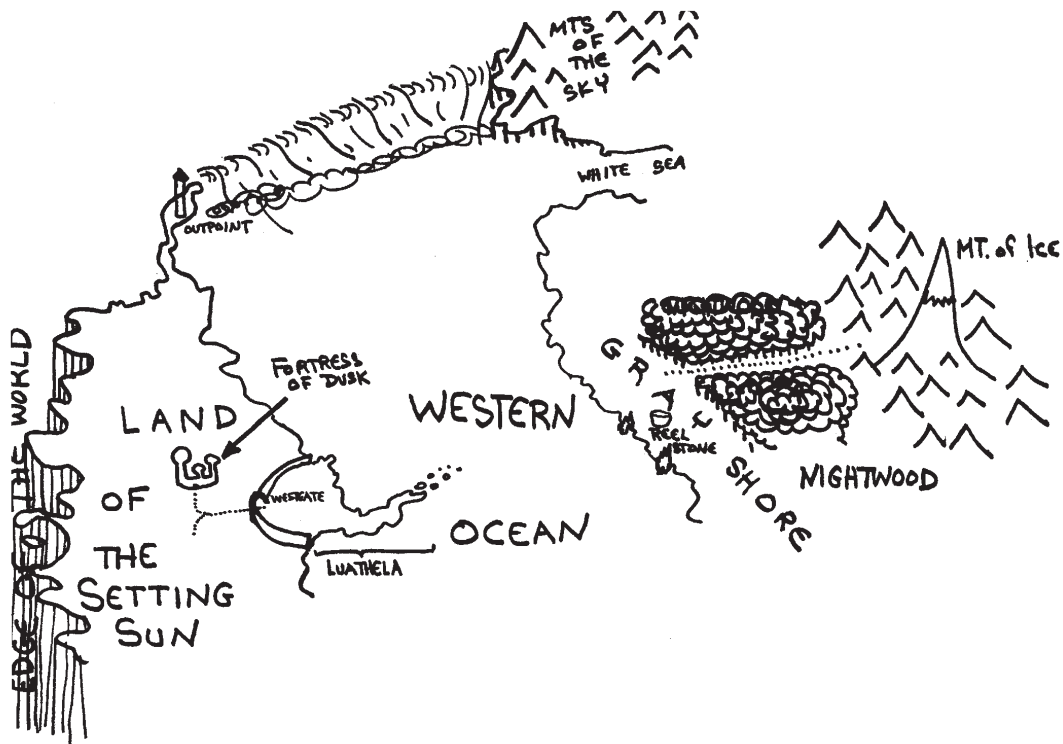


ARCANE LORE

HEROQUESTS & HEROQUESTING

A COLLECTION OF SPECULATIVE AND
EXPLORATORY TEXTS ABOUT GLORANTHA



— ARCANES LORE —

HEROQUESTS & HEROQUESTING

A COLLECTION OF SPECULATIVE AND
EXPLORATORY TEXTS ABOUT GLORANTHA

BY GREG STAFFORD, SANDY PETERSEN, STEVE MARSH, RODERICK
ROBERTSON, BILL KEYES, AND DAVID HALL.

WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF:
WILLIAM DUNN, BRIAN ISIKOFF, GRAHAM ROBINSON,
AND MANY OTHERS LONG, LONG AGO.

ALL MAPS AND DIAGRAMS BY GREG STAFFORD.

"No Questing without Respect and Humility."

Portions of this book have appeared previously in different form:

"The HeroQuest Quiz," "Revisiting the Hill of Gold," and "The Berserker Path" appeared in *Tales of the Reaching Moon* #7.

"The Chaos Wars" originally appeared in *Lords of Terror*.

"Another Early Set of Definitions" originally appeared in *The Wild Hunt* #41.

Portions of "The Other Worlds" and "The Invisible Measure" appeared in *Narrator's Book*.

Portions of "The Hill of Gold" appeared in different format in *Enclosure* #2, and originally appeared in *The Wild Hunt* #53 and #61.

"Elova's Blue Moon Heroquest" originally appeared in *The Wild Hunt* (issue unknown).

"The Quest of the Seven Sky Gates" originally appeared in *The Wild Hunt* #38.

Alebard's Quest originally appeared in *Alarums & Excursions* (issue unknown) and later in *Tales of the Reaching Moon* #5.

"Hellmouth" originally appeared in *The Wild Hunt* #38.

"The Quest of Renallien, Breaker of Bricks" originally appeared in *The Wild Hunt* #42.

"The Seven Sky Games" originally appeared in *The Wild Hunt* #40.

Additional maps of the Heortling myths appear in *Thunder Rebels*.

"Rainmaking and the Harvest" consists of several excerpts from the unfinished *Harmast's Saga*, by Greg Stafford.

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INTRODUCTION

LATEST REVISED EDITION

DEAR READER,

You have in your hands the latest set of my notes concerning Glorantha. This book, even more than the other Unfinished Finished Works, is an extremely rough draft, a collection of notes which I have compiled during my speculations, playing *RuneQuest*, *Hero Wars*, and *HeroQuest*, and rough planning.

I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this book, directly or indirectly. Many of these heroquests were originally developed by Steve Marsh, who began exploring heroquesting almost as early as I did. More material was developed by my great friend Sandy Petersen during the time he worked at Chaosium. Sandy and William Dunn both worked on some of these files, entering my old typed and hand-written notes and formatting them for whatever rules system we were using at the time. Bill Keyes is just one of many people who helped me playtest the rules and quests that make up much of the book.; thanks to him and my other intrepid players who dared the Other Side during those glorious moments of play. Roderick Robertson was instrumental in helping to bring first Hero Wars and then *HeroQuest* to fruition.

David Hall, my Light in the Darkness, questioned and probed to evoke new insights from me. Brian Isikoff, like Bill and Sandy before him, has worked hard to convert my old notes and maps into electronic form. Graham Robinson took multiple versions of many files and quests and sorted through them, sorting the grain from the chaff and outlining the main contents of this book. And finally, Stephen Martin has taken all of this work, added to it, and pulled the book into this, its final form as a Pre-Finished Work. Thanks to you all.

Even more than with the other books in this series, I am compelled to warn readers that the material herein is **Extremely Speculative** and subject to great changes before the final version of a *Heroquesting Handbook* is done. With those caveats in mind, I invite you into the Other Worlds, and hope you enjoy the contents.

GREG STAFFORD, AUGUST 2004

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HEROQUESTING

EXPLORATIONS INTO THE WORLD OF MAGIC

As explained in "Hepherones' Statement of Magic," the Realm of Magic is the interaction of Free-willed individual with the predestined immortality of the cosmos. Through such undertakings an individual grows in spiritual awareness and ability, thereby becoming able to delve more and more deeply into the Magic realm until he can, at last, contact the very world of the gods and influence it.

The process by which an individual enters this system and grows in it is slow and gradual. A normal person in the world will have undergone at least one magical ritual in his life and taken part in its workings. This single ritual would be whatever initiation ceremony was required for adulthood, or acceptance into a guild or cult, participating in holiday festivals, and so on. As a member of a cult, he may also be offered a chance to participate in some special magic adventure, such as aiding a rune lord in his quest. Some cults have their own layman magics, such as the Telmori quest for their wolf brothers.

There are key points in the heroquester's pattern that will alter the seriousness of the actions, and will also alter the response of the cosmos to his magical acts. These are levels of consciousness or planes of being, which the quester activates with his presence. A brief and even accidental glimpse of the 'deeper realms' may activate some immortal presence from there. However, if undisturbed the deities remain in their set roles, as unconcerned about a heroquester's passing as the constellations.

Thus, a beginning heroquester encounters only small nature spirits and the like at first, as they develop their perceptive skills. (Spirit Sense is one of the first magical skills developed by a heroquester.)

The result of successfully completing a magical quest is that the hero will acquire some benefit from it. This is a magical ability, a spell, increased characteristics, weapons, or many other things, depending upon the quest undertaken.

The quest will be known to the party who undertakes it as a part of the myths of their religion. The quest will be an attempt to duplicate, or improve, the primal acts of their heroes and gods. By activating the proper portion of the cosmic matrix with their preparations and ceremonies, they alert the cosmos to their coming, and place themselves in the proper setting and spiritual state to follow the path of their quest. The alerted cosmos will bring forth whatever foe or opponent is analogous to the situation and most readily available as a natural function of its workings.

The universe may summon a person to answer someone else's quest *only* if the person summoned is also upon a heroquest. (Once accepted, the quest must be maintained until it is completed. Some will take many adventures, with rests in between, to accomplish.) Thus laymen are not troubled to be slaughtered by a champion, but another hero will be found. This may require some long journeys for powerful beings. And there is no guarantee that the foe summoned will be an exact fit, only analogous to it, and possibly with some nasty personal surprises of its own.

The length of a quest is variable depending on upon its complexity and danger. Some will require that they be completed in a predetermined length of time. Others will require rests in between, in the mundane world. Some may never be abandoned, and the person is subject to the dangers of the magical world intruding upon his daily life.

Even the staunchest heroquester must maintain a life in the mundane world. His free will is a result of his mortal origin, and the more and more he abandons the mortal realm the weaker his contacts with it get.

Myths commonly relate the adventures of one deity or hero, but these are tales of the great and mighty who lived before death. Their power has been broken and scattered into the world, and mankind is the heir to it. But few people are capable of carrying all that the gods did, and it is common for men to band together to aid each other on these mighty tasks. These may vary according to the circumstances from a band of rune lords and priests setting off upon the Lightbringers' Quest to a band of laymen retracing the bridal quest of their Founder.

It is common for a rune lord to be accompanied by other, less powerful, laymen from the cult. These laymen are not subjected to the same level of danger as their leader, but they certainly share in it and, to a certain extent, are dependent upon their leader's results. If they fight well, they will surely help their leader; if they fight poorly, they will probably hurt him. But if their leader fares poorly then his followers will be at the mercy of their own god's power to save them, and will remind their deity of the good religious lives they have led, and hope mightily that the world minds their presence.

THE HEPHERONES TEXTS

THE PLACE OF HUMANKIND IN THE WORLD

The mortal humanoid races of Glorantha are among the class of *burtae* or "bastard deities." The founders of those races were hybrids of different Elementals and/or Powers, each one different in parentage (and thereby inherited abilities) but alike in most other respects.

The origin of the "Man" Rune is described in the tales of Grandfather Mortal, a folk tale character known by local names, but recognized as the First Person. He is the exemplary model of behavior and decision-making for all humans.

Grandfather Mortal was present during the Great Compromise. He was in fact the first creature to experience Death, when Humakt was testing the New Power during the critical turning point of the War of the Gods. His death and subsequent withdrawal to the Underworld established the route that the more powerful deities followed who were later victims of Death. Human chroniclers constantly point out that Grandfather made the Path of Death and was thus responsible for the collection of deities and powers that gathered there afterwards to confront the Devil and force the Great Compromise. They also point out that he was the first creature that volunteered for mortality to maintain the balance of Entropy and Eternity. Human anti-apologists claim foreknowledge of what was to come and crow about the triumph of mankind over the universe thanks to Grandfather Mortal's cleverness. (Of course, they usually fail to note the primal squalor that is a natural by-product of such a choice.)

Whatever the motives behind Grandfather Mortal's actions, the results are painfully evident within the realm of his descendants, reproductions, and look-alikes. We are all committed to mortality, and the omnipresent specter of death is the measure and sounding board of life. This consciousness of the primal opposition is what gives humans their initial and internal dichotomy of Experience, and sets the human mind into a 'natural' dualistic method of thought.

The dualistic approach is evident in the entire universe, although I would question whether the universe is dualistic or whether mortal interpretations of it are. Gloranthan thought had no preference at all. Both *synthesists* and *detaillists* glory in the fertility of the 'two-sided cosmos.'

The duality of experiences and realities in the "world of Time" was essential to the working knowledge of man in his world. His world was commonly called the "physical plane," and the passage of time leading towards death was the prime influence in it. Man's time in the temporal realm was divided into Sacred Time (wherein the acts of the gods took place to renew or destroy the world according to the Destiny of Time) and Mundane Time (the so-called 'everyday life' of daily existence). In between those realities lay the world of magic. It is useful at this stage to present an ancient document commonly called Hephherones' Statement of Magic. This is a document first written in Rinliddi.

Translation of this document is in considerable question, but since I have visited the sites in question and formed my own opinions from experience I present them as "fact" and note the opposing and supporting views only when they are obvious, necessary, or illuminating. The lack of "archaic" language (or jargon) is evident upon reading the documents, but I present these as admissible translations to a modern audience, intent upon meaning rather than literal (and evasive) translations.

The dating of this document assures us that the human race had realized its potential for change and growth, even to affecting the great gods of the cosmos, by about 1200 S.T. (+/- 50 years). This 'secret ability' was lost and rediscovered many times, but the encroachment of mortals upon the Divine Plane was well established by the end of the New Years (i.e., 500 to circa 1,000 S.T.).

Summarizing, we may infer that the general class of mortals entered into the Third Age,¹ the "time of Time," with a rudimentary knowledge of the workings of magic. They also controlled the only active factor within the "New World (of Time)": Free Will, and an innate mastery and understanding of linear time.

Thus, at the start of Time, those individuals who were able to set about an education process consciously intended to educate and increase the spiritual abilities of the other survivors of the Great Darkness. Where a mortal race had been wracked in the Darkness, there was occasionally an individual who could lead his tribe from the muck and murk of the Darkness and whose actions were heroic in stature and so determined the future paths of the people of the tribe. In other places, whole societies emerged at the Dawning as intact powers, complete with ruling structures and administrations in both the physical and magical realms. The divinities, bound to their realms and spheres of activity, responded to their fates as they were able.

STATEMENT OF MAGIC

A practical working knowledge of magic stems from understanding the essential work upon which the energy system is built. The essential system of Gloranthan energy exchanges lies in the inherent duality that is built into the spiritual and physical fabric of the cosmos.

Before Time, there existed the world of endless bounty, life, and love. There was no end to existence and power, and the entire world flourished in boundless creation and intelligences. The Second Age, of Darkness, sought to end that bright fury with violence, death, and entropy. War

¹ The usage of First Age, Second Age, and Third Age is not the standard breakdown to which we are accustomed; instead, the terms are First Age = Golden Age, Second Age = Great Darkness, Third Age = History/Time.

entered the world and the endless beauty and harmony of the universe was devoured by its negative half.

The Third Age, during which we live, is that of Compromise, wherein the gods that were voluntarily abdicate their Free Will within the existing world, and accept a limited Fate rather than lose their All into the maws of nonexistence. Thus did those creatures and beings of great Power save themselves, in both spiritual and physical form, but at the cost of losing all self-change and growth.

By their choice they also accepted, or began, the duality of Being and not-Being. The belief, and reality, of not-Being was the source of the potential death and entropy of the immortals. Their demise could never occur if they upheld their static part in the cosmos. Yet, if they were ever to transgress from their fixed portions of the universe they would enter into the world where death and decay would rob and destroy them. This place was called, by divinities, the Mortal Realm or the Physical Plane.

Humans are among those creatures that occupy the Mortal Realm, and within whose daily existence Death is a known and inevitable function. The necessity of Death in this realm is the result of the Great Compromise, wherein the Powers of the world created the Mortal Realm as a combination of the powers of Entropy and Immortality.

Humans and other mortal races on the Physical Plane shared in the common Gift of Free Will, which is denied to those embedded within the structure of immortality. It is at this gift that allows mortals the ability to grow, change, and exert their individuality upon the world around them.

The dualistic worlds of Immortal Destiny and Mortal Free Will are the basic polarities of the universe. From these poles of opposition come all of known reality: the living and dying cosmos. The frictions caused by the co-existence of these oppositions forms the very energies that support both worlds, commonly called magic.

Magic is the interaction of the Mortal and Immortal Planes and/or of conscious beings against destiny. Although the two oppositions are mutually exclusive there exists the common ground between them that is the place of energy exchanges. This exchange of energies from divine to mortal or from mortal to immortal is known as magic.

The exchanges of energy from the Mortal Plane to the Divine Plane are most commonly those of sacrifice. This may be of physical goods or power, of time and effort, or of services and information. The forms of sacrifice are multiple and very widely according to local lore. They are all generalized in that they are a freely willed gift to the recipient divinity that can never be recalled, whose purpose is maintenance of the deity's stature in the world of myth.

The exchange of energy from the Divine Plane to the Mortal Plane is of special gifts, curses, overgenerous returns for ordinary deeds, or specific aid in certain circumstances. The recipients may be whole peoples, as a general cult function; or individuals, as in divine aid or spells.

The magician may gain importance and ability in the Magical Realm by establishing a Base of Power. This is begun in the Physical Plane by extending himself to the limits of natural abilities and inclinations, to thereby learn of

his physical self. This will allow for the development of the higher senses and abilities that can then carry the magician into the magical sphere. This base of magical power allows the magician to draw energy and resources that are not normally available to people or immortals.

Study and meditation upon the World of Myth will familiarize the magician with that world's abilities, forms, and parameters. A successful and aggressive magician will be able to manipulate the mythic forms according to the methods learned in the Physical World. This manipulation and meeting of forces is the operation of magic. Successful use of magic will allow an individual to grow within the physical and magical realms, expanding in both will and consciousness to compete with the very immortals in power. Advancement of the individual being is the purpose of existence for those within the mortal sphere.

The entire cosmos has been bereft of the unification of Immortal Growth with Universal Will ever since the beginning of the Third Age. The increase of personal power for the good of all creation is the natural byproduct of this evolution of the individual. The progression of the Many back towards the One is, and shall be until its completion, the vehicle for future progress and advancement within this world, magic, and the mythology of the future. Thus, it is good for each of us as individuals to grow and aid ourselves and our fiends and relations to expand and exert our Wills and Power upon the cosmos, taking our truth into the world, and forming the world to our way.

THE ARGUMENT OF HEPHERONES (THE DECLINE OF THE OLD RACES)

It is a known fact that the universe is divided between Free Willed Mortals and Predestined Immortals, but the creativity of Nature is hardly so limited to just those simple divisions! What, pray tell me, of Free Willed Immortals and Predestined Mortals? Of the former, we know nothing, Alhazal,² nor will any of us be likely to learn of it for many years, lives, and legends hence. Of the latter we can speak more freely, for the very experience has been visible in our world, and serves to prove that although Nature has the creativity for such oddities, the makeup of the world does not allow for their importance.

The Old Races are, in fact, those very Destined Mortals of whom I speak. Their origins all lack the colorful variance that is at the founding of all the *burtae* humans. Their origins are in the sedentary and unwieldy elements, and although mortal they do not have the freedom of other peoples.

Indeed, the shortness of the reigns of the Old Races speaks for their destiny, sad that it is. In the Mythical Ages they were great and powerful, but their collective decline after the Dawn Age, despite their efforts to act collectively, speak of a sad fate for them. The continued existence of members of these races seems assured by their strength in the Magical World, but their inability to manifest it upon the Physical Plane seems just as assured by their mythical origin.

² Untranslatable, but I believe it to be an invocation or protective charm. Reasons for its presence are unknown.

HEROQUESTING

Heroquesting is a powerful and rare Gloranthan activity in which the participants leave the material world and enter the realm of legend and myth to interact with heroes and gods, gambling precious Life Force to gain miraculous powers.

The Inner World is the only place in Glorantha where the Life Force is generated on a grand scale, for there all of the gods and all of the powers touch in equal strength. The movement of the Life Force throughout the physical world, carefully following the Great Compromise, gives the gods of nature their energy.

Human beings, in their many kinds and colors, generate energy freely, and can affect the spiritual realm when given in large enough quantities or strategically placed locations. Some deities are even dependant upon this energy given by humans.

When humans participate in a religious ceremony they expend energy and gain temporary benefits in perception and understanding of cult secrets. The depth of participation is based on a person's magical power and contact with the ceremony. In most ceremonies priests are endowed with preternatural senses, while initiates see the dramatic participants bathed in their divine splendor. During annual ceremonies for large gatherings an entire temple's ground might be transported to the Hero Plane, for all to witness the mythical acts which empower the cult.

When an individual reaches a certain state of spiritual development he can exist independently on the Hero Plane. These men and women are potential candidates for Heroquesting.

During the First Age, such men and women could fulfill their potential only with the established cults. A considerable amount of cult secret activity is devoted towards defining their god's place in the mythic geography, and exploring nearby events and neighbors. Associated cults often share events and unimportant secrets, with each other, but in general every religion kept its experiences on the Hero Plane to themselves. Only a few Brithini claimed to Know Everything, and to record it in *Zzabur's Blue Book*, whose original is long lost beneath the Neliomi Sea. The few real fragments of this book found have proved alarmingly accurate. Most people are glad the rest is lost.

Arkat Chaosbane was the first individual to discover Heroquesting outside of a specific cult myth. He underwent several secret initiations (and excommunications) which gave him an unusual transcultural view of the secret world of legend. His personal experiences gave him clues which he followed, exploited, and taught to others. He finally established a cult which preserved the secrets of Heroquesting.

Arkat's heir, the Dark Empire, was a widespread, loosely organized body of city states, families, priesthoods, and special interest groups. Upon his apotheosis in (c. 500) the benefits and problems were divided among loyal lieutenants of the great, solitary superhero.

The activities of the Dark Empire qualified its adherents as a Malkioni heretics. A holy war destroyed the cult of Arkat, driving its followers underground. Though the Arkat people attempted to destroy all their records in the Great Fire of Clarity (c. 715), much of their knowledge and Heroquesting techniques passed into the hands of the God Learners.

The God Learners systematically explored the spirit plane, at the same time exploiting it without regard to its consciousness or purpose. In the centuries of their rule, they made substantial changes, even to the dreams of nations. At the time of their demise a poet wrote: "Too late, too late/ to save the dreams/ all lost forever down the Great Sink."

During most of the Third Age Heroquesting was considered evil, because the God Learners were so enthusiastic about it. Cults purged themselves of unusual rites, denounced certain knowledge, and destroyed records. A general religious conservatism resulted in a stunted understanding of the religious experiences offered by each deity.

Only the Lunar Empire actively pursued the subject. The Pelorian mystical geography was almost virgin territory since the area was never actively part of the God Learner's conspiracy. The Red Goddess, an immortal orphan resurrected by ambitious mystics, opened her own way into the spirit world. The Lunar pantheon is largely made up of mortals who obtained divine status and replaced the Old Gods. The Lunar philosophy urges each person to seek their own Heroquest, and the highlights of their history are lit by individuals who combined material and spiritual success.

The processes of the Lunar Way seemed to contradict the Great Compromise, and in response the ancient gods of nature and time inspired many of their number to rebel against their hidebound cult authorities, and heroquest thoroughly, arming themselves to challenge the Red Goddess. The resultant battle of Castle Blue in 1246 resulted in the acceptance of the Red Goddess into the world as a deity. It was like an amendment to the Great Compromise.

From then on, the forces of the Red Goddess expanded, always grating upon the anti-chaos sensitivities of the rest of the gods. Although the gods had been beaten into resignation, many humans did not accept the Red Goddess as natural. They felt cheated by the outcome and consciously sought to arm themselves as fully as possible for another fight rather than being summoned, almost unprepared, as they were before. They have been preparing Heroes.

Now, in the last years of the Third Age, the social and religious fabric of society is dissolving. Bold individuals are carving niches for themselves, some in this world and some in the spirit world, and some in both. They are learning to be Heroes.

Cosmic tensions have recently raised questions about the actions of the Red Goddess: she is so close to destroying Orlanth that the very fabric of the universe is threatened.

Prophets have predicted everywhere that a great spiritual battle is soon to take place, and that it will be preceded by many skirmishes. This time everyone is ready: the Hero Wars draw near.

HISTORICAL HEROQUEST DEVELOPMENT

TYPICAL RELIGIOUS QUESTS

Every ceremony is a heroquest. These are called Worship Quests. When History began, people were performing these worship heroquests. Worshippers got together in a sacred place, performed their ceremonies to summon the deities, and reenacted the actions that brought them there. To worshippers the action enlivened them to transcend the ordinary world and they become part of the Mythic Realm. They participated in the deeds of their deities.

These usually required a vertical quest, and then a departure from the god's house to be in the mythic story. Thus an Oria priestess in the harvest ceremony summons the god plane of the Weeping Oria to her, and departs from that place and wanders around the God Plane for a while, before returning with the secrets she sought.

As time passes, the participants will participate in many of the major stories of their deities. These events are usually pretty well known, with few variations, and well contained within the established ceremonies. That is, they know the basic religious world through acquired experiences.

SPECIAL JOBS: SOLO QUESTING

Sometimes a leader, whether religious or mundane, would undertake an individual quest to achieve a specific objective. These were usually some unusual activity, needed for extraordinary reason. These were the early and later Hero Cults.

In these ceremonies supporters, several other people typically remain attendant upon the welfare of the traveler. They pray or perform, as appropriate, and lend their strength to the quester in case of emergency. The supporters are linked to the traveler in both blessing and curse.

HARMAST

Harmast Barefoot was the first person to perform extended sequential heroquesting. He linked a number of stories together to reinforce each other, and to achieve long term and powerful consequences.

At the time everyone knew that even within a single myth variants exist, and that participants can actively and consciously affect *which* version of the story occurred by their preparations. Harmast discovered that it is possible to affect the very landscape of the quest *after entering it*. This is called clarification.

ARKAT

Arkat went even further than Harmast. Arkat had participated in several different religions and learned that different religions often portrayed the same event, but from different perspectives.

He went a step further and discovered that he could actually change paths in mid quest, and invade the mythic space of other peoples. This was extremely dangerous since more myths have many ways to preserve themselves, and have little room for variance by intruders. (This is called Ranging.) But some people do it, and after Arkat learned how Harmast could manipulate the mythic landscape, he went to impossible places and discovered things to destroy his mystical foe.

GOD LEARNERS

The God Learners went further and discovered that they could forcibly alter the landscape. This is called mutation.

Later, they learned to mutate the myths permanently, effectively destroying myths and their participants. They did this by applying sorcery to the myths, draining them. This is called tapping.

SIDE LINING

It was realized that some supporters could actually go along as participants and gain normal experience, and not always in what the ceremony normally required. This was a special type of supporter going along as active participant.

HEROQUESTING

Heroquesting did not exist in the Gods Age. In that magic age there was no division between the world of men and gods, of life and death, of body and spirit.

In the Gods War the power of separation, Death, sundered the physical plane from the Other Side. Reality was fractured. Worshipers prayed, but their energy went nowhere. They opened their souls, but nothing replied. Darkness reigned. Gods sought their worshipers, sending their messengers and magics to no one. Empty fear loomed.

Some entities persisted. Some beings held out, and struggled, and resisted the darkness to keep something of the old life force vital. They kept their contacts with the gods, or forged them anew by stalking across the chaos-strewn ruins of the world to find them. When gods and men performed those magical deeds they made the magic which saved the world.

CULT HEROQUESTS

Normal public worship rituals for all Gloranthan religions are re-enactments of ancient creative myths to maintain the flow of magical energy in the world. With the priests' invocations on holy days come real spirits, gods, and demons within the sacred temple precincts. The sacred magic is performed again, invested with the presence of the real gods and spirits.

Some things which the gods did are too intense for the untrained public, who are unused to dealing with powerful psychic forces. Thus there are "secret rites" for every cult, performed by selected individuals of the greatest power. Those are heroquest rituals.

Cult heroquest rituals begin by opening a place into the Other Side and physically entering the Hero Plane. Some begin at a specific place in the physical plane, others from one of several possible sites, still others can begin from any temple or holy place. The transferal may be through an actual gate or hole which forms in the air, by a magical fog which surrounds and blocks all senses, by falling, being blown by a wind, being carried on the back of a beast, walking through flames, leaping off a cliff, or by subtle transitions beyond the ken of mortals.

Once through, the heroquesters seek landmarks to follow a known, ritually prescribed trail wherein certain opponents, friends, and other characters appear according to the sequence of the god's myth.

Cult heroquests stress adherence to the known paths and routes of the gods. The object of the worshiper is to relive the exact experience of his god, to understand his triumphs, sufferings, and problems. Priests of all cults relate stories of terrible disasters when cultists deviated from the pathway into the magical world surrounding. The least that can occur is a permanent loss of personal willpower. A common thing is to fall into the future or suffer a permanent wound. A bad event is to be transformed into something foul, and a terrible fate is to be dismembered, body and soul, into components which are scattered

through the Other Side. The worst disaster is to become captive of chaos, for that means an eternity of torture and evil preceding total oblivion of mind, soul, spirit, energy, body, and of every thought, consequence, or memory.

Every cult has its own paths for its own gods. Deities of a pantheon share several significant pathways, often going through an entire story together. Thus we often find that Yelm, in one form or another, accompanies Lodril, Dayzatar, and Chalana Arroy on quests.

Participants in one of these sacred worship rituals gain first hand experience of their god's lifetime. They gain in understanding and harmony with their deity. As a side effect, they often obtain magical abilities, powers, or spells. For instance, when an Orlanth heroquester enters the first of the Four Weapons heroquest, he returns with an impenetrable shield.

Not all results of heroquests are beneficial, even when the heroquest is performed perfectly. For example, Yelmario gains immortality on the Hill of Gold Quest. Yet he must suffer terrible woes on his journey -- Orlanth wounds him and steals his weapons; Zorak Zoran appears and breaks his thighs; Inora, the white princess, leaves him spurned and frozen immobile. Some have negative effects which seem -- to an outsider -- to outweigh the benefits. For instance, Orlanth must always accompany an Issaries Desert Tracker on a heroquest to the empty Halls of Genert to stand guard against hopeless odds while the Tracker, and others, perform a reconstruction rite.

Such gifts gained at the end of a cult heroquest are magical in nature. They vary widely, but always with one variable: the greater the prize, the tougher the quest.

ARKAT'S HEROQUESTING

Arkat Chaosbane was the first person to realize and experience the breadth and depth of the magical world of the Other Side. His history is extraordinary, and of critical import to the fate of Glorantha.

Arkat spent most of his life in a war to destroy Gbaji the Deceiver, a constructed deity who controlled subtle chaos powers despised (and feared) by Arkat. Arkat began as a wonder child of Brithos, where lived a dying race of immortals with natural abilities of sorcery. Primed, armed, blessed, and backed by the whole of Brithos' energies, Arkat settled and cleansed the ever-faithful colony of Arolanit of disease and evil. Arkat was proclaimed hero, went upon certain Brithini heroquests, and was quickly alarmed at his own turpitude of inaction as the cult of Gbaji spread wider outside. He incited the colony to action and aided dissidents in Seshnela, despite the protests and threats of the Brithini council. Arkat protested, resisted, then defied the elders, and was excommunicated from the Brithini power.

Undaunted, Arkat joined the Malkioni religion of Seshnela, spearheading a revival of the ancient Hrestol traditions. Backed by the royalty of Seshnela. Arkat led a savage war against the Kingdom of Tanisor, whose royal