — Robert E. Howard: The Shadow Kingdom

Setting: Wilderness (Desert and Jungle), City, and Dungeon.

Levels: This adventure is suitable for a party of 4 to 6 characters, each with a total of 10 advancement points.

# Introduction

In the centuries after the fall and devastation of Elder Kuth, the former slave peoples of the giant-kings migrated north and east to settle in the lands of Susrah. An offshoot of these proto-Sushrahnites, called the Ishrah, chose instead to wander south into the hills of what is now the black kingdom of Shoma.

In the jungled hills of Shoma, the Ishrah discovered rich deposits of gold and precious stones. They enslaved the native tribes and set their new slaves to toil day and night in the mines. The small kingdom of the Ishrah prospered and a series of purple stone fortresses was built to control the mines.

Driven by greed, the Ishrah forced their slaves to dig ever deeper into the rich ore, until one day the toiling workers unearthed a series of stone chambers beneath the mine tunnels. The priests of the Ishrah studied the weird pictograms on the walls and deemed it unwise to disturb these prehuman vaults. The mine was sealed off and declared taboo by the priests, and soon the surrounding area was abandoned by the Ishrahnites.

Centuries later, the area was re-settled by a native tribe, the Wamuba, who built a village



in the shadow of the ruined stone citadel of the Ishrahnites. When the chieftain of the Wamuba died without leaving a male heir, the chieftain's oldest wife, Nugga-Tikanda, seized power and declared herself "Queen" of the tribe. Those who resisted Nugga-Tikanda's claim to the throne were soon slain or exiled, for the new queen was a witch who used curses and necromancy against her enemies. Having mastered an abominable rite of longevity, Nugga-Tikanda started a reign of terror which has lasted for two centuries.

### Adventure Synopsis

The player characters are hired by a group of Susrahnite traders who have found clues to the whereabouts of a lost gold mine. These traders are in fact inphidians, serpent-men, in disguise, survivors of a lost age who seek to free a serpent-king, the ancient Yigthrahotep, who lies slumbering in the prehuman vaults beneath the mine.

The PCs travel along with the "Susrahnites" through the desert and into the kingdom of Shoma. The final piece of the key to open the

vault, which was re-sealed by the priests of the Ishrah, can be found in the temple of Katanga, the capital city of Shoma.

Reaching the lost mine, the PCs must deal with the Wamuba tribesmen and their mad witch-queen, then explore the tunnels and chambers beneath the mine. When the vault is found, the serpentmen drop their disguises and attempt to sacrifice the player characters to the awakened serpent-king Yigthrahotep.

### Starting the Adventure

Consider any of the following hooks to get the adventure started.

- A scholar among the PCs finds and studies a clay tablet that contains tantalizing hints of a lost gold mine in the jungles south of Shoma. The player characters set out on an expedition on their own. As they search for the keys to the lost mine, they are approached by a group of foreign merchants.
- The player characters are hired as mercenaries or caravan guards by foreign merchants who are travelling south.
  When the caravan reaches Shoma, it becomes apparent to the PCs that the merchants are looking for a lost gold mine somewhere in the jungle. The player characters are promised a share of the loot if they help find the lost mine.

# Legend of the Purple Spires

The Ishrahnites wisely re-sealed the ancient vault they unearthed in their mines (see the Introduction), by placing powerful warding spells on the doors to prevent anyone from going into (or breaking out of!) the vault. But according to the laws of sorcery, there is no magic that cannot be undone, and for all seals there must exist a key.

The priests of the Ishrah therefore covered the vault doors with hundreds of arcane sigils and cuneiform script. Three of the symbols, placed randomly among the other sigils, are the keys to opening the vault. To preserve the keys (as they must be, otherwise the seal is voided), the priests carved each symbol on separate objects, which were then handed on to different guardians and carried away. Over the centuries, the keys changed hands multiple times, and eventually their significance was lost.

The three objects each containing a part of the key to the vault are a clay tablet, a golden figurine, and a marble flagstone. The clay tablet is assumed to somehow fall into the possession of the player characters (see below), while the golden figurine has been found by a group of serpent-men. The marble flagstone is currently set in the floor of the inner shrine of Nataka in the city of Katanga.

### Che Clay Cablet of Zhaol

The clay tablet written by the priests of the Ishrah eventually found its way to the city of Zhaol the Accursed (so called by its neighbouring peoples for its wickedness) where the stone rested for centuries. Only recently, the tablet came to the city of Zul-



Bazzir through a merchant, or perhaps a thief or sorcerer. It is assumed that the player characters start this adventure with the tablet already in their possession, but a separate introductory adventure could easily be created wherein the PCs find or steal the tablet.

The tablet, little more than a square foot in size, has now broken up into three pieces, of which the largest is missing (and is, in fact, forever destroyed).

Men of bronze, masters of fire Kings of black jungles beneath a purple spire Mad blind hands reach into the night To plumb abysses dead to human sight The Sons of Ishrah adorned with glittering stones The earth yields riches but claims black bones Tunnels in the earth, and vaults, too Secrets of a lost age remain taboo The one-eyed keeper of secrets knows the way To the ivory goddess who holds the key all must pray

The first remaining piece is covered with cuneiform script. It requires a successful Demanding (-4) mind + appropriate career Task Roll to read what turns out to be a mythpoem:

Further research on the "Sons of Ishrah", for example with a Tough (–2) mind + appropriate career Task Roll, makes it apparent that the myth-poem refers to the area which is now the black kingdom of Shoma. A successful Tough (–2) mind + appropriate career Task Roll also reveals that the "ivory goddess" is Nataka, a female deity whose temple is in Katanga. If the PCs lack the appropriate knowledge skills, they might seek out a sage to help them study the clay tablet.

The other remaining fragment contains a single cuneiform symbol, whose large size makes it of special significance. This is, of course, one of the keys to the vault of Yigthrahotep, although the player characters have no way of knowing this yet.

### Chree Men of Susrah

Whether the player characters begin to prepare for an expedition to the south or not, they are eventually approached by a group of three men, claiming to be merchants of Susrah. Through rumors and a network of spies and informants, they have learned that the PCs have the clay tablet.

The chief merchant, who calls himself Ursib, carries a small, 1-foot tall golden figurine of Aklathu, a minor god in the pantheon of Susrah. The statuette is in the shape of a pot-bellied, bearded dwarf with deformed, perhaps even retarded, facial features and a wicked grin. Also of note, the left eye-socket of the figurine is empty, while the right socket is set with a small gem. Carved under the feet of the figurine is a cuneiform symbol. Anyone with Mind 1 or more realises that this symbol is somehow related to the symbol on the clay tablet (see above).

Ursib does not initially show the figurine to the player characters. Rather, he states flatly that he and his fellow merchants are looking for a lost gold mine somewhere to the south of the black kingdom of Shoma, which is supposedly sealed by sorcery that requires knowledge of three sacred symbols to open. Since both the merchants and the PCs have a

# About failure

Don't let a roll of the dice determine whether a character succeeds or fails in a task, but allow it to determine the level of success or failure. If a character is attempting to decipher the script but fails the Task Roll, you could decide that he translates enough to identify the Sons of Ishrah, which then gives the players another avenue of investigation. So the game doesn't stumble to a complete halt, because the players still have some leads and openings to continue the adventure.

Another option is to allow a player to convert a failure to a full success. He must spend a Hero Point to do this, and also suffers a complication. This complication is up to the GM, but might include letting other less honest characters know of the tablet and its secrets.

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part of the puzzle, Ursib suggests that they cooperate to find the mine, and split evenly any treasure found. The player characters have (or at least are assumed to have) expert fighting skills, while the merchants have money to pay for mounts, supplies and equipment. Play out these negotiations as you see fit.

If he gets a chance to study the clay tablet, Ursib concludes that the third and final part of the key is kept in the temple of Katanga. If the player characters are on their own, or refuse to let the merchants study the tablet, this information could be given to the PCs through a sage (unless they figure it out from the poem themselves, of course).

#### Merchants of Susrah (villains) (Male inphidian "Walkers-Among-Men")

Strength Agility	1 3	Initiative Melee	2 1
Mind	0	Ranged	1
Appeal	0	Defence	0
Rogue	2	Merchant	1
Lifeblood	11		

Kukri d6L

Dagger d6L

Boons:

- Born Acrobat
- Distracted Attack when you can use the confusion of battle to your advantage roll an extra dice in combat to make a melee attack

Languages: Yalothan, Susrahnite.

Possessions: Merchants' clothing, kukri, 3 daggers, purse of gold, golden figurine of Akhlatu (carried by Ursib).

Description: Dressed as regular caravanmasters, these inphidians are similar to normal men in all respects. It is only when they shed their magical disguises that their true nature is revealed: Blue-green scaly skin, a snake-like head, and arms which end in viperheads instead of hands.

Tactics: The walkers-among-men stay disguised as humans as long as possible, dropping their disguises only when they are sure that they are going to kill their surprised victims. They open combat using their

### Secret History: The Children of Zanthiss

Aeons ago, a race of highly intelligent ophidians known as the "serpent-kings" ruled the primeval jungles of the continent. It is said that the great demonic serpent-god Zanthiss created this race from ordinary reptiles, and taught them the secret of sorcery. The serpent-kings used ape-men and primitive humans as slaves, and crossbreeding is said to have produced the inphidians, who had the bodies of men and the heads and hands of serpents, and some among them had the sorcerous ability to disguise as true men.

A sudden slave uprising, perhaps assisted by disloyal serpent-men, caused the decline and fall of the serpent-kings. They were driven back into the dwindling jungles of Yalotha, and Zanthiss himself is said to have been banished to a frozen star when his cyclopean black fane was sacked and destroyed at the height of the uprising.

Only in isolated pockets did there remain serpentmen, servitors of Zanthiss who were able to blend into human society. The once-great and immortal serpent-kings went into hibernation to survive, sleeping through the ages in sealed vaults beneath the earth.

blinding spray, then use Born Acrobat to get behind and flank opponents, so that they can use Distracted Attack.

Blinding Spray: Once every 1d3 rounds, a common inphidian can spew forth a line of milky-white liquid that causes blindness for 1d6H rounds to any creature struck. A PC making a Hard (-1) agility + appropriate career Task Roll manages to dodge the spray. The spray has a range of 20 feet.

Poison: A common inphidian delivers a debilitating poison with a successful bite from its snake-hands, which affects any creature of man-size (medium) or smaller. Heroes get to make a Tough (-2) strength Task Roll to avoid paralysis. Once paralysed, the victim will die within an hour. Affected Heroes get to make another Tough (-2) strength Task Roll to avoid death.

### Unmasking the Serpents

Although the player characters are likely to distrust the "merchants", the true nature of the serpent-men is revealed only near the end of the adventure. That said, it is possible for the PCs to discover the truth earlier. For example, if a "merchant" is killed, he reverts back to his true, serpent-headed self. The GM may also allow especially suspicious player characters to roll a Formidable (–6) mind + appropriate career Task Roll to try to see through the (magical) disguises of the serpentmen.

If the "merchants" are unmasked, there will probably be a violent confrontation with the PCs. Even if the player characters defeat the serpent-men, the PCs are unlikely to discover the true purpose of the false merchants. The serpent-men would rather fight to the death than surrender and reveal that they are seeking to free the ancient serpentking Yigthrahotep (in which case the PCs might decide to stay away from the mines altogether).

Thus, barring any additional research by the player characters, it is likely that the PCs continue on their quest to find the "lost gold mine" even if the true nature of the "merchants" is revealed.

# Across the Desert

The expedition must travel the long way from Zul-Bazzir to Katanga. The first leg of the journey is through the trackless sand dunes of the al-Khazi Desert, then through the desert wasteland known as the Desolation of Elder Kuth, and finally into the Parched Lands, a bleak savannah teeming with wild beasts.

Refer to the description of the al-Khazi desert in "The Spider-God's Bride" for details of terrain and climate, the dangers of hunger and thirst, and random encounters on the first leg of the journey.

It is assumed that the player characters and their allies, including the merchants of Susrah and any Khazistani soldiers or mercenaries following them, travel on horses or camels. Additional pack camels are probably required to carry extra water, supplies and equipment through the desert. Under normal circumstances, it takes around 35 days for a party on horseback or camel to reach Katanga (700 miles from Zul-Bazzir, through trackless desert and plains).

As the expedition travels across the desert, the GM should roll for random encounters or insert appropriate encounters as he sees fit. There are a few special events which should happen in the listed sequence, as described below.

### Wrath of the Khamsin

Somewhere past halfway to Katanga, an oppressive wind suddenly blows up. A character who makes a Hard (-1) mind + appropriate career Task Roll realizes that this is the dreaded sandstorm known among the local nomads as the khamsin.

Fortunately, the howling winds also reveal a range of rocky outcroppings, about half a mile away, where the PCs can seek shelter. Those mounted on horses and camels can roll with a bonus dice. Heavily loaded steeds will roll normally. To reach shelter in time, it might be necessary (depending on the current health of the PCs and the damage inflicted by the sandstorm) to spur the mounts to greater speed with Hard (-1) agility + appropriate career Task Rolls.

Development: Regardless of whether the player characters manage to reach shelter, a number of the Khazistani soldiers who accompany the PCs, as well as several pack camels or horses carrying water and equipment, are killed by the raging sandstorm (it is assumed that the NPCs were blinded by the storm and lost sight of the hills, or that they had too few hit points to reach shelter in time).

As the storm recedes, the player characters find that the only other survivors are the three merchants of Susrah and 1d3 of the Khazistani soldiers. There is little water left and the party eventually faces the danger of death by thirst. Exactly how much water is left after the sandstorm is left up to the GM to determine. Nevertheless, it is too late to turn back, and the merchants of Susrah insist that the party should continue south.

### Slavers from the East

The expedition (or rather, what remains of it after the sandstorm) eventually reaches the Parched Lands, which is the savannah between the Desolation of Elder Kuth and the kingdom of Shoma. The terrain changes from a sandy wasteland to dry plains dotted with rock outcroppings, areas of short grass, and the occasional tree.

As the PCs and their companions cross this landscape, they spot a column of people moving in the distance, going from west to east, directly crossing the path of the PCs. Assuming the player characters move closer, it becomes apparent that this is a band of mounted slavers herding a number of slaves towards the east.

These slavers are in the employ of the infamous Slave Sultans of al-Qazir, a notorious fortress-city of Zadj. There are 12 Zadjite slavers on riding horses led by a slavelord riding a Zadjite warhorse. They have captured 32 slaves, among which are 12 men and 20 women, mostly of Shoma origin but also some Azimbans (1d3 men and 1d6 women).

**Development:** Assuming the party suffered the fury of the sandstorm and that several of their mounts and supplies were destroyed during that event, the PCs might be weakened by Exhaustion (heat, hunger and thirst) when they encounter the slavers.

If the PCs hold back, the slavers ignore them and continue on towards the east. On the other hand, defeating the slavers can provide the player characters with fresh mounts, water, supplies, weapons, and the gratitude of any liberated slaves. But keep in mind that if the PCs do liberate the slaves, some of which are severely dehydrated already, they must take care of them and make sure they can return safely home (to Katanga or Zimballah, depending on their origin).

### Slaves (rabble)

8

Slave 1 Lifeblood 1 Damage 1 (1d3 if armed)

#### Makhtisar, Zadjite Slavelord (villain)

Strength	2	Initiati	ve 0
Agility	2	Melee	2
Mind	1	Rangeo	
Appeal	1	Defenc	e 1
Slaver 3	Nob	le 1	Soldier 1
Lifeblood	12		

Chain shirt d6-2 (2)

#### Sword d6

Whip d6L (instead of causing damage can attempt to disarm or trip (knockdown)) Net. A successfully thrown net entangles the target. The target can take no actions apart from attempting to break free by using a Demanding (-4) strength Task Roll or if a dagger is available a Tough (-2) strength Task Roll.

#### Languages: Zadjite, Azimban.

Possessions: War horse (unarmoured), chain shirt, sword, net, whip, purse of gold.

Description: Clad in expensive clothing beneath his armor, this is a broad-faced, tall man with a hoarse voice. He is ruthless and seeks only to maximize profit.

Tactics: Makhtisar attempts to disarm or trip opponents with his whip, or entangling them using his net. Only if this fails does he fall back on his sword-skills.

### Zadjite Slavers (tough)

Strength	1	Melee	1
Agility	1		
Slaver	1		
Lifeblood	7		
Leather armor Scimitar d6 Net	d6-3 (1	1)	

#### Languages: Zadjite.

Possessions: Riding horse, leather armor, scimitar, net, purse of coins.

Description: Dressed in simple grey kaftans, with leather armor on top, and red turbans wound around their heads.

Tactics: These hardened men work in teams; some use their scimitars against armed and armored opponents, while others throw their nets to entangle foes. 90 vara 30 vara 30 vara 20 var

# **Che Nameless Oasis**

Approximately 100 miles north of Katanga is a small oasis that is the first (or the last) stopping-point for many caravans bound out of (or into) the city of Katanga. There is a small pool of fresh water here, ringed by palm trees.

Roll a first and a second d6 and consult the following encounter table to determine what happens when the PCs approach the oasis:

### first roll 1-3, second roll below:

Ambush: A group of 1d3+3 per player bandits or slavers are hiding in the

undergrowth near the oasis pool, waiting to rob or enslave those who approach.

Curse: A curse of madness affects those who sleep in the oasis or drink of its waters. If a Hard (-1) mind Task Roll is failed the character will either twy to

failed, the character will either try to drown himself in the pool, or suddenly attack his friends in a mad rage (50% chance of either). The curse lasts for 1d3 hours.

Drought: The waters of the oasis have

**3** dried up. The oasis is strewn with the bleached bones of animals and men.

Feud: Members of two rival nomad clans have entrenched themselves on different sides of the oasis. There are 6d6 nomads in each group, and each

4 tries to recruit the PCs to their cause. Those who ignore the feuding groups risk getting caught in the crossfire between them.

Fouled or Poisoned Water: The water is either naturally fouled (perhaps by a sunken animal corpse) or deliberately

**5** poisoned (50% chance of either). Characters who drink the water must make a Hard (-1) strength Task Roll or gain a poisoned penalty dice.

Ghost: The oasis is haunted by a single

**6** ghost. Encounters with the ghost happen only at night.

### first roll 4-6, second roll below:

Merchant Caravan: A caravan with 3d6 camels, carrying furs, raw metal, lumber, wine and pottery is camped at the oasis, along with 1 guard per camel. There is a 25% chance that the caravan has

1 Is a 25% chance that the caravan has suffered a bandit attack in the last 24 hours, and that the assistant caravanmaster was abducted, in which case the caravan-master offers a reward for his or her return.

Narcotic Flowers: A blue lotus-flower occasionally blooms in the oasis, causing nearby creatures to make a Tough (-2) strength Task Roll or fall

 asleep for 2d6 hours with strange and sensuous dreams. Affected creatures may awake at the mercy of bandits, cultists or wild animals.

Sunken or Buried Treasure: With a successful Tough (-2) mind + appropriate career Task Roll, the PCs stumble upon a chest of treasure, either

**3** at the bottom of the pool, or buried beneath the sand. There is a 50% chance that the treasure is associated with a curse, ghost, bandits, or a tentacled horror (see other descriptions).

Tentacled Horror: A loathsome creature lurks in the oasis, preving upon visitors.

The horror is either buried in the sand, or in the pool itself.

Treachery: There is a camp at the oasis which appears inhabited by 2d6 friendly nomads. In reality, these are cultists or slavers who offer the PCs food and hospitality, while waiting for an opportune moment to enslave the

5 characters (and sacrifice them to their dark gods, in the case of the cultists). The PCs might be served drinks laced with sleeping-poison, backstabbed after their weapons have been stolen or removed, or attacked while sleeping.

Wild Animal: A pride of 1d6+4 lions or 2d6+6 hyenas come to the oasis seeking food.

# The Gold of Katanga

Katanga is the only city of importance in the kingdom of Shoma; the lesser "cities" are merely crude villages scattered across the grassy plains. South and east of Katanga are the Shining Hills, jungle-covered highlands that abound with gold.

Approaching the city, great herds of cattle can be seen; these belong to the king himself and many of the animals wear ornaments of beaten gold. Each herd consists of 1d3 x 100 animals; about 10% of these wear adornments of gold. The herds are protected by Shoma spearmen (one spearman for every five cattle).

# Royal Cattle-Herders, Spearmen of Katanga (tough)

Strength Agility Barbarian	1 1 1	Melee Ranged Beastmaster	1 1 1
Lifeblood	7	beastinaster	1
Spear d6 Large Shield			
T	معنداه		

Languages: Zadjite.

Possessions Loincloth, heavy wooden shield, spear, bow, golden armband.

Description: The Shoma spearmen wear headdresses of ostrich plumes and carry large wooden shields covered with rhinoceros-hide

Tactics: These warriors use their bows from a distance, then attack with their spears. They can quickly close with their enemies due to their great speed.

### Rabble

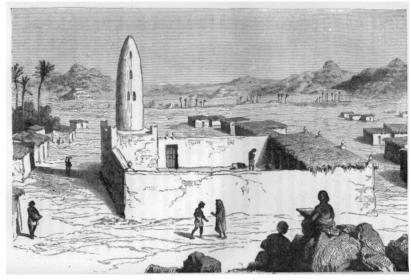
Beastmaster 1 Lifeblood 1 Armed d3

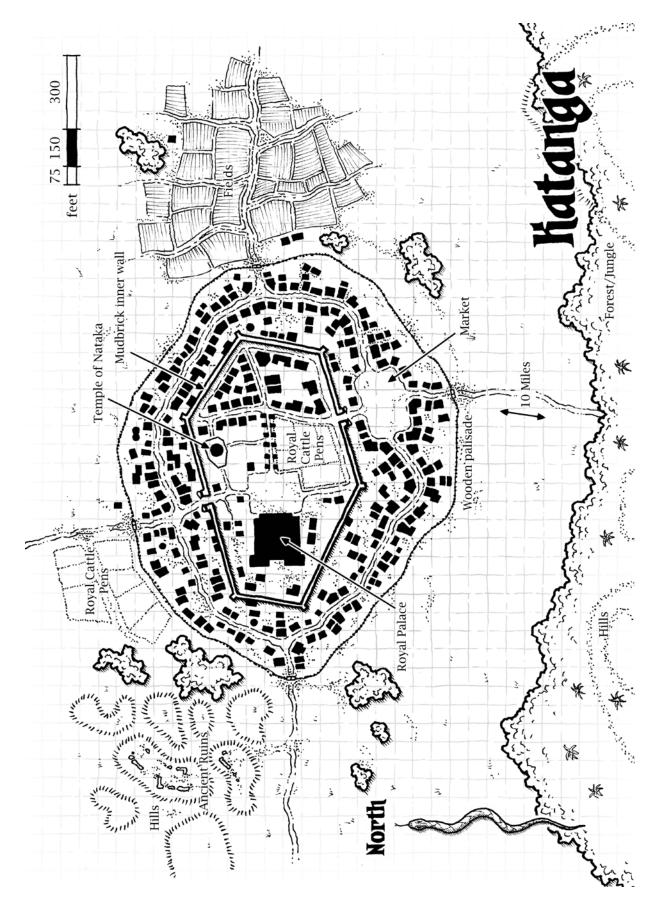
## Che City of Katanga

Katanga is surrounded by a wooden palisade, inside which over 8,000 people huddle together in wretched huts. The spacious inner city (which includes the royal palace and cattle pens, the temple of Nataka, and the goldsmiths' workshops) is ringed by a great mud-brick wall. The inner city gates are adorned with massive ivory tusks taken from the greatest specimens of elephants; there are 12 spearmen at each gate who make sure that only nobles, royal guards, priests, merchants and foreign dignitaries are allowed entry.

The average citizens of Katanga are poor, but free, for the rulers of the Shoma do not keep slaves. However, people do not live to be old, so a large percentage of the population are children and young adults. Most live in buildings of sun-dried mud with roofs of straw along with their animals, such as goats and fowls.

The current king is Mashota, a middle-aged man with many wives and several young heirs, all fighting for the king's attention and favors. Should the PCs for some reason seek an audience, it would be unwise to mention their mission to find and loot the lost mine; the king's soothsayers and priests will warn against disturbing the sealed mines, and besides, the greedy Mashota would want the gold for himself were anyone to break the ancient taboos.





Che Vault of Ligtbrabotep Xothian Legends

# Cemple of the White Goddess

The ancient Ishrahnites worshipped a mothergoddess known as Belet-Lil. The members of that race are long dead, but reverence for the white goddess has survived among the upper classes of Shoma, who know her as Nataka. In the inner city of Katanga, there is a great circular tower which is home to the black priests who study and preserve the ancient lore of the Ishrahnites who once sealed one of the mines with mighty spells.

A successful Hard (-1) mind roll + appropriate career Task Roll reveals that Belet-Lil and Nataka are equivalent, even though the name and the rites of the latter have been garbled by centuries of local language and traditions.

**Development**: The third part of the key to open the sealed vault of Yigthrahotep is a symbol carved on a marble flagstone in the temple of Nataka. If Ursib and his henchmen are with the PCs, he asks the player characters to go into the temple to find and copy the symbol. (While it would be possible for one of the "merchants", as a serpent-man, to take the shape of and impersonate a priest, this would obviously reveal their true nature to the player characters, and besides, the serpent-men prefer to let the PCs deal with the guardians and traps of the temple.)

Of course, non-priests are not allowed into the inner shrine, so the player characters must use bribes, stealth, create some diversion, or even risk a direct assault on the temple to gain access.

If using bribes, diplomacy can be used to determine the reactions of the priests (assume an initial unfriendly attitude, with a circumstance modifier applied to the check based on the size of the bribe. A successful Demanding (-4) mind + appropriate career Task Roll points the PCs in the direction of a corrupt priest named N'Kruma (see Area 4) who might be willing (if the price is right) to drug one of the temple gate guards at night, allowing the party to enter the sanctum.

# 1. Cemple Compound

The temple is an ancient stone tower, circular in shape, four stories and 80 feet tall. The tower is surrounded by a 15 feet tall wall with three gates. One priest (see Area 4 for statistics) is always posted at each gate, day and night.

During the day, both priests and visitors to the temple can be found wandering around in the spacious yard in front of the tower. In the southeastern corner of the compound is a set of great wooden drums, which the temple priests employ to communicate with fellow priests in the villages of Shoma using the secret language of the talking drums.

# 2. Entrance

A huge wooden door is the only entrance into the temple tower; during the day, this door is wide open and even at night it is rarely locked. The high priest relies on the guards (and the temple guardian; see Area 7) to keep out those who attempt to enter the temple unlawfully.

# 3. Chamber of Worship

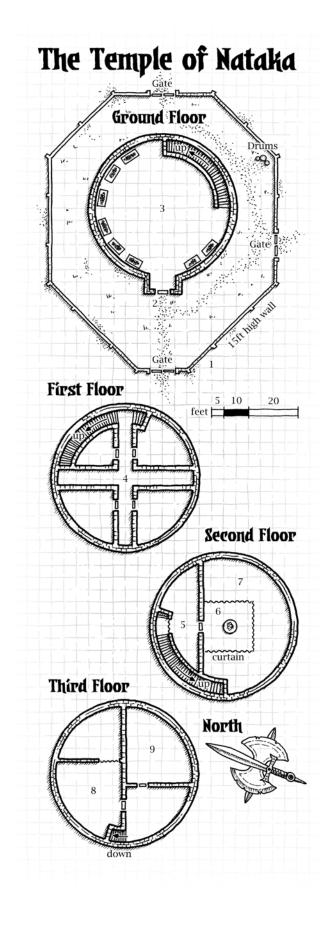
The worshippers of the ivory goddess Nataka (who include the nobles, merchants and artisans of Katanga, but not the common people) are only admitted into the ground floor of the tower. In this great audience chamber, the priests accept the offerings and gifts of the faithful, in return for blessings and omens. Occasionally, if a noteworthy visitor comes to the temple, the high priest makes an appearance and utters an important prophecy after the sacrifice of a gold-adorned bull.

The walls of the torch-lit chamber are painted white and decorated with brightly-colored patterns. Along the walls are flat stone altars with small piles of skulls, having once belonged to important people such as nobles and priests. 40 is 340 to 15 to 15 to 15 to 25 to

### Che Cemple of Nataka

Standard Features: Unless noted otherwise, all interior doors are good wooden doors requiring a Tough (-2) strength Task Roll to kick open and a Demanding (-4) agility + appropriate career Task Roll to open if described as locked. Ceiling height is 20 feet.

Lighting: All rooms of the temple are lit with torches set in wall brackets of carved ivory.



### 4. Priests' Quarters

The shaven-headed priests live in large common rooms on the first floor of the tower. Each room holds six priests and their personal belongings. Among the priests, there is an individual named N'Kruma who is willing to betray his fellow priests if the reward is great enough (see above).

### Priests of Nataka (tough)

Mind	1	Defence 1
Priest	1	Sorcerer 1
Lifeblood	6	Arcane Power 7
Fate Point	1	

Sinister Presence – the priests invoke trepidation in those they address, gaining a bonus dice in social situations.

Languages: Shoma, Azimban.

Possessions: Green robe, light mace, golden armbands

Description: Shaven-headed, dressed in flowing green robes and adorned with golden armbands, these priests perform the day-today duties in the temple.

Tactics: The priests rely on their great numbers, sorcerous abilities and their devotion to their god, if facing intruders.

### N'Kruma, Corrupt Priest of Nataka (tough)

Mind	2	Defence 1
Priest	1	Sorcerer 1
Lifeblood	6	Arcane power 8
Fate Point	1	

Sinister Presence – the priests invoke trepidation in those they address, gaining a bonus dice in social situations.

Languages: Shoma, Azimban, Mazanian.

Possessions: Green robe with gold trim, masterwork light mace, large golden earrings.

Description: In his early thirties, N'Kruma is tall and gaunt, and very quick. He is in fact a spy of the southern realm of Mazania, although he will take a bribe from anyone if he thinks he can get away with it.

Tactics: N'Kruma avoids battle if possible, using his Sinister Presence ability. He prefers to use sorcery from a distance, and quickly flees if he feels cornered.



### 5. Antechamber

At the top of the stairway to the second floor hangs a black silken curtain. Behind the curtain is a small antechamber. At the other end of the antechamber is a locked wooden door inset with ivory pieces in the shape of a skull. Only the high priest, Yama-Thembu (see Area 8), has the key to this door.

### 6. Inner Sanctum

The door to this room is locked. The inner sanctum is a large chamber. It appears to be square, with black silken tapestries hanging from ceiling to floor, but the sanctum does in fact fill the entire second floor of the tower except for the antechamber (Area 5). Standing on a circular dais is a life-size ivory statue of a voluptuous woman, seemingly carved from a single piece of ivory.

The marble floor around the dais is covered with cuneiform in archaic, proto-Susrahnite script. A Demanding (-4) mind + appropriate career Task Roll is required to read the words: "Praise the Ivory Goddess! Praise the Mother Goddess! Her lips are sweet, life is in her mouth."

Those foolish enough to kiss the statue or otherwise touch her lips discover that the opposite is true, for the statue's mouth has been smeared with a lethal contact poison by the priests to prevent such blasphemies. If the PC fails a Tough (-2) strength Task Roll, he is poisoned, which will immediately paralyze anything of man-size (medium) or smaller. Heroes get to make a Tough (-2) strength Task Roll to avoid paralysis. Once paralyzed, the victim will die within an hour. Those affected get to make another Tough (-2) strength Task Roll to avoid death.

One of the flagstones on the floor is of a slightly different coloration than the rest (because it is far older), which can be discovered with by making a Hard (-1) mind + appropriate career Task Roll. **This flagstone contains a single symbol which is the third part of the key to Yigthrahotep's vault.** 

### 7. Cemple Guardian

Hidden behind the silken tapestries of the sanctum is the monstrous guardian of the temple. A terrible four-armed demon-ape is chained to the western wall, but the leash is long enough to allow it to roam freely on the whole second floor of the tower. It obeys only the high priest, who has instructed it to kill anyone else entering the sanctum. The demonape scents intruders and tears down one of the three large tapestries as it attacks.

### Temple Guardian, Demon-Ape

Strength 3Agility 0Mind 0Bite attack +1Damage d6Claw attack +2Damage d6Attack with both at +0Defence 2Protection (hide) 1d6-3 (1)Lifeblood 13

### 8. Digh Priest's Quarters

The high priest, Yama-Thembu, occupies a spacious chamber on the topmost floor. A curtain separates his bedroom and the study, from where he administers the temple and the cult. During the day, there is a 50% chance that Yama-Thembu is here; otherwise he is in the royal palace, offering his advice to the king. At night, the high priest can be found sleeping in his bedchamber, but he keeps a trained panther in the study to warn him of intruders. A small wooden box in the high priest's study contains a large amount of gold ingots; hanging on the walls and heaped on Yama-Thembu's bed are half a dozen lion and leopard furs.

Development: The heroes do not really need to enter the high priest's chamber to complete their mission within the temple, but they might be tempted to explore the upper levels of the tower. Depending on how the PCs deal with the temple guardian (see Area 7), the noise from battle might alert the high priest (as well as the common priests) to the party's presence. If caught trespassing the temple, any surviving intruders are hauled to the royal palace and likely face a death sentence unless quick wits or brute force is employed to avoid it (it is also possible that Ursib and his henchmen can help the PCs to escape).

On the other hand, if the PCs are detected but manage to defeat and/or kill the priests

15

of the temple, they become outlaws and will be hunted by members of the king's own personal guard. In this case, it would be best to flee the city of Katanga as soon as possible.

#### Yama-Thembu, High Priest of Nataka (villain)

Strength	0	Initiative	2
Agility	1	Melee	0
Mind	3	Ranged	0
Appeal	1	Defence	2
Sorcerer	3	Priest	2
Lifeblood	10	Arcane Power	15
	-		

Fate Points 2

Boons and Flaws:

- Power of the Void
- Arrogant

Languages: Shoma, Azimban, Zadjite, Yar-Ammonite, Mazanian.

Possessions: White robe with gold trim, quarterstaff, golden pectoral, key to inner sanctum.

Description: The high priest is middle-aged and potbellied. He has great influence at court and has the king's ear and protection.

Tactics: Yama-Thembu is no melee combatant, relying solely on his spells, acolytes, and trained pet to protect him.

### Panther

Strength 1	Agility 2	Mind -1
Attack +3	Damage d6	
Defence 1	Protection 0	
Lifeblood 10		

### 9. Cemple Library

The shelves in this room are filled with clay tablets inscribed by the long-dead priests of Belet-Lil. Many of the tablets have not yet been deciphered by the black priests. A character who spends 8d6 minutes searching the library and makes a successful Demanding (-4) mind + appropriate career Task Roll gains a basic understanding of the history of the Ishrah as described in the introduction to the adventure, except (of course) the last part about the coming of the Wamuba tribe, which happened after the clay tablets were inscribed. Also, with a successful Demanding (–4) mind + appropriate career Task Roll, a clay tablet containing dark knowledge can be found in the library (This is a special item for a first magnitude spell of the PCs choice or a special item for a second magnitude spell of the GM's choice).

# Beneath the Purple Spire

After their visit to the temple of the ivory goddess, the heroes have learned the last piece of the secret that enables them to reopen the sealed mines of the Ishrah. From the city of Katanga, the expedition must continue into the jungled hills south of the city.

### Into the Jungle

The uplands south and east of Katanga are known as the Shining Hills. Like the Ishrahnites before them, the Shoma people operate gold mines in these hills, all owned by the king and protected by his loyal spearmen.

To reach the lost mine, the heroes must travel due south of Katanga, into trackless, junglecovered hills. Horses and camels are useless in such terrain; but mules or donkeys are a good alternative that can be used to carry supplies and equipment through the rugged hill terrain.

Vines, roots, and short bushes cover much of the ground. A space covered with light undergrowth provides concealment, but causes a penalty dice to be taken to movement based Task Rolls due to the leaves and branches getting in the way.

The climate of the Shining Hills is very hot. Heroes must succeed on an Environmental Challenge each day. Heroes wearing heavy clothing or armor of any sort add a penalty to their Task Roll. A hero with the Jungleborn may receive a bonus dice on this Task Roll and may be able to apply this bonus to other characters as well. Exhaustion gained is cumulative over the days spent in the Jungle.

Refer to the encounter table opposite for random encounters in the Shining Hills. Each day, an encounter occurs on a roll of 1 or 2 on 1d6. Roll a first and a second d6 to determine the exact nature of the encounter.

### first roll: 1-3. second roll below:

Disease: The characters are exposed to a tropical disease while passing a mosquito-infested area. The disease causes the skin to turn red and become bloated, with friction spots becoming open sores. Incubation period 1 day, affects strength. The character must succeed on a Hard (-1) strength Task

Roll to avoid catching the disease. Otherwise, the 1 character takes penalty dice after the incubation period. Once per day afterward, the character must make a Hard (-1) strength Task Roll to avoid additional penalty dice. Two successful Task Rolls in a row indicate that the character has fought off the disease and recovers, taking no more penalty dice.

Insect Swarm: A centipede swarm approaches the party's campsite. The swarm is immune to weapon damage, but a lit torch swung as an improvised

weapon deals 1d3 damage per hit. Also, a lit lantern 2 can be used as a thrown weapon, dealing 1d3 points of damage to both the target (or where it breaks) and any adjacent creatures. Effects similar to fire may also damage the swarm.

Constrictor vine uses its long, tentacle-like main vine to grab and strangle a passing victim, while

3 using its lesser vines to entangle others. It takes a Tough (-2) mind + appropriate career Task Roll to detect the assassin vine before it strikes.

Monstrous Spider: A colony of 1d3+1 giant spiders have spun several webs to trap the unwary. A Tough

(-2) mind + appropriate career Task Roll is required 4 to avoid stumbling into the webs. (Use skorpider stats.)

Giant Frog: A huge, feral amphibian with large 5 gaping mouth and dark mottled skin with black splotches leap out from hiding in a marshy area.

Heavy Rain and Flood: A massive downpour of rain causes severe flooding of a nearby river. Characters are caught in the river stream and must make Tough (-2) strength + appropriate career Task Rolls every round to avoid going under. If a character gets a mighty success, he arrests his motion by catching

a rock, tree limb, or bottom snag — he is no longer 6 being carried along by the flow of the water. Escaping the rapids by reaching the bank requires three successive Tough (-2) Task Rolls in a row. Characters arrested by a rock, limb, or snag can't escape under their own power unless they strike out into the water and attempt to swim their way clear. Other characters can then attempt to rescue them.

### first roll: 4-6, second roll below:

Constrictor Snake: Constrictor snakes usually are not aggressive and flee when confronted, especially

- 1 if Ursib and the other serpent-men are with the party.
- Fungi: A large patch of 1d3+1 deadman fungi are 2 found in the moist and dark shade of a rotted tree.
- Rockslide: A sudden rockslide threatens to bury one or more of the party members. A character can spot the danger with a successful Tough (-2) mind + appropriate career (e.g. architecture, engineering, stonemasonry based) Task Roll. Characters in the slide zone take 1d6H damage, or no damage at all if they make a successful Hard (-1) agility Task Roll. Characters in the slide zone who fail their Task Rolls are buried. Characters take 1d6 points of nonlethal damage per minute while buried. If such a character falls unconscious, he must make a Hard (-1) strength Task Roll. If it fails, he takes 1d6 points of lethal damage each minute thereafter 3 until freed or dead.

Characters who aren't buried can attempt (each minute) to dig out their friends, by making a Demanding (-4) strength + appropriate career Task Roll in 1 minute, using only their hands. Armed with an appropriate tool, such as a pick, crowbar, or shovel, a digger reduces the difficulty to Tough (-2). For every PC helping, the character may add a bonus dice. You may allow a buried character to free himself with a Demanding (-4) strength Task Roll.

Carnivorous Ape: This aggressive band of 1d3+2 man-eating apes attack by jumping down from the 4 trees above the party.

Native Tribesmen: This is a band of 1d3+1 per PC native warriors, unrelated to the Wamuba tribe.

Their initial attitude is hostile. They are rabble, 5 armed with spears and carrying large wooden shields. Their leader is a tough armed with a greatclub.

Mazanian Warband: A raiding-band from the southern realm of Mazania, consisting of 2d6 x 10 female warriors (rabble), wearing leather armor and helmets set with ostrich feathers. They are armed

6 with clubs, javelins and bows. Their leader is a female (tough) fighter with rhino-hide armor and armed with a dire flail. The Mazanians seek loot and the capture of male slaves.

Due to the confines of the jungle undergrowth the presence of others may only be detected at close range. The background noise in the jungle makes any form of perception based Task Roll more difficult, adding a penalty dice to the Task Roll (but note that stealth based Task Rolls are also more difficult in undergrowth).

### Che Village of the Wamuba

The lost mine of the Ishrahnites is approximately 150 miles south of Katanga, across trackless hills, covered with jungle. A "purple spire", actually the ruins of a small fortress built from purple stone, marks the site of the mine (although the actual mine entrance is overgrown by vines and hidden from sight).

The ruined fortress stands on the eastern slope of a jungled valley. A black tribe known as the Wamuba settled in the valley two centuries ago, clearing away the vegetation in the eastern part of the valley and constructing a wooden palisade across the valley floor. They built their small huts of wood and mud inside the palisade, in the shadow of the purple ruins. The tribe avoided the ancient fortress, believing it to be cursed, but the chieftain's oldest wife, Nugga-Tikanda, secretly delved into the ruins. It was whispered that she learned the dark arts of witchcraft from the dead spirits of the Ishrah within the ruins. Not long after, the chieftain died from a sudden wasting disease, and Nugga-Tikanda seized rulership of the tribe.

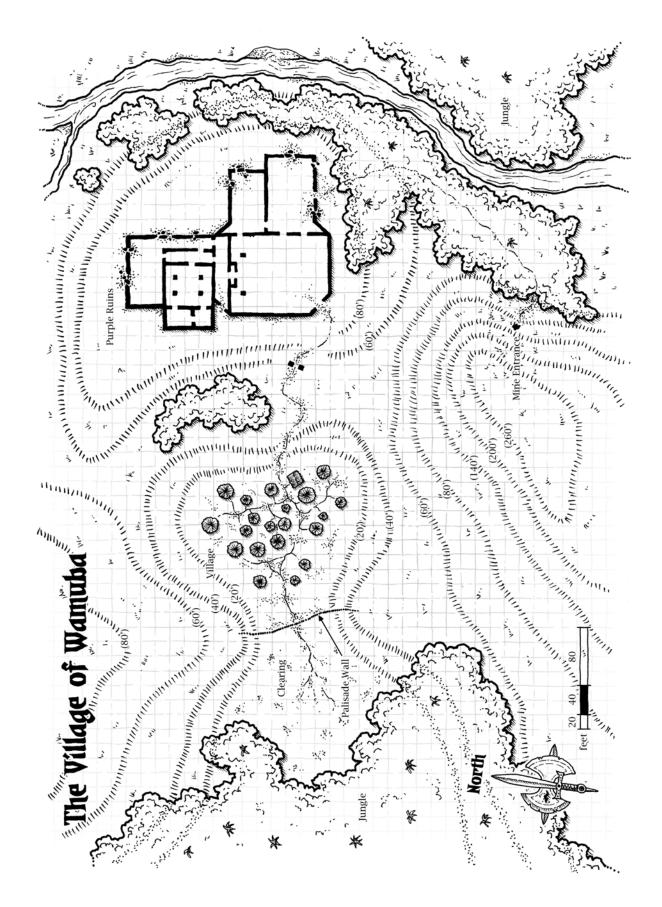
The Wamuba live in almost total isolation from the outside world. There are currently around 300 members of the tribe; two-thirds are adult warriors and the rest are young boys. If the player characters enter the village, they soon notice that there are no women to be seen anywhere. Also, due to inbreeding (see below), many of the tribesmen have gross physical defects, such as missing or bulging eyes, weirdly twisted arms or feet, purple boils or cysts, extra or missing digits on hands or feet, and so on. The majority are still capable warriors, however. The important non-player characters of the village include:

- Nugga-Tikanda, Witch-Queen of the Wamuba: Nugga-Tikanda is the despotic female ruler of the tribe. She is in fact a two hundred year old crone, sustained by sorcery, although her physical form is young but massively obese. The witchqueen is not wholly sane.
- Tibaa, Tribal Champion and Royal Consort: Tibaa, a powerful warrior, is Nugga-Tikanda's current favorite, champion and consort. He enjoys his current position and acts ruthlessly to preserve it against any potential rivals.
- Mwanza "the Hunchback", Village Elder and Chief Steward: Mwanza is an old, hunchbacked man who oversees the village and acts as the queen's messenger. He speaks a basic form of the Shoma language, which allows him to communicate with strangers.

Development: As the PCs approach within a mile or two of the valley, they are spotted by Wamuba sentries who hide in the dense undergrowth. Imitating animal sounds, the sentries alert the tribe to the presence of intruders. Mwanza and the villagers have orders to bring any foreigners back to the village, if necessary as captives. A band of Wamuba tribesmen (1 tough + 10 rabble per PC) surrounds the party and herd the PCs along back behind the palisade wall.

Unless the PCs resist, they are escorted to the village behind the palisade wall by the tribal warriors. Once inside the village, the strangers are directed into a hut where some simple food has been prepared for them. Mwanza appears and tells the PCs that they must select a "champion" among themselves, who is to "entertain" the "queen" of the tribe, Nugga-Tikanda. If the player characters refuse to appoint a champion, Mwanza declares the strongest-looking male character to be the champion.

It is possible, of course, that the player characters choose to fight the tribesmen instead of following the Wamuba to their village. If a fight breaks out, the tribesmen attempt to capture the PCs alive, but they do not hesitate to kill opponents that they consider too dangerous to let live. If the PCs



are defeated, any survivors are taken back to the village. The strongest-looking character is selected to fight against the tribal champion, and things develop more or less as described below. On the other hand, if the PCs manage to defeat or flee from the Wamuba, despite being severely outnumbered, this part of the adventure plays out somewhat differently. The player characters can either sneak into or attack the village and/or the purple ruins, or try to avoid the Wamuba while they look for the hidden entrance to the mine which must be somewhere in the vicinity of the purple ruins. Meanwhile, Nugga-Tikanda will send out search parties to find and capture the intruders. Adjust the following events as you see fit.

#### Wamuba Tribesmen (tough)

Strength Agility Barbarian	1 1 1	Melee Ranged	1 1
Lifeblood	7		
Spear d6 Large Shield	Bow de	5	

Languages: Wamuba.

Possessions: Loincloth, bone necklace, heavy wooden shield, spear, bow, 1 dose of sassone leaf residue.

Description: The Wamuba are naked except for simple loincloths. Their skin is tattooed, and they wear bone necklaces and carry wooden shields. Around 20% of these warriors have gross physical defects due to inbreeding.

Tactics: Fighting with bow and spear, these warriors occasionally coat their weapons with poison.

### Rabble

Barbarian Lifeblood Armed d3

1

2

Sassone leaf residue (poison): The hero must make a Tough (-2) strength Task Roll to resist the effects. If he does not then the wound burns fiercely, causing 1d3 extra damage.

#### Mwanza, the Hunchback (tough)

Mind Agility Barbarian	1 1 1	Ranged Defence	1 1
Lifeblood	6		
Quarterstaff	<b>d</b> 6	Axe d6	

Alert – treated as a villain for priority rolls Languages: Wamuba, Shoma, Azimban

Possessions: Loincloth, cloak of monkey-skin, quarterstaff, throwing axe, pouch with herbs, pouch with 10 small obsidian stones.

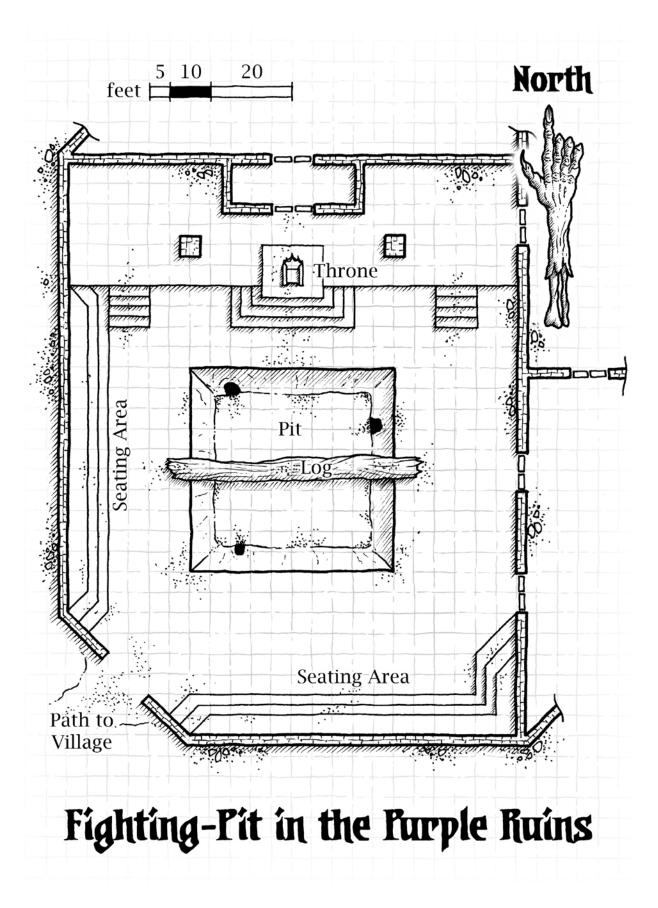
Description: An old and hunchbacked man, Mwanza is both smarter and faster than he looks. His knowledge of the Northern languages makes him useful to Nugga-Tikanda.

Tactics: Mwanza rarely gets into combat himself; as the village elder he commands the other tribesmen.

### Winning the favor of the queen

Assuming the chosen player character accepts his role as champion, he is escorted (along with the rest of the party, including the merchants of Susrah) from the village to the purple ruins in the hills above. Here, the tribe gathers in the courtyard of the fortress, the partly crumbled walls of which serve as an amphitheater.

The champion selected from among the PCs must prove his worth by defeating the current tribal champion, Tibaa. The rules are simple: The fight is to the death. Wearing armor is forbidden, and use of sorcery is of course considered cheating. The champions must fight on a 5 feet wide log which rests across a 30 feet deep pit. At the bottom of the pit are several cave openings; a giant centipede lurks inside one of the cave tunnels and darts out to attack anyone who falls into the pit. The walls of the pit have been greased with animal fat to prevent the centipede (as well as combatants falling in) from climbing up. During the fight, a dozen spearmen guard against interference from the other player characters.



**Development**: Before the fighting begins, the obese queen of the tribe is carried into her seat by six bearers, who strain under the weight of the litter. At Nugga-Tikanda's signal, the combatants face off against each other.

If the Hero wins, he is declared the new tribal champion and a great feast is to be held to celebrate his victory. On the other hand, if defeat seems imminent for the PC, Nugga-Tikanda stops the fight by ordering Tibaa to stand back instead of delivering the fatal blow. In this case, it is assumed that the queen of the Wamubas has taken a liking to the player character despite his lacking fighting skills, and declares the stranger to be her new consort. If this happens, the PC gains the enmity of Tibaa and his henchmen. Either way, a feast is held to celebrate the PCs and the new champion among them.

### Tibaa, Tribal Champion

Strength	3	Initiative	1
Agility	2	Melee	3
Mind	0	Ranged	0
Appeal	0	Defence	1
Barbarian	2	Gladiator	1
Hunter	1	Beastmaster	0
Lifeblood	13		

Greatclub d6H

Boons:

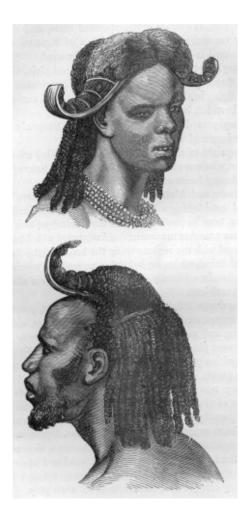
- Fearsome Looks bonus die when questioning or intimidating
- Strength Feat bonus die when breaking, lifting, pulling or pushing things
- Brawler bonus die when fighting unarmed

Languages: Wamuba.

Possessions: Loincloth, hide armor (not worn in arena), greatclub.

Description: Tall, heavily muscled and fearsome, Tibaa's face is disfigured by purple boils, a birth defect caused by the tribe's inbreeding. Owing more to his great strength than his looks, Tibaa is the queen's current favorite.

Tactics: Tibaa seeks to defend Nugga-Tikada, the Tribal Mother, at all costs. When fighting above the pit, he uses bull rushes to try to push opponents into the pit.



### The Thing in the Pit, Giant Centipede (Large)

Strength 4 Agility 2 Mind -1

Bite +2, poisoned bite, target must succeed on a Tough (-2) strength Task Roll or become paralyzed.

Defence 1 Protection: d6-1 (3)

Lifeblood 20

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### A feast for the Champion

The feast is held in the village at nightfall the same day; it quickly develops into drunken revelry as the tribesmen consume prodigious quantities of banana wine. Nugga-Tikanda herself is not present during the feast.

Player characters who use the occasion to speak with the hunchback, Mwanza, can learn the following about Nugga-Tikanda with a mind + appropriate career Task Roll:

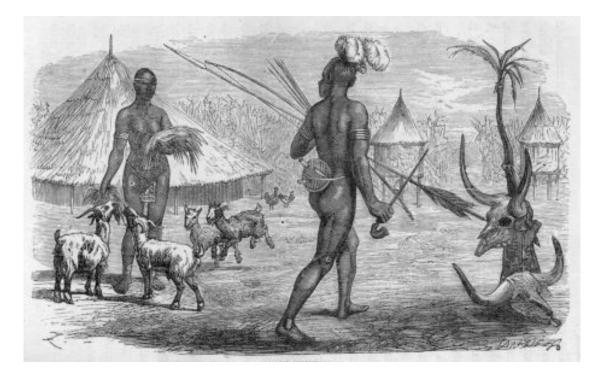
- Se Fail by 1: "She is very old."
- Succeed (just): "It is said that she murdered her husband, the last chieftain of the Wamuba."
- Succeed by 1: "She knows the secrets of witchcraft, which has made her immortal."
- Succeed by 2: "She is the mother of us all — every living man of the tribe is both her husband and her son."

With another successful Hard (-1) mind + appropriate career Task Roll which alters Mwanza's attitude from neutral to friendly, the hunchback can also tell the Heroes about the long-abandoned mines of the Ishrah, and how to find the mine entrance despite the heavy jungle growth which now conceals it. If the Task Roll is good enough (i.e. if it would have succeeded against a Formidable (-6) roll) to change Mwanza's attitude to helpful, he adds that the upper level of the mines is now inhabited by a band of degenerate savages, the descendants of those Wamuba tribesmen who were driven away by Nugga-Tikanda when she usurped the last chieftain.

During the feast, the tribesmen get drunk and it is easy for the PCs to sneak out of the village, should they so desire (possibly to try to find the mines, or even to confront Nugga-Tikanda). If the player characters do stay until the height of the feast, around midnight, a group (8) of Nugga-Tikanda's personal guards appear and talk to Mwanza. The hunchback then announces to the PCs that the queen wishes to mate with her new consort; the celebrated champion must follow the queen's guard alone back to the purple ruins.

### The Queen's Guard (tough)

Strength	1	Melee	1
Agility	1	Defence	1
Barbarian	1	Guard	1
Lifeblood	7		
Spear d6	Axe d6	<b>b</b>	



Hide armour d6-3 (1)

Languages: Wamuba.

Possessions: Hide armor, spear, axe.

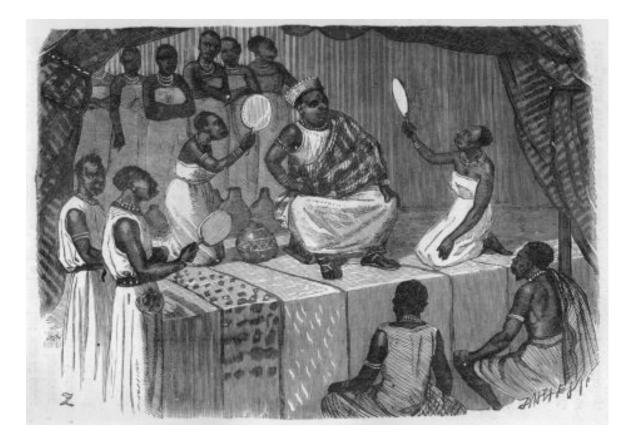
Description: These are the elite guardians of the queen; four of them are always at the queen's side.

Tactics: Keep opponents away using their reach weapons, working together to form a spear-wall.

# **Che Kiss of Death**

Nugga-Tikanda has lived for two centuries by mating with her own sons, but this abominable inbreeding produces both physically and mentally retarded children, and each subsequent generation weakens the effects of the immortality rite. The witch of the Wamuba needs the blood of outsiders to improve the genetic pool of the tribe and boost the effect of her rituals, and has therefore selected the most physically impressive member of the party as her new consort. Note that if the queen's former favorite, Tibaa, is still alive, he tries his best to bring the new consort into disfavor, but at the same time cannot act directly against the orders of the queen.

**Development:** The actions of the player character who has been chosen as the queen's new consort determines what happens next. If the PC agrees to fulfil his duties as the queen's consort, the PC is escorted by the queen's guard back to the purple ruins. He must surrender his weapons and armor to the guards before being allowed into the royal bedchamber. The guards remain within earshot of the bedchamber while Nugga-Tikanda mates with the chosen consort. Due to her sorcerous preparations, a single union is 80% likely to result in pregnancy and can produce as many as 2d6 children. Even so, the queen keeps the PC around for up to 1d3 months before she tires of him and orders him killed (and then takes a new consort from among the other PCs). In the meantime, the player character enjoys the privileges of being



the queen's chosen consort. He and his friends are free to wander around the village and the surrounding area (including the lost mine), but are only allowed into the purple ruins when summoned by the queen.

If the player character refuses to go with the queen's guards, a fight likely breaks out in the village as the guards try to grapple and pin the PC, then tie him up with ropes and drag him along forcefully. If the PCs defeat the guards, one or more loyal tribesmen (who have not already passed out from excessive consumption of banana wine) flee from the village and try to warn Nugga-Tikanda, who sends more guards after the player characters.

# Nugga-Tikanda, the Witch-Queen of the Wamuba (villain)

Strength	2	Initiative	3
Agility	-1	Melee	1
Mind	4	Ranged	0
Appeal	-1	Defence	0
Witch	4	Barbarian	1
Lifeblood	12	Arcane Power	16

Power of the Void (included above)

- Magic (of the Sorcerer-Kings) bonus die when casting spells
- Obese penalty die when moving
- Ugly and Brutish penalty die when looks are important

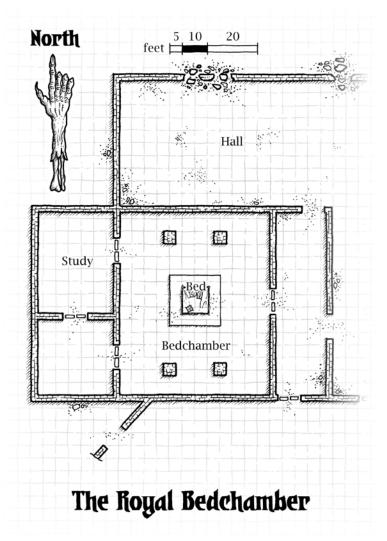
Languages: Wamuba, Mazanian, Yalothan.

Possessions: Loincloth, bone necklace, gold nipple rings.

Description: Obese beyond imagining, Nugga-Tikanda is a repulsive sight as she is carried around half-naked on a litter by four of her bodyguards.

Nugga-Tikanda is in fact the mother of the entire tribe; female babies are slain shortly after birth. The queen's sons mate with their own mother in an abominable fertility rite when they reach the age of manhood, a sorcerous process which extends the lifespan of the sorceress at the expense of her sanity and the well-being of her offspring. Tactics: Nugga-Tikanda relies on her bodyguards for protection, but relishes the casting of destructive and necromantic spells. If her Sinister Presence doesn't keep her out of melee, she tries to grapple and crush opponents under her revolting body mass.

The queen has some treasure in her personal chamber: A golden cup, a bag filled with pearls, a wooden box with 4 large pieces of gold, a damaged bronze timekeeping device (of Ishrahnite origin, appears broken), three large worn silver-embroidered tapestries, two human skulls painted with green paint, the dried husk of a black scorpion, four dark crimson poison berries (Ingested Tough (-2) strength Task Roll; incubation period 1 turn, strength penalty dice; lose their potency in 1 week), and some withered herbs (worthless).

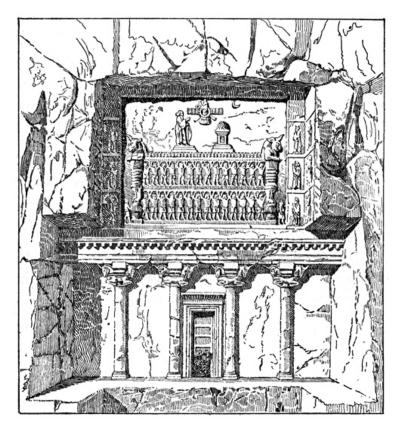


# Che Lost Mines of the Ishrah

When the ancient Ishrahnites discovered the prehuman vaults below their own mine tunnels, the lower tunnels were blocked with rubble and the mines were eventually abandoned.

Centuries later, when Nugga-Tikanda seized leadership of the Wamuba tribe, a group of male warriors opposed her rule. After a short power struggle, most of these warriors were killed by Nugga-Tikanda's followers and the rest were driven away from the village, along with their women. Seeking refuge in the upper levels of the abandoned mines, these outcasts eked out a meager life here for generations, plotting to return to overthrow Nugga-Tikanda, but inevitably falling into sharp decline due to their isolation. After a time, the men were killed in battle with Wamubans loyal to Nugga-Tikanda, or fell prey to wild animals.

However, several of the outcast women were captured by a local tribe of man-apes, who forcibly mated with the captives. From this union has sprung a tribe of semi-intelligent



ape-men, who inhabit the mine's upper caverns. They master the use of fire, primitive weapons and simple tools, but are otherwise as apes. These primitives viciously defend their territory against any intruders, including Nugga-Tikanda's tribesmen (who now mostly ignore the savages but sometimes clash with the ape-men's hunting bands).

### 1. Cave Entrance

The cave entrance is concealed by several layers of thick vegetation. It can be found with a Demanding (-4) mind + appropriate career Task Roll, or by observing the coming and going of the ape-men who inhabit the mines beyond. It is also possible to find the cave entrance by spotting these ape-men outside the mines and making a Tough (-2) mind + appropriate career Task Roll to track them back to their lair.

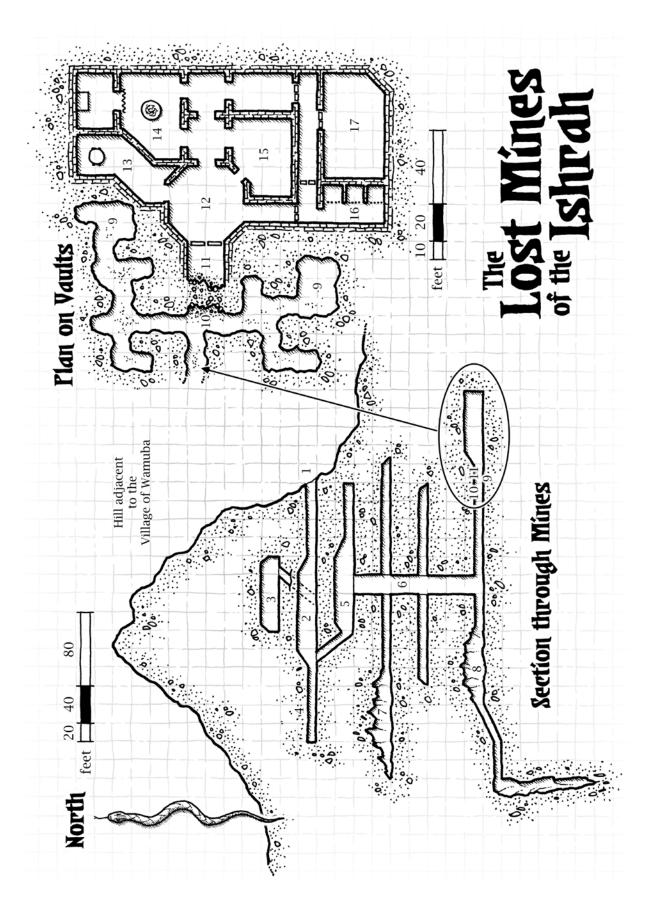
For each hour, there is a 20% chance to encounter 1d6 ape-men outside the cave.

### Ape-Men (rabble) 120 in total

Lifeblood 1 Armed (club) d3 Languages: None (primitive grunting only). Possessions: Furry loincloth, club. Description: Stunted and filthy, with unkempt long hair and beards, these ape-men could easily be mistaken for true apes were it not for their simple clothing and use of weapons. Tactics: The ape-men attack in packs, using a combination of charge, power attack and rage to deliver a devastating first blow. If facing superior foes, they quickly retreat into the darkness of their caves to regroup and prepare another ambush.

# 2. Great Cave

There is a 50% chance that a band of 1d3+3 per PC ape-men are encountered in this large cave. In the cavern wall is a hidden entrance (found using a Demanding (-4) mind + appropriate career Task Roll) to the tunnel leading upwards to the cavern of the ape-men (Area 3).



### 3. Upper Cave

This cavern is 100 feet in diameter, and the ceiling is 20 feet tall. There are 1d6+6 per PC ape-men warriors in the cavern, as well as twice that number of non-combatants (women and children). Scattered in the corners of the cave are various items such as bone and stone tools, scraps of food, and heaps of debris and offal.

### 4. Dead End

A tunnel leading from the main cave (Area 2) is filled with various mining equipment, but most is in poor shape, being broken, rusted, or decayed.

# 5. Mine Shaft

A tunnel leads down to the main shaft. There is no "elevator" in the shaft; such equipment of wood and rope has decayed long ago. A Tough (-2) strength + appropriate career Task Roll is required for a problem-free descent; no roll is required if a knotted rope is used.

If there are surviving ape-men in the mines, they might hide in the dark tunnels opening up upon the shaft and throw rocks down on the PCs as they attempt to descend (treat such thrown rocks as a penalty dice to the Task Roll and making it Moderate (+0) even if using a rope).

On the far side of the shaft is a primitive forge hall with cobwebbed furnaces, bellows of neardecayed animal-skin, dry vats that once held water, rusted pincers, and so on.

### 6. Mine Cunnels

The shaft is 140 feet deep. Along the length of the shaft are several mine tunnels. These are wholly or partly excavated. The ape-men might retreat and hide in these dark tunnels if they are defeated in the upper caverns. They can automatically ascend and descend the main shaft (Area 5).

# 7. fungi Cave

One of the mine tunnels ends in a large natural cavern filled with weird fungi. Several of the fungi are edible, as identified with a successful Hard (-1) mind + appropriate career Task Roll. The ape-men also harvest fungi here.

# 8. Natural Cave and Chasm

On the lowest level of the mine, to the west, is another natural cavern, then a tunnel leading to a deep natural fissure, 100 feet deep. The edges are jagged and it requires a Demanding (-4) strength + appropriate career Task Roll to climb down. This Task Roll can be made easier by one step to Tough (-2) by using rope. The bottom of the chasm contains several bones, both human and animal.

Also on the bottom is a fast-flowing, freezing cold underground river. The river leads to a boggy marshland, about 2 miles from the village of the Wamuba, which is the abode of a giant frog. The murky swamp water is 3 feet deep, and creatures you cannot natively swim must wade through it as if entangled (penalty dice to Task Rolls as appropriate).

### 9. Abandoned Cunnels

These tunnels are the deepest tunnels dug by the ancient Ishrahnites before they discovered the prehuman chambers beneath the mines. The walls are rough and the floor is covered by loose rocks and debris.

### 10. Blocked Cunnel

The main tunnel, which leads to the sealed door beyond, has been blocked by a huge pile of stones. It is apparent with a Hard (-1) mind + appropriate career Task Roll that the pile has been placed there by human hands; in other words, it is not a natural cave-in. It takes several hours to clear away the rocks from the tunnel to allow passage. 90 varate of a star a sta star a sta

### 11. Sealed Door

To the east, behind a partly collapsed tunnel, is a massive door of a curious metal, inscribed with cuneiform symbols.

Only by pressing three specific symbols in a specific sequence (or by destroying the three items on which the symbols are written) can the door be opened. Refer to the adventure introduction for more information.

If the wrong glyphs are pressed, or if force is used against the door, a deadly blast affects the intruder. This is a blast of lightning that deals 3d6 points of damage to anyone in front of the door (Moderate (+0) agility + appropriate career Task Roll for half damage). The door instantly recharges itself and can discharge one lightning bolt each round. The metal door itself is nigh-impenetrable.

2

2

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### Vigthrahotep, Ancient Serpent-King of Valotha (Greater Demon)

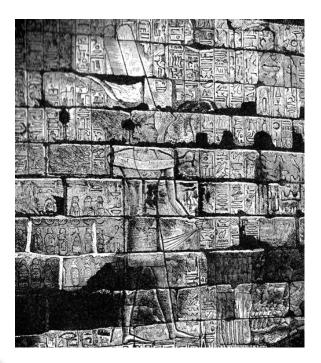
Strength	6	Initiative
Agility	2	Melee
Mind	3	Ranged
Appeal	1	Defence
Lifeblood	30	
Damage	d6H + poison*	

Talents:

- Telepathy (transcends speech and language)
- Sorcery (10 points of Arcane Power)
- \*Poison (exudes a substance that paralyzes Rabble and Toughs; Heroes avoid this with a Tough (-2) strength Task Roll. After an hour, paralyzed victims must make the same roll to avoid death)
- \*\*Enhanced Weaponry: Constrict (gains a bonus die to melee attacks)

Description: Yigthrahotep is a survivor from a lost age, when the serpents ruled beneath the youthful sun from the primeval swamps and jungles of Yalotha, the serpent kingdom. Despite being immortal save for violent death, the cold-blooded serpent-kings were driven into retreat and hibernation as climate changes and slave uprisings ended their aeon-long reign.

Tactics: Yigthrahotep uses 1d3 rounds to fully recover from his long period of hibernation, during which he cannot cast spells. While highly intelligent, his tactics are simple; he spits his poison, then moves in to grab and constrict victims.



# 12. Octagonal Chamber

Behind the sealed doors are several chambers of a weird, curved architecture.

With a successful Hard (-1) mind + appropriate career Task Roll, a character realizes that the chambers were probably built by the prehistoric "serpent-kings", a race of intelligent ophidians that ruled the world in ages past. This realization is reinforced by paintings on the walls, which depict scenes of primitive men being sacrificed to giant snakes.

**Development**: The player characters hardly have time to ponder the implications of these revelations, wever. As soon as the PCs enter the main chamber, they hear a slithering sound as a large human-headed snake appears. This is Yigthrahotep, one of the ancient serpent-kings of Yalotha, who has been awakened from aeons of slumber.

As Yigthrahotep attacks, the "merchants" of Susrah, who have taken up positions behind the PCs, finally drop their disguises. Their leader, Ursib, shouts out: "O, great Yigthrahotep, we have come to awaken you from your slumber and release you from centuries of imprisonment! We now offer you these humans as a celebration of your freedom!" 90 varat at 12 var 10 and 20 a

### 13. Serpent-Bowl

This side chamber is dominated by a large, lidded stone bowl engraved with ancient Yalothan hieroglyphs. The bowl has hinges near the lid which allows carrying rods to be inserted, so that servitors of the serpent-kings can transport their slumbering masters. This is where Yigthrahotep has hibernated through the aeons.

# 14. Snake-Idol

A giant stone idol of Zanthiss, 10 feet tall, dominates this room. The statue is cold to the touch. The serpentine body is adorned with three heavy bands of gold.

The smaller chamber beyond is accessed through a heavy curtain of snake-skin. On a raised dais next to the wall is a black staff set with a golden cobra head. To a priest of Zanthiss, this staff functions as a rod of the viper. Any non-worshipper touching it is subject to a phantasmal snake strike.

Rod of the viper d6H (one handed), once per day for the duration of a scene, the rod can inflict a poison attack. The target must successfully make a Hard (-1) strength Task Roll or suffer a penalty dice to all strength and agility Task Rolls. Any non-worshiper touching it is subject to the effects of a phantasmal snake strike. Heroes get to make a Tough (-2) strength Task Roll to avoid paralysis. Once paralysed, the victim will die within an hour. Affected Heroes get to make another Hard (-1) strength Task Roll to avoid death.

### 15. Meeting Room

This spacious chamber features several weird, curved benches, ideal for snakes to climb and recline upon. The walls are decorated with serpentine patterns and ancient writings that glorify the might of Zanthiss, including paintings that depict large groups of enslaved humans, dragging massive stones and building cyclopean cities of black stone, overseen by tall serpentine taskmasters.



# 16. Cells

This section of the vault has three small cells, doubtlessly used to hold human prisoners or sacrifice in ages past. There is nothing but bones and dust here now.

# 17. fire-Ravaged Chamber

This large room might have been a library or study, but seems ravaged by fire. There is nothing of interest here now, unless perhaps the GM wishes to place some kind of clue to the whereabouts of the lost city of serpents in the jungles of Yalotha among the charred documents here.

# Conclusion

Even if the player characters confront and defeat Yigthrahotep, there might be several loose threads. Nugga-Tikanda and her consort Tibaa could still be alive. If Tibaa is alive, he and his men enter the mines, battle any remaining ape-men, and find the shaft. They remove any ropes the PCs used to descend to the bottom, and guard the shaft night and day, trying to starve the PCs to death. The PCs can survive for a long time in the mines if they harvest and eat the fungi in the fungi cavern. However, they will eventually run out of light sources (torches), and water is only available by climbing down to the underground river.

Despite the lure of a "lost gold mine", there is little loot to be found in the mines. Some GMs might wish to expand the purple ruins with a set of dungeons that once belonged to the Ishrahnite priests and sorcerers, which are still haunted by their ghosts today, and which contain ancient treasures.

In any case, the party must haul whatever loot they find back through the jungle, facing monsters, tribesmen, raiders from Mazania, and royal spearmen of Shoma (for if the king hears about the mine, he claims it as his property). The PCs might also have made enemies among the priests of Nataka.

If the PCs fail: There are plenty of places where the player characters could fail during this adventure. Remember that unintelligent beasts usually devour slain enemies, while intelligent foes might prefer to keep the PCs alive as prisoners, either to extract information, claim ransom, or force them to accept some kind of dangerous mission. If the PCs are captured by Yigthrahotep and his serpent-men minions, they might be taken east to the jungles of Yalotha, and into the heart of the lost city of serpents. 90 varade an star and and and and and an and an and an a

# Additional Rules

# Environmental Challenges

When Heroes embark on a serious journey that may be lengthy or difficult, one Hero undertakes to lead them to their destination, making a travel roll to get to the destination without mishap. Failing the roll means that some unforeseen (or at least unwanted!) event has occurred before the travellers reach their destination. The GM might require a series of travel rolls if the journey is exceptionally long or passes through many different environments.

# **Che Survival Roll**

Before making the travel roll, all characters exposed to extremes of weather, heat, cold, etc. must make a survival roll, which will be +mind or +strength and any applicable career. Failure means that the character suffers from that exposure with a temporary penalty die, which can be removed once the character arrives at an occupied settlement or outpost.

- Survival Roll = 2D6 (total of 9+ to succeed)
  - + mind or strength
  - + applicable career (e.g. hunter)
  - difficulty mods from GM

# **Che Cravel Roll**

The GM determines the number of rolls that need to be made, and if any negative modifiers apply based on the difficulty of travel. One character makes the travel roll that takes into account his +mind and any applicable careers.

- Travel Roll = 2D6 (total of 9+ to succeed) + mind
  - + applicable career (e.g. sailor)
  - difficulty mods from GM

# **Cravel Incidents**

If stuck for ideas as to the nature of the incident, roll 2d6 and consult the table below. If travelling through a densely populated area, include a bonus die. If travelling through a wasteland, include a penalty die.

### Roll Incident

- **2** Supernatural encounter or some unknown phenomena.
- **3** Natural disaster, of the sort the location is prone to.
- **4** Threatened by local predators!
- **5** Ambush! By pirates, bandits, or even a military patrol if in a disputed zone.
- 6 Mechanical breakdown, a mount is injured, or some other frequent travel problem.
- **7** False alarm! (or was it...?)
- 8 Pull over! The authorities want to speak to you.
- **9** Thieves trick, pickpocket or ambush someone in your party.
- **10** Get caught up in a popular uprising.
- 1 Cultists attack!
- **12** Get caught up in a full-scale war.

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# Diseases and Poisons

Mechanically poisons (including venoms, toxins, etc.) and diseases work very similarly and consist of:

- 🛚 an attribute Task Roll to resist
- on incubation period
- 🛚 an effect

The Task Roll to resist uses an attribute only (no careers) and is rolled with the stated difficulty. If successful it will usually fully negate the effects, however with some particularly virulent poisons/diseases it may just reduce them.

Typically poisons have an "instant" incubation period whereas diseases usually have longer ones that could be days, weeks or even months. If no incubation period is stated the effects are applied immediately.

The effect can include lifeblood loss, paralysis, unconsciousness, attribute weakening (penalty dice) or even death.

Really debilitating poisons/diseases may have two or more effects and/or extra effects gained after further periods of incubation. Further incubation periods may be of different lengths.

While suffering from a poison/disease, should a hero roll a calamitous failure (remember player choice), they collapse unconscious (or otherwise incapable of acting) until they receive medical aid.

Should a character roll 3 ones or more (before removing extra penalty / bonus dice) on a Task Roll, the character dies from the poison/ disease. It is unlikely that death will be instantaneous, however the character will die by the end of the current scene or the next. 90 is 290 to 3 to 5 to 4 to 5 date a state a s

# Creatures and Chreats

### Humans

Bandit (Rabble) – Bandit 1, Lifeblood 1 Slaver (Rabble) – Slaver 1, Lifeblood 1 Nomad (Rabble) – Nomad 1, Lifeblood 2 Guard (Rabble) – Guard 1, Lifeblood 2 Cultist (Rabble) – Cultist 1, Lifeblood

Caravan Master (Tough) – Agility 1, Mind 1, Defence 1, Merchant 1, Guard 1, Lifeblood 6 Sword, leather armour

#### Draft horse

Strength 5	Agility 0	Mind -2
Attack 0	Damage d6	
Defence 0	Protection 0	
Lifeblood 20		

#### **Riding horse**

Strength 4	Agility 1	Mind -1
Attack 0	Damage d6	
Defence 0	Protection 0	
Lifeblood 15		

### War horse

Strength 5	Agility 1	Mind -1	
Attack +1	Damage d6H		
Defence 1	Protection 0*		
Lifeblood 20			
*Warhorse can be armoured			

### Camel

Strength 3	Agility 0	Mind -2
Attack 0	Damage d6	
Defence 0	Protection 0	
Lifeblood 20		

#### Carnivorous ape (size)

Strength 3Agility 0Mind 0Bite attack +1Damage d6Claw attack +2Damage d6Attack with both at +0Defence 2Protection d6-3 (1)Lifeblood 13

#### Centipede swarm

Strength -2 Agility 1 Mind -3 Attack 2\* Damage d3 Defence 0 Protection 0 Lifeblood 10 \*Multi attack: If the swarm is near multiple targets at point blank range, it can attack them all.

#### Constrictor snake (large)

Strength 4Agility 1Mind -1Attack +2Damage d6 plus constriction\*Defence 0Protection d3Lifeblood 20\*Target is constricted and gains a penalty dieto physical Task Rolls.

#### **Constrictor vine**

Strength 4	Agility 0	Mind -1	
0	0 1		
Attack 2	Damage speci	al*	
Defence 0	Protection d6		
Lifeblood 30			
Camouflage: F	Hard (-1) to spo	ot.	
*Target is entangled and gets slowly dragged			
back to the base of the vine, being crushed as			
it is dragged. Crush damage is d6L per turn			
and ignores armour. The entangled prey rolls			
a penalty dice on any physical Task Rolls			
while entangle	ed.		

### Deadman fungi (medium)

Strength -2	Agility 1	Mind -4
Attack +1	Damage d3 -	+ poison*
Defence 0	Protection 0	
Lifeblood 10		

Special attack: The tentacles of the fungi inflicts a poisoned wound that acts similarly to a disease. The defender must make a Tough (-2) strength Task Roll to resist the effects. If he does not then the incubation period is 1 turn and the wound quickly festers with the flesh rotting away near instantly causing both strength and agility to gain a penalty dice. The effects do not worsen, but beware further attacks.

### Giant centipede

Strength 4Agility 2Mind -1Attack +2Damage: poison\*Defence 1Protection d6-1 (3)Lifeblood 20\*Poisoned bite, target must succeed on aTough (-2) strength Task Roll or becomeparalyzed.

### Giant frog (huge)

Strength 8Agility 2Mind -2Attack +2Damage special\*Defence 0Protection d3Lifeblood 40

\*Special attack: the frog's tongue darts out up to close range and can grapple an opponent on a successful attack. The prey is then drawn back to the frog's mouth the next round. While grappled the prey has a penalty dice on all physical Task Rolls. When the prey gets back to the frog's mouth, it is swallowed by the frog and takes d6 damage each turn as it's crushed in the frog's jaws/stomach. Once swallowed, the prey gains a second penalty dice to physical Task Rolls, but any damage it inflicts through a successful attack gains a mighty success result.

### Ghost

Strength 0Agility 0Mind 1Fear attack +1 mournful moanFear 1Non-Corporeal: The ghost can only be harmedby sorcery or some alchemy.

### Panther (medium)

Strength 1	Agility 2	Mind -1
Attack +3	Damage d6	
Defence 1	Protection 0	
Lifeblood 10		

### **Tentacled horror (medium)**

Strength 2Agility 2Mind 0Attack +3Damage d6H+2\*Defence 2Protection 1d6-3 (1)Lifeblood 20\*Bonus from the Boon: Ferocious Attack

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