

ATLAS OF MYTHIKA

THE UNTAMED NORTH

WILD LANDS OF BARBARIANS AND AMAZONS



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ATLAS OF MYTHIKA

HYPERBOREA

True and Verified Facts About the Barbarians of the Wild North

by Eurymion the Far-Travelled, Lyrist, Scholar and Adventurer

Translated by **Olivier Legrand**



North of the Land of the Three Cities, past the monster-infested **Helicon Mountains**, lies the frozen land of **Hyperborea**, home to fierce tribes of fur-clad, sun-worshipping Barbarians.

Maze Masters Guide, p 8

The Far North

The first thing to understand about Hyperborea is that it does not really exist.

There is no Hyperborean nation or culture. The very concept of Hyperborea is an abstraction invented by Minean scholars and explorers to put a single label on several very different tribal peoples who live north of the Minean lands ; as a name, Hyperborea (which can roughly be translated as « far north ») has no more cultural significance than other cartographic expressions of ethnocentrism, such as « terra incognita » or « the orient ».

This fact has not prevented most Minean scholars from treating the various Hyperborean peoples as a single nation of « barbarians » (another distinctive concept of ethnocentrism), despite the fact that the so-called Hyperborean tribes can be divided into at least three very different cultural groups, with different customs, different physical characteristics and even different deities...

The main reason for this over-simplistic classification is that those tribes share a common language, but anybody who has studied Borean knows that this « common language » actually includes many regional variations and dialects – far more than, say, our beloved Minean language.

Yet, those same scholars would cringe at the idea of Thenans, Heraklians, Argoseans and Seriphians being viewed as non-distinct components of a single, hypothetical Minean nation, even though they speak the same language, worship the same gods and have very similar customs: if we consider that the small cultural differences that exist between our four city-states are enough to give each one of them a distinct identity, then we must logically acknowledge the major differences that exist between the so-called « Hyperborean barbarians ».

In the course of my travels through the Hyperborean lands, I have come across three very different cultural groups, each with its own assortment of clans, tribes and warring factions: **Galleans**, **Cimbrians** and **Thuleans**.

It is very difficult to ascertain which of these three groups is the more numerous ; my own observations lead me to believe that they are roughly equivalent in population size but occupy very scattered settlements, making any form of demographic census practically impossible – not to mention the fact that none of these folks keeps anything remotely resembling archives or chronicles: they have no written language and have a very limited understanding of mathematics, making oral tradition the sole vector of knowledge transmission.

I will present these three groups in geographical order, from south to north. According to our civilized standards, the farther north you get, the more « barbaric » people become.



A typical summer afternoon in Hyperborea

Galleans

The territories which are closest to the Minean lands (roughly located between the Helicon mountains and the river Rhena) are under the control of the various **Gallean** tribes.

Most Mineans will be familiar with the typical appearance of Gallean warriors (which has in fact become the stereotype of all Hyperborean Barbarians): tall, broad-shouldered men with long moustaches and braided hair, wearing strange leg-garments known as *trousers*, fight bare-chested and have an inordinate love of drink, songs and chariots.

Their hair color ranges from the palest blond to the darkest black and they often have green, grey or brown eyes. Their fair-skinned, long-haired women are renowned for their beauty - keep in mind, though, that the Gallean idea of beauty is quite different from our classical canons.

The gods of the Galleans may seem very different from our Olympian deities but actually share many common characteristics with them – most of the Gallean gods are anthropomorphic deities with recognizable spheres of influence (such as warfare, fertility, wisdom or even poetry) and are (more or less) organized into a fairly cohesive pantheon, known as the Tribe of Mother Earth (see *Gods of the Galleans* below for more details).



A young Cimbrian warrior charging into battle

Cimbrians

The lands north of the river Rhena are ruled by the **Cimbrians**, who are sworn enemies of the Galleans and regularly fight very bloody wars against them, as the Cimbrians try to expand their territory south of the river. The Cimbrians tend to be even taller and more massively built than the Galleans, with fair hair and grey or blue eyes.

Unlike Galleans, Cimbrians do not wear trousers, leave their hair unbraided and often display long, unkempt beards which they adorn with gold rings, knucklebones and other trinkets. While the Galleans tend to fight with sword or spear, Cimbrian warriors almost always select the sword or axe as their weapon of choice – and Cimbrian battle axes are big, nasty things which have very little in common with what a Minean soldier would call an axe.

On the whole, Cimbrians tend to be even more warlike than Galleans and seem to be obsessed with expanding their lands « south of the river ».

The gods of the Cimbrians are far more primitive and primal than the Gallean deities (who would already seem astoundingly « barbaric » to the average Minean) – in fact, « god » is a misleading term here, since the Cimbrians' deities include the forces of nature themselves (such as Thunder, the Sun, the Moon, Winter etc), what can only be called « animal archetypes » (such as the Wolf or the Bear) or even *places* (such as the Great Hyperborean Forest or the river Rhena).

Thuleans

The third group, the **Thuleans**, can be found farther north, in the mountains of the Thulean Range and west of the Frozen Sea ; they are very rarely seen south of the Great Hyperborean Forest.

Physically, the Thuleans are very close to the Cimbrians (and are often mistaken for them by foreign observers) but their hair are often of a fiery red, which has earned them the nickname of *Redheads* among the Cimbrians.

Thuleans also share many cultural traits with the Cimbrians – indeed, an ancient Cimbrians myth describes the Cimbrians and the Thuleans as 'two feuding twin brothers'. Despite these similarities (or perhaps because of them?), the two cultural groups are very hostile to each other and often refer to themselves as 'blood enemies'.

That being said, there are some significant differences between Thuleans and Cimbrians, especially where religion (I use the term loosely) is concerned ; whereas the Cimbrians worship the forces of nature in a very primal (and surprisingly abstract) manner, the Thuleans have a single, supreme god: Ymir, who is, according to their myths, the King of Winter, the Father of all Giants and (of course) the distant progenitor of the Thulean nation – which is why many Thuleans refer to themselves as being « giant-blooded ».

The Land

The Hyperborean lands are defined by three very important natural borders: the Helicon Mountains, which mark the border between the Gallean territories and the Minean nations, the river Rhena, which separates the Gallean and the Cimbrian territories, and the Great Hyperborean Forest which acts as a natural frontier between Cimbrian and Thulean lands.

The River Rhena

The river Rhena acts as the perennial natural border between the two « nations » - again, I use the term very loosely, since both Galleans and Cimbrians are divided into many fractious, often rival clans which can only be united by the strongest, most ambitious warlords... and fortunately for Minean civilization, Galleans and Cimbrians have never united their forces: if such a thing happens one day, it will be a matter of generations before the Three Cities fall before the savage might of the wild north...

But let's get back to the river Rhena itself: to the Cimbrians, the river Rhena is not just a river but a *living goddess*. Indeed, the river is home to a clan of northern Naiads known as the Daughters of Rhena, who act as the sacred protectors of the river and the whole region.



An invincible force of proud Gallean warriors rafting across the River Rhena

The Great Hyperborean Forest

The **Great Hyperborean Forest** is not only a perilous forest full of dangerous creatures and ancient nature spirits. It is also a *sacred site*, at least to the Cimbrians, who view it as a border to the Land of the Dead, which is why even the bravest Cimbrian warriors will simply refuse to venture in the very heart of the forest, not because they are afraid (never even *suggest* this before a Cimbrian) but because *no living man should willingly enter the land of the dead*. Those who transgress this sacred rule are believed to become half-dead beings known as *Wights*, who sneak back into the world of the living to spread discord, strife and death.

The outer parts of the Forest are home to a clan of northern Dryads, the Huldres, who act as the sacred wardens of the woods and seem to have quite a lasting rivalry with the Daughters of Rhena.

Society

The social structure of Cimbrians and Thuleans is, to say the least, quite rudimentary: all free men are warriors and all warriors are free men. The only people who do not belong to this category are women, slaves and children; in most tribes, male children are considered to be grown men around the age of 13. As in Minean society, women have strictly domestic roles and slaves are, well, slaves.

There are no professional traders or craftsmen among the Hyperboreans: blacksmiths, carpenters and other essential artisans are simply warriors who also happen to possess craft skills which they use in the service of their tribe in times of peace.

Each tribe is ruled by a king – but don't be fooled by the royal title: most of these tribal kings are little more than village chieftains. In most tribes, kingship seems to be a hereditary privilege, inherited through the male bloodline but other modes of succession, (including election, designation by Druids and single combat to the death) certainly exist.

Galleans follow this tribal organization too but have a slightly more complex social structure, since their society also includes what we might view as a form of priesthood, whose members, the Druids, are held in the highest respect by their fellow tribesmen, including the kings themselves. The largest Gallean communities also have a few Lyrists (known as *Bards*), who are also held in the highest regard; they act as storytellers, poets, musicians and keepers of tribal history – which is an especially important role in a culture which has never possessed any true form of written language.

The greater « cultural sophistication » of the Gallean people (again, I use the term loosely, since we are talking about *Barbarians* here) is also reflected in their pantheon of deities, who do show an intriguing resemblance to some of the true gods (see below).



A political argument, Hyperborean style

Lastly, it should be noted that a small proportion of Gallean Druids and Bards are « druidesses » and « bardesses » and that Gallean women (especially those of royal blood) are sometimes treated with a degree of respect and devotion unknown among the brutish Cimbrians and Thuleans, probably because of the influence of Bardic songs and poetry, which often celebrates feminine grace and also includes quite a few tragic love tales.

Culture

To Galleans, Cimbrians and Thuleans, battle is everything ; it is in war that a man finds the best opportunities to assert his personal strength, be in the form of physical might, moral resolve or both.

Indeed, might and will are a Hyperborean warrior's most important qualities. They have little interest (or regard) for things like strategy, troop formations or military leadership: they do not have « armies » as we understand them, but hordes of howling, savage warriors (some of them even fight completely naked) that pour on the battlefield like waves of rage and blood... Ah, I guess I'm getting a little too poetic, here...

Speaking of poetic metaphors, a Gallean Bard once told me that Hyperborean warriors fight like wolves and this image may actually be more meaningful than it first appears: a lone Hyperborean warrior certainly fights like a savage lone wolf and a Hyperborean warlord's command of his warriors is indeed very close to the instinctive, animal authority of a pack leader over the other wolves and among the Cimbrians and Thuleans, this authority can indeed be challenged in exactly the same way as in pack of wolves, by single combat (which is one of the reasons why most Hyperborean kings treat their warriors with extreme largesse).

Despite some deep cultural differences, Galleans, Cimbrians and Thuleans have very similar visions of man, life and the world in general. They value courage, honor and loyalty above all things ; in Hyperborea,

traitors, cowards and oathbreakers are more hated and loathed than one's actual enemies. They believe that one man's word is his bond and that a man's honor (or dishonor) is also shared by his kinsmen.

Family and blood are of extreme importance to them ; indeed, no Hyperborean will ever completely trust a man who has no family or who does not know who his ancestors were. Their deep-seated sense of honor also tends to make them immensely proud, overbearing and quick to take a slight or pick a fight... but it also makes them utterly loyal to their kinsmen and friends.

Aside from unflinching courage in battle, the most important quality a king is expected to display is not political acumen (luckily for their civilized neighbors...) or even common sense but generosity, in the forms of largesse (gifts, boons, spoils of war etc) and hospitality (feasting, drinking, more drinking etc).

Because they do not keep written records and rely entirely on oral tradition, Hyperboreans have no concept of history as we understand it. Their Druids do not see time as a line but as a circle (and can be represented by various circular symbols, such as a ring or a serpent): events repeat themselves in a cyclic (but often quite obscure) manner, which (of course) can only be correctly interpreted by Druids and it is only by observing the hidden patterns of the past that the future may be foretold – which probably explains the Galleans' obsession with *patterns* of all sorts (be it in crafts, poetry or destiny) and the extreme importance of genealogy (as opposed to history), which study is another prerogative of Druids and Bards.

Myths

Each of the three Hyperboean cultural groups has its own founding myth.

As mentioned above, the Thuleans believe themselves to be the mortal descendants of Ymir, the first Giant (exactly *how* their gigantic progenitor could actually impregnate a mortal, human woman is better left to the imagination). This mythic tale is almost certainly a fabrication but may actually conceal a small measure of truth, since the northern reaches of Hyperborea are also home to a race of half-giants known as the *Giant-Kings*, who are viewed with great awe by the Thuleans ; perhaps some of these Giant-Kings mingled with some mortal women (probably of Cimbrian stock, which would explain the many similarities between the two cultures) during the Age of Myth, giving birth to the Thulean race as well as to the whole Ymir legend.

The founding myth of the Cimbrians is at the same time more prosaic and more mysterious: Cimbrians believe their ancestors were the children of *Father Sky* - also known in Borean as Crom (« thunder ») or Wota (« storm ») - and *Mother Earth*, often identified with the Great Hyperborean Forest itself.

Galleans have a much more complex (and quite cryptic) founding myth – involving Mother Earth, the Sun and the Moon, some sort of gigantic Serpent and a « Cosmic Egg » which, depending on which Druid you talk to, might represent anything from the world itself to the womb of each woman or some sort of magical cauldron tied to the cycles of life.

Giant Kings & Dwimmerlaiks

During the Age of Myth, a small clan of supernatural beings known as the Giant Kings fell from the stars in the northern parts of Hyperborea. Despite what their name may suggest, these beings are not true Giants but Large-sized, pale humanoids with sorcerous psychic powers. Soon after their arrival, they started building five great cities, whose names have now been lost in the mists of time, all located in the farthest reaches of Hyperborea.

They easily inspired awe in the local barbarian tribes, the ancestors of the present-day Thuleans, who soon treated them as living gods and became their mortal vassals and servitors. To the Thuleans of that time, the Giant-Kings were the "Children of Ymir"; according to Thulean lore, Ymir was the name of some primordial Giant but perhaps it was simply the name of the star from which the so-called Giant-Kings had fallen...

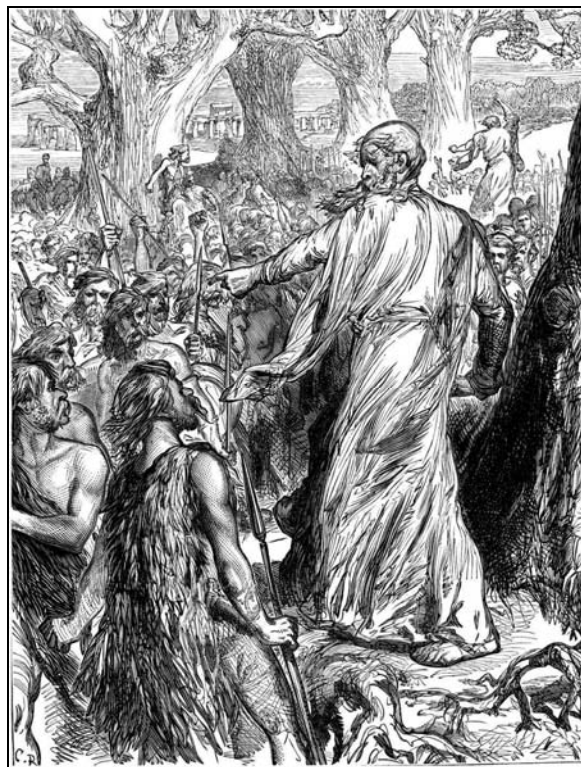
During centuries (perhaps even millennia), the Giant-Kings ruled over their small but mighty empire as the undisputed masters of the northernmost parts of Hyperborea. Then, during the Age of Magic, the supremacy of the Giant-Kings was challenged by a powerful alliance of undead Autarch sorcerers known as the Witch-Kings or Dwimmerlaiks. With the help of their dark sorcery, a few unique artefacts and legions of undead warriors known as Wights, the Dwimmerlaiks obliterated the civilization of the Giant-Kings in a matter of decades.

After the downfall of the Giant-Kings, Hyperborea fell under the dominion of the Dwimmerlaiks, who had established their own Dark Kingdom in the heart of the Great Hyperborean Forest. Toward the end of the Age of Magic, the Witch-Kings themselves were finally defeated by an alliance of Thulean, Cimbrian and Gallean heroes led by the legendary warrior Corma, who was of mixed Gallean / Cimbrian stock and later attempted to unite all the Hyperborean tribes under his own "high kingship", only to be treacherously murdered by a mysterious assassin, who still remains unidentified to this day – the Gallean bards often say that the "great dream of the North" (Hyperborean unity) died with Corma.

Nowadays, the glory of the Giant-Kings has sunk into oblivion and only survives in a garbled form in a few obscure Thulean tales about the great giant Ymir and his children, the Giant-Kings. The ruins of their Five Nameless Cities still exist in the northern reaches of Hyperborea, beyond the territories of the Thulean tribes and may still be inhabited by a few degenerate remnants of the Giant-King race.

As for the Dwimmerlaiks, their Dark Kingdom no longer exists but the last members of their undead order may still be encountered in the darker depths of the Great Hyperborean Forest...

See the *Mythic Bestiary* (p 10) for more details on Dwimmerlaiks, Wights and Giant-Kings.



A Druid blessing warriors before battle

The Gallean Pantheon

As mentioned above, the Galleans have a pantheon of deities which is not entirely unlike that of the true Olympian gods ; indeed, most scholars seem to agree on the opinion that most of these so-called barbarian gods are actually Olympians in disguise.

There are many strong elements in favor of this hypothesis: the similarities between some of the Hyperborean deities and some Olympians (such as Zeus and Taranis or Apollo and Belenos) are obvious and uncontested and it is quite logical to think that gods and goddesses should assume forms that best suit the culture of their human worshippers – deities like the almighty Zeus or Apollo certainly have the power to appear as they wish to us mere mortals.

There are, however, a few problems with this theory ; the fact that some of the Olympians do not seem to have any homologue in the Hyperborean pantheon can easily be explained by various mythical and cultural factors but there are also a few Hyperborean gods who really *cannot* be interpreted as Olympian alter egos – which is quite unsettling if you consider (like most sensible, cultured persons do) the Olympians to be the only true gods in existence, since it brings forth various metaphysical questions such as: if Taranis is in fact Zeus, who in Hades is the sinister Gallean war goddess known as the Morrigan? And if this entity does exist, how can true Olympian gods accept to be associated with them in the same pantheon?

There are of course some possible (but purely hypothetical) explanations and I have included some of these fascinating theories in my description of these « rogue » Gallean gods (see below)... but the truth of the matter will probably remain a mystery, simply

because the gods of the Hyperboreans (unlike the Olympians) *never* manifest themselves *in person* (with the possible exceptions of the Horned God and the Morrigan), a fact which has of course given rise to all sorts of scholarly speculations.

The only major Olympian male god that does not seem to have a Gallean homologue is Ares. Oddly enough, the Gallean pantheon does not have a male war god ; instead, this niche is filled by the sinister goddess known as the Morrigan (see below). Neither Hera nor Artemis seems to have a Gallean equivalent, which is not as odd as it may seem at first, since the Galleans' view of women does not really leave much room for jealous, scheming wives or for Amazon role models.

While these mythological similarities and scholarly speculations are certainly fascinating, they should not make us forget that the Galleans' understanding of religion is *very* different from our classic Minean worldview: the gods of the Gallean pantheon do not have individual priesthoods and are served as a collective entity by the Druids – this alone drastically changes the way men interact with gods (and, conversely, the way gods interact with men, too).

Taranis

This majestic, lightning-wielding god of storms is an obvious local equivalent of Zeus. It should be noted, however, that he is not perceived as the supreme ruler of the gods but as one of the three god-kings, along with Belenos and Lyr.

Belenos

This bright solar god is clearly the local form of Apollo ; like him, he is also associated with poetry and skill. Although often described as the supreme god of Hyperboreans by Minean scholars, Belenos is just one of the three god-kings of the Gallean pantheon, along with the more tempestuous Taranis and Lyr – but the bright, triumphant sun god does seem to be the most popular member of the kingly triad.

Lyr

This mighty, wrathful sea-god is clearly Poseidon under another name. Although he is recognized as one of the three god-kings of the Gallean pantheon, he rarely receives any form of active worship, the sea being seen by most Hyperboreans (including Druids) as a hostile territory well outside the dominion of man.

Ogmios

This god of learning, eloquence and wisdom shares quite a few traits with the Olympian Hermes but is usually depicted as an old crafty sage rather than as a dashing, wing-footed athlete.

Gobannon

The smith god of the Gallean pantheon is clearly Hephaestos under another name. It should be noted, however, that he does not appear to have a lame leg or any other form of physical disability.



The Horned God (aka the Hyperborean Dionysos)

The Horned God

This savage, stag-horned god presides over the wilder and darker aspects of nature (including madness and wild sex) and also appears to be a trickster god (albeit a dark and primitive one), making him a very probable candidate for the Hyperborean incarnation of Dionysos.

Dagda

This enigmatic hooded god appears to rule over the Underworld and the darker mysteries of life and death, making him a very probable equivalent of Hades. He is sometimes known as the *Druid God*.

Danu

This earth-mother goddess plays a major role in the various myths of the Galleans ; she clearly appears to be the Hyperborean equivalent of Demeter but is sometimes described as being the mother of Taranis and other deities, which would take us in the direction of Rhea, the ancient titan-goddess mother of Zeus.

Belisama

This graceful goddess is associated with skill and wisdom, making her an obvious equivalent of Athena... but Belisama is also associated with hearthfire, domestic life and « womanly duties », which clearly correspond to the sphere of influence of Hestia, as well as with love and feminine beauty, which would make her the obvious local homologue of Aphrodite...

Indeed, Belisama is often referred as « the triple goddess » and depicted as a triad of young women, which does seem to suggest that Belisama is actually some sort of « collective guise » shared by the three Olympian goddesses.

Morrigan

This goddess of war, death and carnage is usually depicted as a very ugly woman armed with a spear. As the bloodthirsty queen of the battlefield, she is also associated with crows.

Many wild theories have been concocted about the true identity of this goddess – some scholars have even suggested that she could actually be a *female* aspect of the strangely absent Ares (never even *hint* at such a theory in the presence of a true Ares devotee).

The most probable explanation is that the Morrigan is actually a « barbarian daughter » of Ares, forever exiled (or barred) from Olympus because of her excessive bloodlust and left in charge of the « wild north » by her warlike father.

Life, Death & Fate

The way Hyperboreans envision concepts like fate and afterlife may seem quite hazy and confusing by our more « civilized » standards.

They acknowledge the existence of destiny (as a cosmic and as a personal force) but have no real concept of *fortune* as we understand it ; they seem to believe that a man's fate is cast from the moment of his birth (and even before that).

And yet they also think that strong-willed individuals are able to *make their own fate*, which is not as contradictory as it might seem to the mind of a Thenan Philosopher: for those northern barbarians, a man's life is a constant battle between his own willpower and the (often hostile) forces of destiny and it is at a moment of a man's death that Druids will be able to tell whether this battle was won or lost, by examining his deeds and accomplishments as well as the circumstances of his death and, in some cases, various omens that may have occurred during his life.

If the dead man is declared the victor, his spirit will either journey to some weird otherworld or be reborn in a newborn baby's body (different tribes seem to have different and often quite nebulous beliefs about afterlife) and his name will be celebrated by the Bards in their song and tales ; if, on the other hand, the dead man was « defeated by fate », his name will only be remembered by his those who knew him in life and his spirit will apparently dissolve into the mysterious, impersonal forces of destiny.

This vision of life and death can of course be interpreted as a mythical metaphor of man's struggle for survival in a natural environment as savage and harsh as Hyperborea but it also emphasizes two fascinating aspects of Hyperborean culture: the role of Druids as judges of the living and the dead and the importance of personal renown (be it a warrior's glory or a sage's reputation for wisdom) – not only as a social asset but as a vital, mystical force that defines the very fate of a person's spirit after death.

The Blue Men The Barbarians' Barbarians



In the Bones of War mountains, west of the Great Hyperborean Forest lives a fearsome folk of howling savages known to the Hyperboreans as the Blue Men, not because they have blue skins but because they cover their bodies with blue war paints in the shape of spirals, serpents and other strange patterns. They sometimes come down from their mountainous enclaves to raid the westernmost parts of Hyperborea, especially the ones settled by the Galleans, who view the Blue Men to be their most irreducible enemies.

Little is known about the customs of the Blue Men; they speak a strange, guttural language which no human throat can manage and they appear to worship strange, loathsome, serpent-shaped "gods" known as the Worms of the Earth, to whom they routinely sacrifice human victims. One of the few certain facts known about the Blue Men is that they are anthropophagi – eaters of human flesh. This alone is enough to make the Blue Men odious and abhorrent to Hyperboreans who (despite what some misled or over-imaginative Minean scholars would have you believe) have the strongest taboo against cannibalism.

Even though they do look humans, as far as the Hyperboreans are concerned, the Blue Men are not humans but *beasts in human form* – which not only explains why they eat human flesh but also why the art of metallurgy seems to be completely unknown to them. According to most Hyperborean Druids, union between a Blue Man and a human (ie Hyperborean) woman can only produce monstrous, accursed half-breeds that cannot be allowed to live. The other way around (a Hyperborean mating with a Blue Woman) is simply taboo – and for all that the Hyperboreans know, Blue Women may not even exist. According to another belief, the Blue Men are a degenerate race of humans with demon-tainted blood; they are also said to abduct Hyperborean children to replace them with their own spawn - warped, evil babies known as *changelings* – but this may simply be a 'bogeyman story' invented by Hyperborean mothers to scare their unruly children ("Be quiet or the Blue Men will get you!"). Or perhaps the truth is both simpler and uglier and the Blue Men simply capture human children to eat them, because they are easier to carry away than full-grown adults.

See next page for more details on these abominable painted savages in game terms.

MYTHIC BESTIARY

HYPERBOREAN HORRORS

Undead, Giant Kings & Savage Half-Men from the Northern Wildlands



Blue Men

Taxonomy: Folk

Description: Howling, man-eating painted savages from the Bones of War mountains; see the previous page for more details on their origins and customs.

Size: Medium

Ferocity: Aggressive

Cunning: Alert

Mystique: Weird

Movement: 60'

Initiative: 14

Melee Attack: +3

Missile Attack: +2

Damage: 1d6 (weapon)

Defense Class: 15

Hits Total: 8

Detection / Evasion: +6 / +4

Mystic Fortitude: +2

Special Abilities: Charge into Battle (Initiative 16, Melee +5), Missile Weapons (javelins, 120'), Sharp Senses, Stealthy (16), Uncanny Agility.

Awards: Glory 50.

Children of Ymir

Taxonomy: Monster

Description: Also known as Giant-Kings; not true giants but tall (9'to 10'), thin, hunched and hairless humanoids with almond-shaped heads, albino-white skin and reflective yellowy eyes.

Size: Large

Ferocity: Deadly

Cunning: Alert

Mystique: Eldritch

Movement: 90'

Initiative: 15

Melee Attack: +8

Damage: 2d6 (weapon)

Defense Class: 16

Hits Total: 36

Detection / Evasion: +6 / +4

Mystic Fortitude: +8

Special Abilities: Crushing Damage (req. grapple), Fearsome, Grapple (Might = 20), Magic Resistance, Sixth Sense, Supernatural Vigor, Tough Skin.

Awards: Glory 400, Wisdom 50.

Additioabal Lore: See p 7 for more details on the origins and history of the Giant-Kings.

Giant Kings of Old

The stats given above represent the degenerate remnants of the race; in their long-gone days of glory, the Giant Kings had a more majestic appearance, as well as a Clever degree of Cunning and full-blown Psychic Powers; the mightiest among them even had Crafty Cunning and Unearthly Mystique. Whether or not such ancient, primal beings still exist in the current era of Mythika's history is entirely left to the Maze Master's discretion. Perhaps such "Kings of the Giant-Kings" are buried somewhere beneath the lost ruins of their kin's Nameless Cities in a state of artificially-maintained suspended animation – which could be the true facts beneath the various tales of buried sleeping giants found in Hyperborean lore.



Dwimmerlaik

Taxonomy: Spirit

Description: These very powerful, dangerous and malignant undead beings inhabit the darker depths of the great Hyperborean Forest. They look like human skeletons whose empty eyesockets are filled with an evil, greenish light. They use their psychic powers to prey upon human victims and often use *Wights* (see below) as their servitors and sentinels.

Size: Medium

Ferocity: Deadly

Cunning: Crafty

Mystique: Unearthly

Movement: 60'

Initiative: 17

Melee Attack: n/a

Damage: 1d6 (touch)

Defense Class: 18

Hits Total: 20

Detection / Evasion: +10 / +8

Mystic Fortitude: +10

Special Abilities: Fearsome, Life Energy Drain * (touch), Magic Resistance, Psychic Powers (Psychic Gift +6, Mystic Strength 18, Power 24), Sixth Sense, Stealthy (18), Supernatural Vigor.

Awards: Glory 130, Wisdom 540.

Additional Lore: Dwimmerlaiks are the undead revenants of the sorcerer-kings of a long-forgotten, possibly prehuman race who battled against the Giant-Kings (see below) during the Mythic Age. As hinted above, they are responsible for the creation of Wights, which are brought back to unlife by the Dwimmerlaik's foul life-energy drain powers.

* Humans killed by a Dwimmerlaik's Life Energy Drain automatically become Wights (see below). As soon as they are reanimated, Wights become automatically Enslaved to the Dwimmerlaik who created them; these undead slaves do not count against the Dwimmerlaik's usual maximum of Enslaved beings.

Wight

Taxonomy: Spirit

Description: Undead revenants bent on spreading discord, strife and destruction among the living. They look like abnormally pale and gaunt humans with hauntingly dead eyes; an eerie aura of gloom seem to surround them at all time. Most of them haunt the deeper parts of the Great Hyperborean Forest, as noted in the *Hyperborea* gazetteer.

Size: Medium

Ferocity: Dangerous

Cunning: Alert

Mystique: Eldritch

Movement: 60'

Initiative: 16

Melee Attack: +4

Damage: 1d6 (weapon)

Defense Class: 16

Hits Total: 16

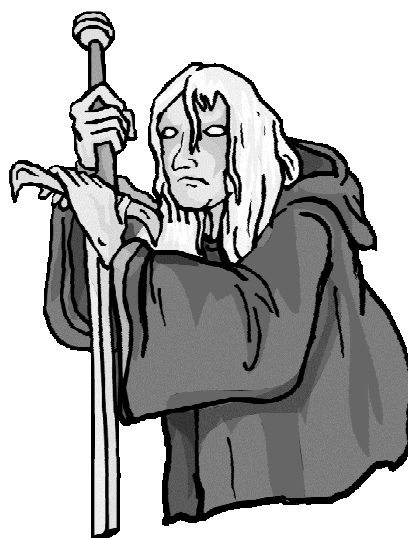
Detection / Evasion: +4

Mystic Fortitude: +8

Special Abilities: Fearsome, Magic Resistance, Stealthy (16), Supernatural Vigor.

Awards: Glory 65, Wisdom 90.

Additional Lore: Wights are brought back to life (or rather 'undeath') by the *Life-Energy Drain* ability of Dwimmerlaiks, as detailed above. There is no other way of creating a Wight. Since their soul is still trapped in their undead bodies, they qualify as Spirits rather than as Animates.



Creatures devised by Olivier Legrand & Peter Politis

The illustration for the Dwimmerlaik was taken from Wikimedia Commons, released under the GNU license.

ATLAS OF MYTHIKA

AMAZONS!

Secrets of the Warrior Women of Mythika

Written by **Olivier Legrand** and **Andrew Trent**

Tastefully Illustrated by Unknown Classical Artists

The scholars of Mythika, Artemis forgive them, have at best a poor understanding of the Amazons of the Wild North – but hey, all these scholars are males, aren't they? Let this record do what it can to demystify my Sisters.

Dido of Amazonia

Heritage

It is understandable that a phallocentric culture such as that of the Three Cities - and much of the rest of Mythika - would find it difficult to grasp the nature of the Amazons. Whereas so many of the nations of our world seem bound together through common heritage, we Amazons are not. A wide range of hair and eye colors, skin tones and facial features are found across the Amazonian spectrum.

This variation is so strong that any two Sisters are as often as different as night and day. In fact, the only consistent characteristic shared by the women of the north is a tendency towards possessing greater height and athletic ability than the majority of females in other portions of Mythika. While your philosophers and academics struggle to understand how this is so - to find some divine or mystic reason for the propensity towards physical dominance exhibited by the Amazons - the answer lies before your eyes. Our culture is founded on rigorous training, both martial and physical, and a dedication to the sanctity of our physical selves. While the rest of Mythika tends towards indulgence, we live by the simple rules of healthy diet and active bodies.

But enough about the source of our prowess. Instead, let me explain the nature of our wild variation in superficial appearance. No matter what strange legends you may have heard about how we procreate - that we are hatched from eggs or that we grow from stones or are birthed by sexless winter wolves - the truth is that we arrive on this earth in the same manner as the rest of human kind. However, unlike your cultures, our mothers receive seed from any of countless slaves drawn from any and all corners of Mythika. As a result, my sisters often possess traits associated with other cultures.

Among the Amazons you will find those with the flame red hair, piercing blue eyes and the pale skin of the northlanders fighting alongside those with the dark hair, brown skin and chestnut eyes of the east.



A noble Amazon warrior of Amazonia

Still others resemble Hyperboreans with blonde or red hair while a few Sisters could even be mistaken for the almond-eyed ladies of the Land of the Sun. Variation in form is expected and celebrated among the Amazons.

There is one last thing to understand about the nature of the Amazons. We place no value the male part of the procreative pair. Our tongue has no word equivalent to your "father." Nor do "uncle," "brother" or even "son" exist to us. A male is a male and fit for labor and little else. Because of this, lineage is tracked only along our maternal line. Hence, the only way for one to be recognized as an Amazon is to be born to an Amazon.

No doubt you have grown uncomfortable with the frankness of my discourse. Such is the nature of men. So perhaps you would fare better if I tuned my attention to the kind of stories and myths that you people of the Three Cities seem so enamored with. To put you at ease, I shall relate the founding myth of Amazonia.

Founding Myth

According to our legends, every Amazon is descended from the same group of ancestresses known to us as the Seven Sisters. Indeed, "Amazon" means "sister" in our tongue.

Millennia ago, at the start of the Mythic Age, the land now known as Amazonia was called Scarmathia and was ruled by a mighty, despotic monarch called Gargaros. King Gargaros had nine sons and nine daughters; his nine sons were his pride and Scarmathia's most powerful warriors, while his nine, beautiful young daughters were, in his own words, "his most valuable treasure".

King Gargaros was accustomed to utilize his children to consolidate and expand his power: he sent his sons on epic wars and quests to conquer new lands and defeat formidable foes and offered his daughters in marriage to his mightiest or wealthiest allies.

The eldest daughter was married to the king of a neighboring land – but when two of her sisters visited her one year after her wedding, they saw that she had become little more than a slave, dominated by her brutal and mean-spirited husband.

When the two appalled princesses reported this shameful situation to their father, King Gargaros replied to them that such was the proper place of a woman. This attitude came as a shock to the two sisters, who realized that their father had a similar fate in mind for them. The older one, who was set to be married in a few months, was so torn by despair that she committed suicide, slashing her veins in her bath. When King Gargaros learned of his daughter's tragic death, he was clearly more irritated than devastated, for this suicide compromised yet another well-laid plan of alliance-by-marriage with another kingdom.



Antianera, the First Queen of Amazonia

The third daughter, upon learning of the death of her sister, swore an oath that she would never bow before the patriarchy. She locked herself in the temple of Artemis and prayed for seven days and seven nights for the Mistress of the Hunt to grant her the strength and skill to fight as well as any man of the earth. So moved by the grief and devotion of the princess was Artemis that - against the counsel of her brother Apollo - she granted the wish.

With her newfound prowess and the heart of a lion, the third daughter rallied her remaining sisters and began a bloody revolt against her father. The slaughter, though terrible, was cleansing. With her father and his warriors slain and the establishment of a new form of government - a gynocracy - the third daughter assumed her position as Antianera I, Queen of the Amazons. From her family flows the blood of the Amazons, blessed by Artemis to be as strong as any man.



A Sister dressed for war

The story of Antianera is taught to every little girl in Amazonia ; three days after her menarche, every Amazon undergoes a sacred ceremony where she receives her arms (bow, spear etc) and is acknowledged as a true warrior by the rest of the community. To complete the ceremony, she must take the Oath of Antianera – a solemn vow never to let herself become a male's slave or spouse (which are essentially the same thing as far as we are concerned). Indeed, a true Amazon will prefer death to that kind of dishonor. Those rare Amazons who do break the Oath of Antianera to surrender their freedom to a man always suffer the wrath of our goddess Artemis and die giving birth to their first child - who is always a male child, the living reflection of the mother's doom. This recently happened to that Antiope who willingly surrendered herself to Prince Theseos of Thena, a few years before he became King: Antiope gave « her » man a son (young Prince Hippolytos) and died in childbirth from what those foolish Thenan physicians called « complications » - but every Amazon knows such is the fate of all those who break the Oath of Antianera. Antiope knew it, too, and I suppose that's why she is seen by some as a truly tragic character.

History

The Amazon folk has a long, proud history, full of glorious victories – but don't worry, I won't bore you with endless lists of queens, heroines and battles. Suffice it to say that our Queendom has earned its might and glory the hard, bloody way – it's a man's world out there and, as the story of Antianera reminds us, being a free warrior-woman in a male-dominated age always comes with a price. For an Amazon, freedom as a woman and as a warrior is more important than her own life: it is the sacred gift of Artemis to the Seven Sisters and is the true motive behind most (if not all) the glorious deeds accomplished by our heroines over the centuries.

It was this sacred freedom which made our foresisters stand against the malevolent, power-hungry (and predominantly male) Autarchs during the Age of Magic (see *Maze Masters Guide* p 13). More recently, it was the same sacred principle which caused our wise Queen to declare war on the

Centaur of Sicania (see *Maze Masters Guide* p 14), who, in a typically male, overbearing manner, sought to encroach upon our Motherland.

Society

Are you sure you want to learn more about the way our society works? I'm asking you because I know how you outsiders usually react to such stuff. Really? Well, don't say you haven't been warned. I'll try to put myself in your phallocentric Minean sandals and focus on the differences between our society and what you consider to be the norm – no, I can hardly say I enjoy this kind of perspective shift but that's probably the only way to make you grasp a few basic truths about how we really live.

First, I'd like to discount a few misconceptions born from centuries of gynophobic propaganda: we don't eat men, nor do we usually offer them in sacrifice to our goddess ; we don't cut one of our breasts to make us better archers (but most Amazon archers do wear an asymmetrical breastband that tends to flatten their bow-breast) and no, we don't kill our male offspring, simply because we do not give birth to sons, thanks to the special blessing bestowed on the Seven Sisters by the goddess Artemis – all our children are daughters and will become warrior-women, just like their mothers. Those who break the Oath of Antianera are the only exception – their first child will always be male and his birth will always kill the mother, interrupting the bloodline and ensuring that no Amazon is ever born in slavery or in ignorance of her heritage.

The society of our Queendom is based on two basic principles: gynocracy and matriarchy.

Gynocracy means that all the power is in the hand of women. We are ruled by a Queen and all our warrior-women form what you might call our « aristocracy » - in Amazonia, being a warrior and being a noble are the same thing and, as you will more fully understand in a few minutes, the concept of « breeding » as you understand it has little meaning in our Queendom.



The same Sister in more peaceful times



An Amazon warrior with spear and shield

Amazons belong to what we call Houses – or what your Philosophers might call « extended matriarchal clans », in their typically chauvinistic nomenclature. There are seven Houses in Amazonia – one for each of the original Seven Sisters, with the bloodline of Antianera herself forming the backbone of the Royal House. Every House is ruled by its council of elders, with one elected Sister acting as leader in times of war or crisis ; the head of the Royal House is, of course, the Queen herself.

Our family trees do not record « fathers », « sons » or « brothers », since these concepts do not exist for us – that's what the « matriarchy » bit is all about. An Amazon has no father, only a Mother, and will only give birth to other Amazons. It is as simple as that.

How can a child be unaware of her father's identity, you ask? Well, wait until we get to our mating customs – yes, that's what we call them. Weddings, marriages and other male-invented contrivances simply do not exist in our society – the closest thing we have to wedlock is the life-bond that may exist between two Amazon lovers - and no, I will not pander to your basic instincts by providing further detail about this.

Let's get back to social organization, shall we? The Seven Houses form the military, political and economic backbone of our society – each has its own army of women-warriors, its own lands and its own special traditions. Feuds between Houses are virtually nonexistent ; unlike your male-dominated aristocratic families, our Houses do not need to

increase or maintain their political powers through inter-dynastic marriages (since these do not exist, remember?) ; as a result, Amazonia is a very stable political entity, united beneath the strong and benevolent rule of our Queen.

In Amazonian society, everyone who is not an Amazon is a slave. We have no room for intricate concepts such as citizens or free commoners – as have told before, freedom, nobility and 'warrioriness' are all parts of being an Amazon.

All males in Amazonia are slaves - and no, we don't deprive them of their manhood (that's another myth) but not all slaves are males. Most male slaves are used for agriculture and other heavy labor (but NEVER as an auxiliary fighting force, even in desperate circumstances), while female slaves are generally used for personal or domestic service. All our craftsmen, scholars and artisans are slaves – and as everywhere else, skilled or well-educated slaves can have a very pleasant life as long as they remember what they are.

By now, we're probably wondering how we have children. Well, just like all other women – by mating with a man. The only difference in our case is that these men are neither our « husbands » (another word that do not exist in our language) nor our « lovers » ; twice a year, once at the Spring Equinox and once at the Summer Solstice, we perform our fertility rituals under the sacred tutelage of Artemis – we go into the woods, wearing masks (and very little else), where we meet the stronger, healthier male slaves and...

I'll stop there since nobody is allowed to discuss the Sacred Mysteries of Artemis with outsiders. I'm sure you can rely on your own imagination. That's right, no *Sex Secrets of Ancient Amazons* stuff for you.

In ancient times, the male slaves who served in the fertility rites were systematically put to death after having fulfilled their sacred task but this practice was abandoned several centuries ago, since good male slaves became increasingly hard to find. Today, the only ones we do kill after mating with them are the crazy ones who think that their role in the fertility rites give them special rights – including the one to talk about such things. Ah, I see you get my point, now.

Each of the Seven Houses of Amazonia is named after one of the original Seven Sisters. The seven House names are: Antianera (the Royal House), Diona, Attala, Tamara, Velleda, Hippolyta and Marada. Thus, my full name is Dido, daughter of Viria, from the House of Diona.

One last thing about names – our Queen is always called Antianera. She forsakes her birth name when she receives the crown of Amazonia, thereby becoming a living incarnation of the first Antianera. Thus, there has *always* been an Antianera on the throne of Amazonia – and no, we don't bother to give them a dynastic number, since there is only one Antianera.



Artemis the Archer, Goddess of the Amazons

Religion

This brings us to the topic of religion – another common source of misconceptions and misunderstandings between Amazons and male-dominated folks.

Many Mineans believe we Amazons do not have any proper religion, simply because we do not have priestesses, temples or other trappings of « civilized » worship. Mind you, we do have a religion – but the forests are our temples and each Amazon is responsible for her own faith. So no, we don't have any form of organized priesthood – our Elder Sisters act as keepers of sacred lore and the heads of the various Houses also lead the fertility rites and other religious ceremonies, with our Queen acting as what you would call a « high priestess ».

As you might have guessed, we only worship goddesses in Amazonia – and certainly not all of them. Our main goddess is of course Artemis, whom we worship under three different aspects: the Maiden, the Huntress and the Moon Goddess – her most mysterious, mystical incarnation, which is tied to our vision of royalty and matriarchy as well as to our fertility rites... but we do have room for other goddesses as well – Athena is especially popular with some of our young warriors. Some of her devotees think Amazonian society should « advance » and embrace « civilization », which has recently caused some friction with the more traditionalist Sisters, who still regard Athena as an « outsider goddess ». Demeter is also worshipped in Amazonia, but only by our slaves, since she is not a warrior goddess ; indeed, her cult is the only one allowed among our slaves, giving her a very special niche in our society.

What, no Divine Prodigies?

The fact that Priestesses do not exist in Amazonia does not mean that Divine Prodigies never happen here. How is it possible, you ask? In Amazonia, spiritual power and temporal power are the same thing, as Dido herself implies in her exposé.

In game terms, an Amazon who becomes the head of her House is granted the full repertoire of Divine Prodigies of a Priestess by Artemis herself, with a number of Power points based on her level as an Amazon (which is usually quite high in the first place). This is an exception to the general M&M philosophy, which do not normally allow characters to be dual-classed but it should be noted that Amazon House leaders are no longer allowed to leave Amazonia on quests, adventures and other expeditions, because of their sacred duty to their House and Queendom ; in other words, any Amazon PC reaching this exalted status should be retired from active play, becoming a NPC, unless of course the Maze Master is willing to run an Amazonia-based campaign focusing on the various political affairs of the Queendom (and why not?).

The position of House leader should not be available to Amazons with a level below 5 and should require Will and Luck scores of at least 19, representing an extraordinary strength of character as well as outstanding divine favor. Even if these requirements are met, promotion will not be automatic – there is only one leader per House and she may only be appointed by the council of Elder Sisters after the death of the former ruler. To avoid political rivalries and internecine power struggles, most House leaders select an heiress apparent (usually their eldest or most promising daughter) while they are alive but the real decision belongs to the council of Elder Sisters and surprises have been known to happen.

The priestly powers granted to the leader of each House are a direct reflection of their sacred sovereignty ; they are bestowed on the newly-chosen leader during a special ceremony where the power of Artemis manifests itself... and will immediately disappear if the leader ever offends the goddess or forsakes her duties as a ruler.

Amazons who worship Athena cannot count on any form of local priesthood to lead them in their worship, which is one of the reasons these « Athenians » often leave Amazonia to become adventuring warriors ; most of them also strive to become Divine Agents of Athena and thereby establish a special, unique connection with their patron goddess.

Despite what some misinformed scholars would have you believed, we have little regard for Hera, who has surrendered her freedom and womanhood to her « husband » Zeus – your typical self-indulgent, self-centered male god. And don't talk to us about Hestia... goddess of hearthfire and domestic peace, really? Goddess of submission and passivity seems more fitting!



A Graceful Amazon Princess

And then there is Aphrodite. Her worship is supposed to be banned in Amazonia, because we have little interest for a goddess who uses seduction and sexuality to get what she wants and who will not touch a bow or spear. The whore goddess, some of our Elder Sisters call her. We also know that she is the unseen influence behind every oathbreaker's infatuation with a man – but Artemis never allows the so-called goddess of love to save her pawns from the oathbreaker's curse. Perhaps Aphrodite had something to do with the fate of Antianera's elder sisters – we will probably never know because she is never mentioned in our mythology.

Culture

Most scholars will tell you that our native tongue is Borean, the language of the Hyperborean Barbarians – put this is only partly true. As I've implied before, we have liberated our Mother Tongue from the influence of many masculine words and concepts, just like our ancestresses liberated themselves from the tyranny of men. Most of us also know Minean, which we prefer to use when dealing with outsiders. We do not have books, scrolls or any other form of written records: in Amazonia, knowledge is transmitted from mother to daughter, through tales, poems, songs and other forms of oral literature. Indeed, the preservation and transmission of this knowledge is one of the main tasks of our Elder Sisters, Amazons who have become too old to fight and act as the living memory of our folk.

Over the ages, outright lies have been spread across Mythika about how we supposedly kill or enslave any man foolish enough to venture into our territory. This is simply not true. Male adventurers are welcome in Amazonia and will be treated as free men (a real privilege, since this status does not exist in our society) as long as they respect our customs and forget about trying to turn us into « real women » (whatever that means) – and consider this a warning: although this kind of attitude has become rarer in recent times, we still know how to deal swift justice to those who would abuse our hospitality or try to take away our freedom. We have a popular saying in Amazonia: *Men who act like Minotaurs will die like Minotaurs.*

Amazonia

Amazonia is a magnificent, fertile land of deep forests and rolling mountains ; some western Lyrist once described our Queendom as « *a living metaphor of the female body* » but he may just have had an overactive imagination (or perhaps it was just some lousy way of trying to charm us with his typically-male poetry). Outsiders usually find our climate surprisingly mild for such a northern country, especially when compared to nearby Hyberborea. That being said, Amazonia holds many perils, which often prove fatal to unguided outsiders – including savage Beasts, a few Monsters here and there and, of course, the Sisters themselves. Artemis has blessed us with a homeland made in her own image - wild, beautiful and merciless to her enemies.

All human activity is concentrated in the Seven Citadels which are scattered around the wildland at strategical points, making Amazonia an impregnable Queendom. Each of these fortified bastions is ruled by a different House ; the largest of them is the Royal Capital of Antianera (our only real city), which is roughly located in the Heart of Amazonia, surrounded by the wild, sacred Forest of Artemis. Like the royal citadel, the six other fortresses are named after their ruling Houses (eg Diona, Tamara etc). Thus, to an Amazon, her House and its bastion are essentially the same thing – the fortified citadel is the body and the House itself is the soul (or the blood, but soul and blood are the same things to an Amazon).

You want to know more? Well, you'll have to come to our Queendom and discover by yourself... I'll be leaving Thena in two days to return to my homeland and spend a few weeks here, among my people. You could come with me, provided you behave properly and forget about all your sexist, misogynistic prejudices – remember what I told you earlier about Men and Minotaurs? Fancy a trip to the land of truly free women?

Black Amazons of Charybdis

According to some persistent rumors, deep in the southern jungles of Charybdis lies the fabled Lost City of Negara (which, according to some obscure scholars, mean something like *Vale of the Lost Women* in ancient Charybodian), inhabited by ebony-skinned Amazons ruled by an undying Queen named Zenobia. While completely unrelated to the Amazons of Amazonia, those Black Amazons share many cultural traits with their northern cousins, including gynocracy, matriarchy and devotion to a mysterious Moon Goddess, who may well be Artemis in one of her guises. The only logical explanation behind this mystery is that events similar to the tale of King Gargaros' daughters also happened in Charybdis, resulting in pretty much the same consequences – warrior women of the world unite!