

BEST OF GREYHAWK 11

Excerpted from the World of Greyhawk folder, #11
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May 2, 1997

Adapted by Armenfrast Dec 2009

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INTO THE ABYSS: DEMONS & BLOODSTONE IN GREYHAWK

By *KHYRIC*

Subj: Demons and Bloodstone Pt.I
Date: 96-02-29 01:32:41 EST
From: KHYRIC

Just happen to have some notes on my hard drive about the Throne of Bloodstone, TSRs last real foray into the Abyss (pre-Tanar'ri days). Hopes this brings some questions up to date. I call this the Good Old days:)

The Realm Of Demogorgon.

The smell of rotting jungle vegetation will greet the party as soon as they enter this plane. Jagged mountains and jungle that goes on as far as the eye can see is part of the make up of this plane. The full range of demonic life makes up this plane along with all types of dinosaurs, wild apes, and birdlike monsters. Creatures of animal intelligence have neutral or neutral evil alignments. Intelligent creatures are all chaotic evil. There are no undead on this plane. The great type VI demon known as Balor is said to inhabit this plane and if convinced of a party's merit, can take them to an audience with Demogorgon himself.

The palace of Demogorgon rises several miles high in the center of a great city occupied by over 100,000 demons of all types. A side note to the city is that characters spending time in the city will lose one life level for every hour spent there, no save. The palace itself stretches several miles above the city. It is occupied by demons of all sorts and contains many magical devices and traps. It is impossible to approach the palace without Demogorgon being aware of the approach. He prefers to capture rather than kill his victims, and tortures them thruout time, never letting them die.

The Realm Of Yeenoghu

As the party enters this plane, a barren wasteland of salt lies as far as the eye can see. In the distance, a mansion, the size of a city, is being slowly pulled by thousands of slaves. Gnoll overlords whip the slaves ceaselessly to keep pulling the city. If characters were to attack the gnolls, a flight of 100 type IV demons attack the party. If that 100 is destroyed, a further flight of 100 keep descending upon the PCs until the party is killed, flees, or is captured. If characters surrender or are captured, they are brought before Yeenoghu. It is said that Yeenoghu can be goaded into a one on one fight with a single character, with a wager of freedom to the party as the prize for victory.

The Realm of Juiblex

The land of the faceless lord is filled with all manner of living fungus and rot. The full range of deadly slimes, molds, and jellies thrive off of each other. While on the plane, all characters must save vs. poison at a -5 penalty for every three turns spent here. Failure will bring on the effects of a stinking cloud spell.

The magic of the plane also instantly putrefies all non magical food and water carried by the PC's. Water is changed into gelatinous cube material and food is changed into black pudding. The landscape is a stinking swamp filled with unnatural colors. Fumes rise into the air from the mass of putrid liquid. A single path, wide enough for only single file movement, is the only semi-safe way thru here. Stepping into the swamp at any time or point will result in the effects of a green slime, black pudding, yellow mold, and ochre jelly happening all at once to the creature who treads in. Trying to fly above the muck will result in the swamp spewing forth great streams of itself into the skies to hit the characters with the same effects as mentioned earlier.

The biggest heap of decaying garbage in all the planes is the Palace of Juiblex. As it is approached, the area around the palace is a constant battle ground with manes, type II and type IV demons, and bar-Igura all preying on each other. As the party nears the heap, it will be attacked. If the attack is not repelled at once by great force, a great mob joins in. Juiblex will not take an audience of any kind and will attack any who enter his palace. If the possibility of losing confronts the demon, he will teleport away, only to return later when healed.

The Realm of Baphomet

A ever-changing maze of a plane, it is currently void of its leader. Baphomet, the demon ruler of minotaurs, has been captured by Orcus and is held in the dungeons of the prince of the undead.

The Caverns Of Zugtmoy

Part of the river Styx runs into this plane forming a waterfall on the plane itself. At the bottom of this waterfall, the characters find themselves in a network of caverns-a small node of the layer inhabited by Zugtmoy, demoness lady of fungi (see dungeon level 3...appendix B of module T1-4, the temple of Elemental Evil for details). The entire floor of this level has been turned to mud by the water of the river Styx. Touching the floor at any point has the same effects as any contact with the river itself. The caverns are used to grow the various molds and slimes and puddings that Zugtmoy loves. There is a cumulative 10% chance that any acts of destruction here will bring the demoness here to attack.

The Palace of Graz'zt

The Palace itself takes up one whole plane. The home of millions of demon soldiers who drill constantly for war against both Demogorgon and Orcus. Entering this place will bring 100 type III demons commanded by a Type V demon that will demand that characters sheath their weapons and come with it.

If the characters accept, they will be escorted to the throne room of Graz'zt. After being captured by a sorcerer (Iggwilv) from the prime material plane (Greyhawk) at a crucial moment in a battle against the troglodytes, harpies, and bar-Igura, he escaped at the cost of being confined to his own layer for a century. If the players explain their plans against Demogorgon or Orcus, he will lend help to further their goals, then capture or kill them if they succeed.

The Realm Of Fraz-Urb'luu

Appearing at first to being totally flat and featureless, this layer is totally alive to the wishes of the demon prince of deception, Fraz-Urb'luu.

Besides being able to shape itself however its ruler wishes, it also radiates a powerful anti-magic. After 6 turns in this layer, there is a 90% chance for each magic item (not counting artifacts or relics) to lose its dweomer and become powerless. There is also a 10% chance per turn that the demon lord himself becomes aware of the trespassers and will gate in another demon prince or princess to attack the party. The terrain will assist in the battle against the characters.

The Glacier Of Kostchtchie

A howling arctic wind, orange ice, and a bleak sun greet visitors to this plane of the abyss. No fire based spells work, and it is so cold that unprotected creatures suffer an automatic 1-6 points of damage per round. It is populated by various ice demons, ice para-elementals, ice devils, ice trolls, remorhaz, night hags, and frost giants to name a few. There is a cumulative 10% chance per turn that Kostchtchie will sense the intruders and appear with his pair of Leucrotta (HP 49 each), and his giant white dragon (HD 7) to destroy all he finds.

Iron Fortresses

Each of the four Iron Fortresses located on the layer of Pazunia (The Palace of 1,001 Closets) is inhabited by a major demon: Ahrimanes, Aseroth, Dagon, or Eblis. Their physical bodies are protected here while they are traveling astrally. First sign of danger and they return. Each fortress is guarded by 10 type V demons. Intruders will be first asked to go away, then the major demons return to gate in all kinds of help. There is no treasure here.

The Realm Of Orcus

In a word...HUGE. A ton of adventure detail that I will only touch upon. The 333rd layer of the Abyss, The Palace of Orcus lies in a deep valley surrounded by immense mountains honeycombed with narrow passages. Smaller valleys in the mountains contain cities of undead, a Type VI Demon named Ter-Soth, A Valley of the Crypt Things...24 in all, a City of the Liches...100 Liches, 12 Demi Liches, and 12 Death Knights and the Artifact known as the Hand Of Vecna, a trapped Solar, a Tarrasque, a city of the Zombies....10,000, and The Castle of Orcus complete with surrounding city called Orcusgate.

Well, there you have it. All the facts from the FR Module The Throne of Bloodstone. What is really incredible about this series is how easy it can fit into a World of Greyhawk Campaign.

Examples....and just a few:

*The Kingdoms of Damara and Vaasa might as well be Furyondy and Iuz or Nyron and Ivid or Vecna, you take your pick the story and history is so close in some areas its scary.

*The Witch King and his secret ally, the Grandfather of Assassins. Or could this be The Lich Vecna and the Scarlet Brotherhood???

*St. Sollars...The FR version of St. Cuthbert???, able to zap in and out of the affairs of men.

*Mention of areas in the abyss for side adventures in both theGDQ1-7 modules and the Temple of Elemental Evil module.

*Lets not forget the city of Liches with the Hand of Vecna. (see above), and loads of UA magic items

In short there is a great deal of usable stuff in the Bloodstone modules, the above is just a snippet. If you ever see these adventures...buy them... you might be surprised what you can get if you just make things a little less FR and a little more...shall I say... Greyhawk:)

PANTHEONS OF THE FLANAESS: THOUGHTS ON THE BAKLUNI

By Iquander

Subj: Almor, Ekbir and the Rest
Date: 96-02-29 02:40:19 EST
From: Iquander

Hurm. I don't see Almor as polytheistic at all. Granted, there is a very limited amount of detail on this one, but the nation's Coat of Arms depicts a sun rising over a battlement. I'd be more likely to equate this state to Pelor. One of the prominent national alignments of Almor was neutral good, so it would seem to be a match. Also, it seems like Medegia and Almor are diametrically opposed, and it also seems like Hextor is the religion of record in the Holy See. So, who better to oppose Hextor than Pelor (assuming that Heironeous is not an option)? So, let's get a list of the theocracies of Eastern Oerik:

Theocracy of the Pale: Pholtus (obvious)

Prelacy of Almor: Pelor (?)

Archclericy of Veluna: Rao (this is positive, with some Cuthbert mixed in, probably)

See of Medegia: Hextor (is this explicitly stated in Ivid? It should be.)

This leaves us with a problem, though. What of the Caliphate of Ekbir? I'm currently trying to figure out the clergies of Xan Yae and Zuoken, and I'm all but convinced that the Baklunish pantheon is incomplete. The two alignments of the nation are neutral good and lawful good. I'd be tempted to say that the Caliph speaks for the entire pantheon, but the national alignments seem to deny that. Why? Because the entire Baklunish pantheon is True Neutral, an alignment not even mentioned on the national alignment chart representation of the Caliphate. The description of the nation (typical of all the Baklunish states, actually) is so short that it contains almost zero useful information. Sargent, unfortunately, sheds no light on the issue. It seems, as far as I am concerned, that the chance of Ekbir being devoted to the pantheon, or for that matter, to a member of the pantheon, are slim indeed.

There is an option, though. Think back to the description of the Cup and Talisman of Al-Akkbar. Though Zeb Cook seems to have missed this, I believe that Gygax intended Al-Akbar to be Pelor. The primary alignment of Ekbir is neutral good, thus there would seem to be a match.

The Common gods are common for a reason. Though Pelor is most heavily associated with the Flan, he is also worshipped across the Flanaess, including the Baklunish states. Most of the official Baklunish pantheon are detached or intensely personal. We know for a fact that Istus has few worshippers (though many ask for her help, of course), and that the followers of Xan Yae and Zuoken are devoted to personal goals above all else. What of Geshtai? It's hard to think of a god of Lakes, Rivers and Wells having a Caliph powerful enough to control the most influential of the Baklunish nations.

So, I believe, Pelor is the answer. The followers of Al-Akkbar would have the gumption to get an organized church together, and they would also appeal to the organized mien of lawful good folk. It goes without saying that there are severe holes in the Baklunish pantheon, and I think filling in some "common" deities, especially those of the Greater variety, is the answer (all with Baklunishified names, of course.)

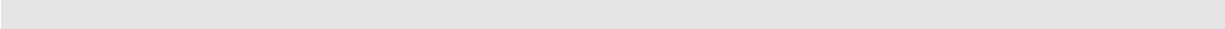
So let's see. What other gods would likely be worshipped by the Bakluni? I know some people will disagree, but I see the Bakluni as a pretty highly magical race. I like Al-Quadim's Sha'irs and elementalists, and I definitely think their magic is different, but it would still tap the same knowledge created by Boccob. Therefore, I think it likely he would be worshipped, as well.

For my own reasons, I'm unsure about Beory. I think the Bakluni have a very different cosmology than the easterners, and I don't really see any version of Beory fitting into that cosmology. Incabulos is probably acknowledged, but not honored. If Pelor is worshipped, I think it likely that some aspect of Nerull survives, perhaps at the head of the pantheon of daemons much honored to the west of the Baklunish states (mentioned in Come Endless Darkness).

Tharizdun, in some form, is almost certainly known, at least to certain sages. His power is universal, and covers all of the pantheons.

I doubt the Oeridian gods are much honored by the Baklunish, and the Suel are probably much hated. I also don't envision the Bakluni as having a developed maritime industry and trade (in part because there really isn't anywhere to go), so I'm not sure they'd need a god of the sea.

An idea, submitted for your approval,
Savant Iquander



A FIEND OF DELCOMBEN

By *KHYRIC*

Subj: Fiend Of Delcomben Pt.1
Date: 96-03-04 16:33:13 EST
From: KHYRIC

From the supplement Iuz the Evil, something not all of us might own, is the following description of the Castle called Delcomben located in the occupied Shield Lands. After that is how I use Klavikus (a Demon of Orcus from the Bloodstone Module) to fit into my campaigns version of Delcomben.

« Delcomben.....Once a castled village acting as an outpost watching the lands of the Hierarchs, Delcomben is now important as a secondary garrison supporting patrols along the Ritensa road. Traveling troops stay in the village, with the castle being occupied by a balor (Type VI demon for you old timers) who does not appear outside it. The balor refuses to communicate with Iuz's troops and no commanders are willing to take the risk of challenging it. The Free Reavers of the Horned Lands have been seen entering the castle, though, and there are reports of two beholders hovering above the central keep in addition to babau and vrock within the castle. Very deep, bass, grinding noises, as if rock grinding on rock, are heard during the nights. What Delcomben's fiendish liege may be up to is any ones guess »

Klavikus, Demon Guardian (Type VI Demon).....1st ED.

AC:-6, MV 6"/15", HD 8+8, hp61, #Att 1, Dmg 1-12+1, SA Whip and Flame for 4d6, spell like abilities SD +1 or better weapon to hit, MR 75%, AL CE, CR 12", CB +1, Size L

Special Items: Ring of protection +4, +2 on saves.

Klavikus has been ordered to guard Delcomben by none other then Orcus himself. The mighty demon prince of the undead detected dangerous ambition in Klavikus that left unchecked, could have caused unwanted problems on his home plane of the abyss. When news came of Iuzs request for servents, guards and armies from the abyssal lords in exchange for magic items, souls and bodies, Orcus saw a chance to do business with the old one.

The demon Klavikus does one day yearn to rule a portion of the abyss himself, but through the trickery of Orcus, a pledge of service has been extracted that binds him to the castle of Delcomben for the next fifty years. In that pledge, the demon must guard the treasure of the keep, located far below, from all who would take it. He now spends his time unoccupied with the dealing of Iuz, but carrying out his sentence reading the thousands of books that he has managed to collect.

Even though Klavikus cannot leave the castle, by means of the pact with Orcus, he still manages to collect new books all the time. In his keep, he works with two Beholder Scholars who research the where abouts of rare and priceless works. Through his dealings with the Free Reaver's, and also by gating in weaker demons to obtain unread or desired material, his collection of books continues to grow. He can possibly be bribed into letting intruders live, with the price being map books, spell books, or whatever-the fiend will read almost anything. A spell book offer will almost always grant passage for a party of characters. A lesser book will have a chance of 50%, modified up or down depending on price, contents, binding, rareness, ect. Several books will increase the chance of success. Characters brought before the demon will not be offered lives or information for books, they must think of it themselves, but if they do, Klavikus might even be persuaded to allow a single PC to escape and return with some books-but he will keep the remaining party members as hostages.

The demon has vowed to stand guard over the treasure of Delcomben Keep, but nothing more. He neither gives direction or help lead any of the old ones troops. All intruders in his lands are ordered to be brought to him for his pleasure as part of the pact. PCs will be taken to the castles doors, led in, and then left alone, their way out barred from the outside. Babau and Vrock within the stonekeep will then escort the intruders to their lord for judgment of their worth. If attacked, Klavikus will call to his babau and vrock guards (numbering 20), and his two Examiner Beholder scholars wielding mage wands of lightning and fireball.

The grinding noises, sometimes heard within the castle, are in fact the sounds of excavation to the vault below by the demon guardians minions. News of the actual hoard he has pledged to watch over has surfaced, found by one of his Examiner Beholders, in a tome obtained from the Free Reavers. Klavikus has taken steps to "refotify" the resting place of the old ones treasure.

Taken from the book, 'Histories and tales of mighty tomes of evil' by the mage known as Cranzer of Riftcrag, details of the possible resting places of potent works of ill has come to the attention of the curious balor. If the vault below holds any of the mentioned works of damnation, Klavikus will soon find out.

Well...there you have it, most of it that is. In my Greyhawk the vault has still not been explored or opened, but the characters do know it exists. They believe it holds ether powerful items of good not of use to the Old One, or some of the books from Dragon #225 (detailed in the Dragon back issues part on the TSR page). As for Klavikus, he met the PCs when they were captured outside of Delcomben on their way to Laws Forge on a scouting mission. All involved (except the mage p.c.) found that meeting and the ones after it beneficial to all sides. Since then, the demons hunger for knowledge has been well fed-and still keeps getting larger, and the party has found a source for both information and adventure. And isn't that what Greyhawk is all about??)

Well, if this peaks anyone's interest, I will post the rest of Iuzs "Pact with Fiends" later including the warring balor and marilith from the village of Stahzer. KHY

EXPLORING THE FORBIDDEN CITY

By Iquander

Subj: I1, Hepmonaland, etc.
Date: 96-03-06 01:57:21 EST
From: Iquander

The Oerth Journal is (with issue 3) starting a regular column called "The Good Oerth," that will discuss various "off the map" areas. While it's possible that the column will eventually contain information on the asian cultures and nations of western Oerik, we're starting off small, with areas like the Amedio, Hemppmonaland and the Dry Steppes. Because Hepmonaland is likely an upcoming article, I thought I'd check out module I1, Dwellers of the Forbidden City, to see if I could find anything.

Boy, was I disappointed. The module is set in Hepmonaland (in unexplored mountains just south of Darlene's map), but that's about all the geographical information given. While it's unfortunate, in hindsight, that a lot of these earlier modules didn't focus more on the world, others, like the excellent Hidden Shrine of Tamoachan, have nonetheless provide ample opportunity for expansion. Dwellers of the Forbidden City, unfortunately, does little in this area.

It's a shame, too, because the setup is fairly interesting, and the overhead view of the Forbidden City itself is quite intriguing. Unfortunately, Dave Cook took up nearly 80% of the module in the boring, generic dungeon-like cave system that leads to the rift in which the city is situated.

Since we know so little about the culture of the people of Hepmonaland (outside of David Howrey's "Dark Continent" contributions, about which I have certain reservations), I was hoping to find just a few lines to spark my imagination about the people who once lived here. If the descriptions of the buildings echoed Tamoachan, for instance, a case could be made that the Olman Empire reached as far north and east as the location of this module.

All of the four or so buildings that play a part in this module aren't really described in terms of architecture, so once again, we're left without a clue. Of course, we can make up our own descriptions, but there's something satisfying about finding it all in a module. I know, I know, it was a different period in gaming, a different time in design. Too bad it was a stinky illogical one, though.

Indeed, it's almost impossible to find out if the original inhabitants of the Forbidden City were even humans. As the place is now infested with Yuan-Ti, it would be easy (and lots of ambiguous DM descriptions don't help overmuch) to assume that these creatures crafted the city.

As it turns out, it was humans. About three paragraphs from the end of the module, Cook finally reveals something about the city to us. While investigating something in nearby caves, adventurers find that they have travelled back in time, to the period before the coming of the Yuan-Ti when humans ruled what would become the Forbidden City.

This last of four possible campaign "expansion" ideas (a three sentence description of a building in the city could accurately be called an "expansion" upon the provided material) gives us some clues that can maybe give us some insight into the past of Hepmonaland.

The Forbidden City (which was, of course, called something different) was built a long, long time ago (it has to be several thousand years, imho, because the original humans have de-evolved into really deformed mongrel-men) in a mountain rift deep in the Hepmonaland jungle (south of the Pelisso Swamps). They lived there for long enough to build all the way to the borders of the rift, and all told, the city probably housed about 2,000 people (judging by the size shown on the city map).

It's unlikely, given the geography of the place, that the city-dwellers traded outside of their own community. A huge field in the northeast portion of the rift provided vegetable footstuffs for the entire community. A small lake in the middle of that field was well stocked with all sorts of fish, and by these means, the citizens were largely self-reliant.

In fact, it is this self reliance that caused their downfall. Since they did not communicate much with the humans of the south, they had no warning of an oncoming invasion that would destroy their society. A strange race of good-aligned bat-like humanoids tried to warn the city of the coming invaders, but were unsuccessful.

What made the invasion so horrible was the nature of the attackers. Though the city had never before had to defend itself (there are no obviously constructed military buildings in the city), they had prepared for defending themselves against the tribesmen who were their neighbors. They were not, however, prepared to face the Yuan-Ti.

These strange snake creatures attacked with great fury, and the city fell with little effort. The humans who were not killed outright were enslaved. Nothing is known as to the fate of the bat-folk. Perhaps they were destroyed by the Yuan-Ti, or perhaps they still inhabit the caves beneath northern Hepmonaland.

Some humans, however, escaped the Yuan-Ti by entering the primitive sewer system below the city. There, they managed to escape their pursuers by taking refuge in the natural caves that bisected the main ducts. They remain, in some form, there today, though they are much different than they were thousands of years ago. Though still human, they have grown to be incredibly susceptible to light, and now worship Ranet, a kindly goddess of darkness who drives away those who would bring light to the undercity. There is a fabulous temple to the deity(?) below the city, where it is said that the serpentine form of Ranet herself holds court.

Some time after the Yuan-Ti established themselves in the city, the greater empire that had been created by their race to the south began to decline, and many of the Yuan-Ti were called away. Those that remained were eventually thinned due to disease and natural predators, and the upkeep of the City fell to almost nothing.

About CY 420, a group of Bullywugs, probably from the Pelisso Swamp, found their way to the Forbidden City (called such by the human tribesmen who neighbored the city and saw it as a place of their ancestors--which is probably true, given that they were likely related in some way to the folk who originally dwelled there) and parleyed with the Yuan-Ti. They brought what they called a "god-egg" to the city, and were given the northeastern plains, which had, in the past centuries, become a swamp, as a domain. The egg proved to be that of a Pan Lung, a wingless dragon from the Far West who is now worshipped by the Bullywugs.

So it was for over a hundred years until a human mage named Horan found his way to the place, and encouraged the Yuan-Ti to strive for empire again. They did so, and began to court the attentions of a powerful outer-planar personage, some say even a demon prince. They have managed to open a gate to this creature's plane, and it is unknown what will occur should such a fiend walk the Oerth.

Recently, the Yuan-Ti have been contacted by a group known as the Black Brotherhood. It is suspected that this group is a special faction of the Scarlet Brotherhood, and many have suggested that the mage Horan may have been aligned with this group. Such an event would not be out of character for the Brotherhood, and many fear what might come of an alliance between the two groups.

That's about it, really. I've made certain connections on my own, but that's all there is. I guess from that information we can assume that the Yuan-Ti once had an "empire" (which is probably a relative term) in Hepmonaland, and that that empire no longer exists (though it would be fun to have a few vestiges left). Since Yuan-Ti are described as "once-human demon worshippers," it's likely that they were merely a faction of a larger human empire who managed to take over those areas not aligned with them in the first place. The appearance of Ranet, herself a serpent-goddess, suggests that the original human culture had a fixation with snakes that probably affected the truly evil of their society in really bad ways.

I am intrigued by the bat-people, and I think it would be fun if they were still around. I tire of the normal AD&D races at times, and these folk seem just unique enough to inspire some truly interesting play.

Looking at what I've just typed out, it does seem like there was, in actuality, quite a lot of material in the module. That may be true, but I only wish that II had been more like C1, and then our work would be cut out for us.

What have some of you done with this module? I think it poorly executed, but intriguing. Have any of you had different impressions? How do you view the cultures of Hepmonaland, and what do you think of this module, in particular?

Iquander



THE KINGDOM OF FURYONDY: AN ALTERNATE CAMPAIGN

By Wildwood72 & additional by Aria13

Subj: What If.. Part 1

Date: 96-03-04 11:12:43 EST

From: Wildwood72

Well, here's the post on an alternate Furyondy that I promised. I don't claim that it is the best, and feel free to comment away. The only major difference in my campaign and "canon" at the beginning of the campaign was that Mayahaine appeared in 577 instead of during the Greyhawk Wars. She has taken over the active resistance against Iuz that St. Cuthbert carries to this day in the "historical" Greyhawk.

As I stated in an earlier post, this is a greatly simplified version of an earlier campaign of mine, and parts have been left out. This is because at least two of my players have access to this folder, and I plan on running a variation of this in the near future.

Furyondy

The disappearance of the Prince of Furyondy and the Provost of Veluna destroyed the carefully laid plans of the forces of good in the Flaness, strengthening all that we call evil.

Evil became so overconfident in all of its myriad forms that it hid one of the symbols of what is held good under the very noses of those who sought the two leaders out. Caught by a union of evil and seperated among it's members, Thrommal was held by Iuz, who struck a pact with the Scarlet Brotherhood to further evil on Oerik. The Old One received Thrommal, while the Scarlet Brotherhood got Jolene.

Hidden deep within the Temple of Elemental Evil, Thrommel was thought to be dead at the hands of the Scarlet Brotherhood by all, until in C.Y. 577 an unlikely band of adventurers entered the Temple to destroy the evil within. During the course of their 2 week adventure in the Temple, several significant things happened. On the fifth day of fighting and exploring, a crypt that appeared to be warded from without to contain a great evil was discovered. When the crypt was opened, a great mystery became evident to the heroes. A vampire, with a wooden stake barely penetrating it's chest, lay within the bier. However, to a half-elven fighter in the group who had also become a fledgling priest of Mayahaine, and was considered a bane to all undead, this did not seem right. Using a god-given ability to detect undead (as he was an undead hunter), he detected no undeath within the "vampire," and the illusion that covered the body melted away. Revealed now in his true form was none other than Thrommel, Crown Prince of Furyondy.

During the three days that the group took to bring Thrommel to a place of safety, they tried their collective best to bring the Prince up to date on what had happened in the 4 years that he had lost. When the group was satisfied that Burne and Rufus of the Village of Hommllet had the situation under control, they returned to the Temple, more determined than ever, and uplifted by the Prince's promise of support for their cause. During the few days, the group suffered heavy losses, as the Temple's inhabitants were forewarned and ready, springing many ambushes and setting no few traps. During the final battle within the temple, the survivors were horrified when none other than Iuz appeared to combat them. They were only saved by the appearance of Mayahaine, brought by the pleas of her faithful. Not wishing to confront each other before mortals, they both left the Temple. The group eventually figured out the secret of Goldenskull and the Temple was utterly destroyed.

While this was happening, King Belvor was overjoyed that his son was returned to him, and arranged for advisors to bring Thrommel up to date on the goings on in the Flaness. However, Thrommel was so heartbroken and sick at the loss of Jolene that he paid them little mind. One particular advisor got through to him, however, sympathizing with him for his loss, and appealing to Thrommel's sense of "right". This follower of the Scarlet Brotherhood relied on Thrommel's black and white approach to life, saying that the ones responsible for Jolene's abduction must be stopped at all costs.

Meanwhile, while radiantly happy, King Belvor's health was slowly slipping. No amount of magical or mundane healing could ease the unnatural pain that now gnawed through his body. Each day, the King appeared weaker and weaker, with none able to give him aid. Some whisper that the Brotherhood's agents were the cause, others that the root of this came from far away (perhaps even as far as Ket...).

As fate would have it, King Belvor died on the same day that the adventurers who rescued Thrommel (now known as Fire and Fury due to the spectacular end of the Temple) arrived in Chendl. Thrommel, numb with grief, listened to their report of what happened after he had left the area of the Temple, and became enraged when the Old One's appearance was mentioned. Now he had a target for his anger, which had been mounting day by day since his return.

On the day that he was crowned King, Thrommel issued an ultimatum to his nobles. They could either support him in his holy war against Iuz, or they could refuse and be branded traitors. The southern nobles fought against this long and hard, but in the end were convinced that their own lives were worth more than disobeying their new king. With the full backing of the churches of Pelor, Mayahaine, and Heironeous, and with his nobles firmly in line and troops from Veluna backing him, Thrommel invaded the southern lands of Iuz, taking the cambion almost completely completely unawares. Thrommel had seen the evil within the hearts of Iuz's spies in his court, and had kept the plans secret from them. Only after the invasion had begun did Thrommel have them captured and executed.

Caught with his powers weakened by his battle with Vecna, and with his attention focused on the Hold of Stonefist and the Horned Society, Iuz was ill prepared for the invasion. He had only a few of his regulars and the assorted humanoid rabble of the Vesve to draw upon. Desperate, he called upon his allies in the Abyss and even took the field himself, stalling the Furyondian advance at Dorokaa.

At the same time, the Shield Lands strengthened their northern and western borders, expecting an attack from either the Horned Society or Furyondy, seeking to reclaim their former vassel state. This never happened, but Iuz was busy defending his lands from Furyondian and Velunan troops, and never attempted to invade a ready Shield Lands.

This dividing of his power changed this version of the war, however, as he did not have the time to gather allies as he would have normally had. The allies still came, but later than in the "official" war, so that the best Iuz could do was reclaim the lands he lost, and annex part of the Horned Society. Thus, his gains were extremely modest compared to the official war. He still held the lands of The Rovers of the Barrens and the Hold of Stonefast, but Furyondy and the Shield Lands remained more or less intact.

The rest of the war continued as per Greyhawk Wars, with no major changes other than the ones mentioned above (i.e., the Lost Lands were still lost, the Great Kingdom still self-destructed, etc.). The eastern and western fronts were unaffected by this turn of events.

Ok, everyone. I know that I am no great literary genius, and that some of the things I wrote about are stretching the limits of WoG. These were only part of the things that shaped that particular campaign. Many (if not most) of the details that led Furyondy to this state must remain out of the folder (because of players being lurkers). These things happened the 1st time I ran this. Any comments about how you'd change things are welcome, because this is about to be replayed with a different group of players, and I wish things to run as smoothly (and well) as possible.

Thanks all,

Bill (cringing in anticipation of the responses...)

Subj: Lost Line of Furondy
Date: 96-03-07 21:30:17 EST
From: Aria13

Taking this Thommel idea and supposing it true. You could get a lost line of Furondian nobility. Like the last Czars of Russia or the lost Dauphin of France. Thus, while "alternate", this story line could be worked into actual history with fascinating consequences. Nothing stops it. Supposed history can be just that. Again Wild. Excellent posts.

Aria13

EXPLORING HEPMONALAND

By DTorsiello & SEPieper

Subj: Hepmonaland
Date: 96-03-07 09:44:14 EST
From: DTorsiello

Rog-

I agree with most everything you said in your post regarding Hepmonaland, but one of the things I'd like to point out is that there would be some differences in technology based on climatic reasons if nothing else. I mean, I wouldn't expect the Hepmona to be walking through the jungle in full plate mail any more than I would expect an Athasian to -- it would be impractical and would also shatter the atmosphere. Please -- everyone on the council and on this board -- I beg of you, for once, can we avoid strangling ourselves with this damn political correctness?

At any rate, in my old campaign, there was one ethnic group purely indigenous to the continent; whom we referred to as the "Hepmona," or, singularly, "Hepmon." I don't know if this conflicts with published material, but my understanding was that the Olman people populated the Amedio jungle, south of the Sea Hold, and were not native to Hepmonaland. I saw the Olman culture as Central American (obviously), with a little dash of the south Pacific (in ye olden days, there really was no material branded as purely "Greyhawk," so we used to mix and match. We put X1, Isle of Dread, just south of the Olman Isles and sort of tacked on the polynesian natives of that module to the Olmans, retroactively, after the WoG box came out in '83).

We patterned the Hepmona after middle eastern peoples. They worshipped Egyptian, Babylonian and Sumerian deities. I know alot, if not most, posters think of the Baklun as middle eastern, but I always saw them as more Asian. In any case, I only use real-world ethnic groups as a sort of template for purposes of reference; I do not see any of the GH groups as actually being African, Asian, or even European, for that matter.

The fringes of the continent were rather primitive, and there was some racial mixture between native Hepmona, Olman, and Suel (I would throw in some of those "dark continent" adventures from Dungeon magazine in these wild areas, if I still played). As we penetrated more deeply inland, the peoples were a more pure Hepmon strain, and lived in city-states modeled (politically, not culturally) after those of ancient Greece. The biggie we created was the city of Ahtept, ruled by council of priests of the Egyptian pantheon. The head of this council was the centuries-old Corim, priest of Osiris. Somewhere outside the city, hidden in the jungle, was the lair of the evil Amin Seth, priest of Set, and hated adversary of Corim. He dwelled in a pyramid that was externally invisible to the eyes of anyone of non-evil alignment. He was also the zealous guardian of the Infinity Well -- anyone drinking of its waters, ceased to age. Legend had it that Corim, as well as Amin Seth, had both drunk from it, and that they had actually been fighting one another for the better part of a millenium. It was whispered that if Amin Seth captured you alive, he would force you to drink its waters so he could keep you and torture you for all eternity. As a priest of Set, Amin Seth's dark powers often had a snake motif; and he was usually served by the Yuan-Ti (he was actually created after adventuring through I1, The Forbidden City, as the trueringleader of the Yuan-Ti).

Needless to say, the inspiration for most of this came from REH's Stygia, in his Conan stories. Anyway, that was my take on Hepmonaland.

I posted my last post before I read the others, so just for the sake of adding my two cents, I agree with Oeridian's interpretation that the Yuan-Ti are of corrupted human stock. I always thought that they were cursed-- in my campaign, it was Set, but if you prefer not mixing real world mythology with GH (*cough, Erik, *cough, *cough), you could make it a GH god. "Who," you ask? Who else? Tharizdun.

-DT

Subj: Re:Hepmonaland
Date: 96-03-07 18:28:22 EST
From: SEPieper

I don't have the Forbidden City module, so I can't comment on it, but I do have a few ideas about Hepmonaland.

A recent (581 CY) expedition from the Sea Barons discovered the ruins of several cities far to the south, near Oerth's equator, in the jungles of Hepmonaland. Whether the people who lived in these cities were part of the old Olman empire rumored to have existed in this part of the world or a previously unknown culture is still not known, because the expedition, weakened by disease was unable to explore the ruins. What is known is that the cities are now ruined and overgrown by the jungle.

Did the civilization decline naturally, was it destroyed by an outside invader(possibly the Yuan-ti empire mentioned by Iquander or by the migrating Suel savages who occupy the northern reaches of the continent) or was something more sinister at work. The primitive people who occupy the area today refuse to even approach the ruins, fearful of the slithering evils that are said to lurk within (Yuan-ti, Naga, Dragons?). The leaders of the previous expedition were planning a return to explore the ruins in the next year(582 CY). They never got underway due to the beginning of the wars, and it has since been abandoned.

I see the ruins they found as being from a Mayan-like civilization; small city-states skirmishing amongst themselves, step pyramids, blood sports, human sacrifice, etc. The people living around the ruins are the remains of that culture, although they themselves do not remember any of their past glories.

Steve

GODS OF THE YUAN-TI

By Oeridian2

Subj: Gods of the Yuan-Ti
Date: 96-03-07 20:56:52 EST
From: Oeridian2

That was an excellent question posed a few messages upstream. Exactly who was it the human ancestors of the Yuan-Ti were worshipping that brought them to their current state? We have something of a precedent from the ancient Flan kingdom of Sulum (mentioned in "Rary the Traitor") in which all the inhabitants were transformed into the fiersome manscorpions in a single moment, through the devices of "evil gods."

With the Yuan-Ti, I always liked the idea of a slower, more hideous transformation of the population over the course of generations. Imagine dark and forbidden rites of demon-worshippers, nine months after which a new litter of slightly-more-snakelike babes appear in the city. The process wouldn't be a mystery to the people; they would be active, enthusiastic participants, even if they were ignorant of the long-term effects. Eventually the reptilian aspects would gradually be accepted as "normal" until, one day, the whole population might be transformed but could still consider themselves human! (And how would the followers of Wastri deal with that conundrum, I wonder?)

This still begs the question, which gods, demons, devils, whatever were being worshipped? We aren't helped from the official list of Greyhawk deities, as no evil deity seems to be particularly associated with serpents. I hesitate to bring Set into Greyhawk, and I think that Tharizdun is overdone as a source of evil.

The answer? There's always the arch-devil Geryon (half-man, half-serpent). And Demogorgon is as equated with serpents and lizards as he is with apes and simians (his cousin Mandrillagon notwithstanding), and there's nothing to say that a cabal of particularly powerful Marliiths (that's Type IV demon to the rest of us) couldn't have "hatched" the scheme, so to speak. Plus, there is nothing to say that one couldn't invent a new patron demon of serpents for the purpose.

Actually, my GH campaign is restarting this Sunday, and I was hard up for a long-term opponent for the party. I think I just found it. Drow do get old after a while. :)

Joseph

THE ORPHIDIAN MYSTERIES

By T2Tyger

Subj: Orphidian Mysteries
Date: 96-03-09 03:18:17 EST
From: T2Tyger

The Orphidian Mysteries is a sensationalist monograph believed penned by the itinerant charlatan-sage and hedge-wizard Ursk the Brown, the so-called Shattered Mage. A montebanke of the first order Ursk has been declared a heretic in the Theocracy of the Pale is unwelcome in Veluna, being charged with sedition, and faces charges of outlawry in Nyronde, Furondy - and the Pomarj! Making his home in Rel Astra, or Dyvers when things get too hot, this raconteur, and self styled bon vivant, makes a living producing treatises on a variety of questionable subjects, then passing himself off to wealthy patrons as an accomplished man of action and sagacity. While not purely a liar, and capable of enough veracity to incite certain factions, the Shattered Mage's work must be viewed with a jaundiced eye.

The Orphidian Mysteries is not his most original work, being largely a compilation of the work of others, with just enough of the sensationalist "sage's" own musings to stamp it as his own. Still, in bringing together disparate sources, Ursk has performed something of a service to more scholarly academics, though such would never admit to reading his scribblings. Still, Ursk's sources can be trusted, even if Ursk can't.

His monographs, like scholastic plagues, sweep through the Flaneass every so often and are gone. Copied on cheap parchment, they are notoriously ill wrought, much as Ursk. Or so say the wags. The Orphidian Mysteries is currently available in Greyhawk for 5 coppers and nearby Dyvers for the same. It's a silver if you want it autographed by the "author" who is currently in residence. "On the run from those slithering idiots," or so he says. Doubtless, a publicity stunt to lend an air of dangerous allure to the Mysteries.

(Copied from Urnst Allegemine)

Orphidian Mysteries - Introduction

The Empire of the Yuan-ti once stretched from the Amedio Jungle to Hepmonaland. The people we know as the Olman lived in slavery till freed by the renegade Yuan-ti deity Kukulkan. Kukulkan's revolt shattered the Orphidian Empire and upon its ruins rose the Olman Empire.

So long ago did these events occur that no complete history of the snake-men's empire exists. Scholars have only been able to piece together what is known from scattered reports of explorations and discoveries in the far south. Yet, so disturbing is the picture that emerges that what knowledge is available has been widely suppressed.

That the Yuan-ti practiced demon worship is well known. That they kept human slaves and performed human sacrifice is not as well known but hardly surprising. That the snake-men engaged in deviate relations with snakes, demons and conducted foul breeding programs to strengthen their hybrid race is whispered. But none will speak of the Orphidian Mysteries and the cults that once flourished, carrying out blasphemous rights, whose chants still echo through the Flaneass.

Orphidian Mysteries - Chapter 1 - The Olmani

Reports of Shrine of Tamoachan tell us little about the Olman deity Kukulkan that the Olmani themselves will not willingly divulge. Kukulkan is a messianic figure, who once saved the Olman people, only to depart, promising to return one day. As such, Kukulkan is not the most prominent Olmani deity, yet his importance is in no way diminished for all that.

Depicted as a feathered serpent, Kukulkan's connection with things serpentine is obvious. However, one might discount any connection with the Yuan-ti based upon mere physical similarity were it not for accounts of the Nacehual - The Achieved Ones. The name itself suggests some transformation. Their description suggests even

more. Cipactonal and Oxomoco as they are named are described as having bodies "covered with dry, crackling snakeskin." This might well describe a Yuan-ti hybrid of some sort. Still, the account is not precise.

If we find, however, clearer evidence of the Yuan-ti in both the Amedio Jungle and Hepmonaland and it is noted that they once possessed an empire, does not geography suggest that the Olman Islands would have been part of that empire perforce? It makes some sense. That it may be more of a certainty considering Kukulkan and the Nacehual does not seem that far of a stretch.

Orphidian Mysteries - Chapter 2 - The Amedio

That the Yuan-ti exist in the Amedio Jungle cannot be doubted. Such is common knowledge in the Hold of the Sea Princes, which has significant and frequent with the southern jungle. The anonymously published Voyage of the Dragonspray adds considerably more detail.

This adventure recounts an expedition to the Amedio Jungle which encountered not only pure-blood and half-breed Yuan-ti but Abominations as well. The presence of this later creature more than supports the conclusion that the Yuan-ti are present in the Amedio in numbers to any familiar with the habits of the snake-men. What's more an entire Yuan-ti lair was encountered. Within that lair were discovered tapestries. The author recounts "Of the three tapestries, two depict whole armies of Yuan-ti overrunning human cities, while the third is of humans being changed into Yuan-ti by some gigantic snake-man, obviously a god."

In light of this discovery, there can be no doubt about the presence of Yuan-ti in the Amedio Jungle. Similarly, that they were once part of a greater nation or empire is obvious.

The religious tapestry apparently depicts the Yuan-ti god Sarthis. The author was mistaken for this deity's avatar and was referred to as "Sarthis" after the discovery of artifacts connected with the deity.

Orphidian Mysteries - Chapter 3 - Hepmonaland

Across the Azure Sea from the Amedio Jungle is Hepmonaland. Evidence discovered here suggests that this may have once been the capital of the Orphidian Empire. Accounts of the so-called "Forbidden City" name it a ruined city of an ancient Yuan-ti empire. While the Yuan-ti of the Forbidden City are no longer the power they once were, the accounts make clear that they are once more seeking to assert themselves. Chillingly, they are apparently being aided by humans! Worse still, fragmentary observations suggest a danger of near cosmic proportions.

The tales of the Forbidden City include reference to a certain Hall of the Serpent God. Within this hall is a bas-relief of a "cobra-headed man" overlooking scenes of snakes coiling about men. Can this be anything but a representation of Sarthis? This connection becomes more possible when we consider the tantalizing rumors of the "fabulous lost temple of Ranet." Ranet is said to be a "giant-snake-queen," who still guards her "temple." The implication is clear.

Ranet is the Yuan-ti "snake-queen" to Sarthis' "snake-king." Together, they form the cosmic king and queen of the Yuan-ti - the creator god and his consort. Yet, this attribution flies in the face of the common knowledge that the Yuan-ti worship demons. Indeed, evidence of these foul practices were reported by the explorers of the Forbidden City.

The adventurers tell of encountering "vampiric orchid-like plantmen" called Orchonos, issuing from a minor gate to some unnamed plane. An unnamed tentacled being had to be driven back through the gate. This seems very likely a description of some demon as the Yuan-ti are said to be "worshipping" the being. For lack of a better name, I call this being Orchon. It's servitors being identified as Orchonos. Possibly, "the spawn of Orchon." As we will presently see, this type of demon worship is not uncommon by Yuan-ti. How then to explain Yuan-ti "gods."

If, as seems likely, the tales of Kukulkan reflect a renegade Yuan-ti god rebelling against other Yuan-ti deities, what more likely candidates are there than Ranet and Sarthis? Perhaps, there was no real victor? Perhaps, Ranet,

Sarthis and Kukulkan destroyed one another or nearly so? In the ensuing vacuum, the Yuan-ti turned to demon worship.

Orphidian Mysteries - Chapter 4 - Eastern Demons

In the Memoirs of Hirikito Toshubu, known to exist in the library of the sage Hodukuri, comes the most detailed account of the demon worship and abominable breeding practices of the Yuan-ti. Of somewhat questionable veracity, the Memoirs are yet so rich in detail that they can hardly be discounted. Indeed, much of the accounts therein exactly match, in greater detail, stories of common currency. Thus, even with reluctance, we must accept that the Memoirs have much to tell us concerning the Yuan-ti.

The demon Sch'theraqqasstt is identified as the creator of a fourth type of Yuan-ti - the Histachii. The mating of Histachii with Histachii is said to produce Pure-bloods, while the mating of Histachii and Pure-bloods is said to produce half-breeds. Pure-blood, half-breed and Abomination Yuan-ti may mate to produce Abominations. Thus, according to this account, Histachii are identified as the progenitors of the Yuan-ti race.

Histachii care created from human stock. Forced to drink the monstrous Black Broth on the Night of Venom, willing or unwilling imbibers undergo go the transformation into Histachii. The transformation is successful or they die. The resulting Histachii are little more than mindless breeders.

Sch'theraqqasstt is said to have thus created the Yuan-ti race who founded a great empire upon his worship. That empire fell when the demon attempted to become as one with his plane of the Abyss and succeeded at the cost of his sanity, becoming more and less powerful than before.

Certainly, this account is self serving and from its detail could only come from those familiar with the Cult of Sch'theraqqasstt. However, there yet may be some truth to it. The Empire spoken of is said to be in eastern lands and would thus be distinct from that of the Orphidian Empire of Hepmonaland and the Amedio. Certainly, Histachii are unknown in the Flaneass and thus may well be the creation of Sch'theraqqasstt. That, they are the progenitors of the Yuan-ti race, however, seems pure hyperbole, self-serving cultist propaganda.

One might speculate, however, that the worship of the demon Sch'theraqqasstt replaced the fallen Yuan-ti gods in the Flaneass. Two obscure sources hint at this possibility. The miscellany attributed to Drawmij, the so-called "Greyhawk Adventures" speaks of a land to the "Far East," whose description matches that in the Memoirs of Hirikito Toshubu. Even more exacting is the description given in the Fate of Istus, a series of religious scrolls concerning that goddess, which if true would speak to the puissance of that Baklunish power. Therein are accounts of easterners exactly like those mentioned in the Memoirs. The scrolls, ominously, place these easterners in the Tilvanot Peninsula, home of the Scarlet Brotherhood. Thus, though remote in origin, the worship of Sch'theraqqasstt might well have come into the Flaneass from some "Far Eastern" lands.

By any account, Sch'theraqqasstt's power in a resurgent Yuan-ti Empire did not last. Undone by his own schemes, the demon is now only a peripheral figure if the Memoirs are to be believed. The most recent, and euphonious, accounts of the Yuan-ti, penned by the miscreant Dark Sage of Greyhawk, name one Merrshaulk as "god" of the Yuan-ti. Little is said of this being, save that he slumbers in the Abyss. Thus, might not this "god" be, in truth, one more demon? It seems likely. That Merrshaulk slumbers can only be wondered at. He is noted to be in decline but the cause of that decline is not specified. However, certain horrific correspondences suggest a possible explanation.

Orphidian Mysteries - Chapter 5 - Black Brotherhood

Returning, for the moment to the accounts of the Forbidden City, mention is made of the Black Brotherhood. Humans who would see the Yuan-ti return to power. All sane men must quake at this passing account.

That the Brotherhood is deemed "Black" harkens to the terrible rites of the Night of Venom when the Black Broth is imbibed. That the Brotherhood is so named raises the specter of another Brotherhood, one of Scarlet. Certainly, the scrolls of the goddess Istus connect easterners of a kind mentioned as followers of Sch'theraqqasstt with the Scarlet Brotherhood. Certainly, the Forbidden City is not so very far from the strongholds of the Scarlet

Brotherhood. Both Brotherhoods are said to be "secret." Do not the Scarlet Brotherhood and the Yuan-ti both engage in breeding programs? Is this all mere coincidence?

Of course, the Scarlet Brotherhood has been identified with the worship of Tharizdun. What then? Might not Tharizdun seek followers such as the Yuan-ti? Might not this explain Merrshaulk's waning power? If true, could the prophecies of Kukulkan's return in messianic fashion foretell a conflict between the feathered serpent and dread Tharizdun?

Then again, one must wonder. Are the Yuan-ti allies of the Scarlet Brotherhood, through the auspices of the Black Brotherhood, or do the Yuan-ti secretly control the Scarlet Brotherhood? In which case, Tharizdun must be more impressed with the Yuan-ti than the Brothers of Scarlet. This might well explain why, despite references to Tharizdun, the Scarlet Brotherhood is often associated with more traditionally Suel deities. Wheels may well turn within wheels.

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Best of Greyhawk #10	
1. GA: Horror in Greyhawk	(Folder #10)
2. Koravia	TSR Roger
3. A Plague Years Campaign: Godwalkers	QSamantha
4. Prisoners of Zagig	Aria13 & Iquander
5. PoF: Scarlet Gods	Iquander
6. The Continent of Hepmonaland	Lefto & Iquander
	TSR Roger
Best of Greyhawk #11	
1. Into the Abyss: Demons and Bloodstone in Greyhawk	(Folder #11)
2. PoF: Thoughts on the Bakluni	KHYRIC
3. A Fiend of Delcomben	Iquander
4. Exploring the Forbidden City	KHYRIC
5. Kingdom of Furyondy: An Alternate Campaign	Iquander
6. Exploring Hepmonaland	Wildwood72 & Aria13
7. Gods of the Yuan-Ti	DTorsiello & SEPieper
8. The Orphidian Mysteries	Oeridian2
9. Appendix One: Best of Greyhawk - Table of Contents, #1-#11	T2Tyger
	Nellisir

AQ = Al-Qadim
D,CoA = Dyvers, City of Adventure
GA = Greyhawk Adventures
GG = Greyhawk Gazetteer
GK = The Great Kingdom
GO = The Good Oerth
GoF = Gem of the Flanaess
GP = Greyhawk Powers
OoF = Overview of the Flanaess
PoF = Pantheons of the Flanaess

End Best of Greyhawk #11
