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Introduction

Characters in a typical fantasy role-playing game setting spend much of their time trudging through teeming wilderness, exploring forgotten ruins, and risking the hazards of subterranean dungeon complexes. Before and after such adventures, however — and sometimes even during them — characters often visit a wide variety of places to buy and sell weapons, armor, and other equipment; consult with or hire mercenaries, tradesmen, scholars, and various sorts of specialists; and participate in training and other activities related to their vocations.

The various types of communities where adventurers perform these and other functions is the subject of this book and the series of which it is part. It has not been written with any particular game system in mind and is intended to be useful for Game Masters building a wide variety of ancient, medieval, and fantasy communities.

In many game campaigns, visits to such communities and the essential places within them are often given short shrift, and dispensed with in the most perfunctory way. Not every visit to such non-adventuring venues needs to be played out, of course, and it is perfectly appropriate that many not be. Periodically role-playing visits to various essential places, however, can serve a number of useful functions.

Communities of various sorts often serve as the starting and ending points for all sorts of ventures, and uncounted parties of adventurers have begun and ended their quests in the marketplaces and taverns of the villages, towns, and cities of the game world. Communities themselves can also serve as locales for exploits of all sorts, especially those involving skill use and role-playing rather than battle, with encounters and characters much different than those typical of the usually more dangerous wilderness and dungeon environments. Even campaigns encompassing long overland travels or voyages at sea will likely involve occasional stops at settlements or ports to obtain supplies and services beyond what characters in a party can carry or provide for themselves.

Indeed, one of the things that distinguishes a campaign from an unrelated series of dungeon crawls can be the downtime between adventures. Many parties will return again and again to a well-established base of operations, a place where the adventurers can heal up, resupply, and train. Providing a detailed community in which to perform these tasks establishes a sense of continuity, provides a stronger rationale for player characters' progression in competence and ability, and helps tie together adventures into a cohesive whole. Game-world communities are, unfortunately, often not

as interesting or unique as they could be, and the intent behind this book is to provide Game Masters with a resource for making the communities in their worlds more plausible, memorable, and exciting.

Visits to places that have been given interesting details and added dimensions can reinforce the feeling that the characters live in a real, vital, interconnected world. This will seem especially true if various fundamental places and the people associated with them are affected by the same sorts of factors present in the milieu as the player characters are.

Finally, Game Masters can often use communities and the relevant places within them both as locales where player characters might meet non-player characters who might be useful to them or otherwise influence their fates, and as opportunities to insert adventure hooks of various sorts.

About This Series

Each of the 11 volumes in this series begins with a brief overview of the sorts of places discussed in it and then details a number of such places, as described below.

Volume 1: Communities discusses villages, towns, cities, and other locales and covers such things as types of communities, regional and racial influences on them, and the sorts of calamities that can affect them and their inhabitants.

Volume 2: Craftsman Places explores the locations associated with people who make things and to which characters must frequently go when they need to purchase or commission armor, weapons, clothing, and any other kinds of custom-made or special items. Places it covers in detail include Armories, Arsenal, Blacksmithies, Clothiers, and Jewelry Shops.

Volume 3: Entertainment Places visits the locales to which people in the game milieu may go for leisure and recreation. Specific places of this sort that it covers include Carnivals, Menageries, Museums, Parks, and Theaters.

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Volume 4: Professional Places discusses institutions that characters might need to visit in order to advance in their vocations, or to which others might need to go for information or various services. Specific places of this sort described in this chapter include Guildhouses, Hospitals, and Training Halls.

Volume 5: Tradesman Places examines places occupied by various sorts of specialized individuals that player characters might periodically need to visit. Specific places described in it include Apothecary Shops, Breweries, and Mills.

Volume 6: Mercantile Places deal with wealth in its various forms and are the locales where characters go to liquidate, spend, and safeguard the loot they acquire in the course of their adventures. They are, naturally, among some of the most visited places in many campaign settings. Places of this sort described in this chapter include Banks, Brokerages, General Stores, Marketplaces, Pawnbrokerages, Trading Posts, and Warehouses.

Volume 7: Service Places are locales that characters can visit to fulfill their needs for things like food, drink, sleep, and personal hygiene and include some of the most quintessential places associated with fantasy role-playing games. Such places described in this book include Inns, Taverns, Barbershops, Bathhouses, Hostels, Kitchens, Livery Stables, Restaurants, and Rooming Houses.

Volume 8: Scholarly Places looks at places characters go to ask questions of their knowledgeable inhabitants or purchase goods and services from them. Places of this sort described here include Academies and Colleges, Alchemists' Workshops, Fortune Tellers, Libraries, Mages' Guilds, Scriptoriums and Scrollshops, and Wizards' Towers.

Volume 9: Religious Places are locations characters can visit to fulfill various spiritual needs, meet with the people associated with them, or try to commune with the gods or their agents. Such places described in this book include Cemeteries, Monasteries and Convents, Shrines, and Temples.

Volume 10: Governmental Places examines venues associated with and controlled by the ruling powers of a community or state. Characters might decide to visit such places for any number of reasons, but might also find themselves summoned or unwillingly taken to some of them. Specific places of this sort described in this book include Audience Chambers, Barracks,

Guardhouses, Harbors and Harbormasters' Offices, Jails, Manors, Manor Houses, Municipal Courthouses, Palaces, Prisons, and Workhouses.

Volume 11: Underworld Places are those associated with criminals and the seamy underside of society. Places of this sort that adventurers might visit for business or pleasure include Brothels, Pit-Fighting Rings, and Thieves' Guilds.

This volume's section on "Physical Characteristics of Cities" contains a significant amount of material derived from *Wizards of the Coast's v.3.5 System Reference Document*, which is used under the terms of the Open Gaming License. Content in each of the other 10 volumes of this series is completely new and original.

Overall, the intent of this book and the others in this series is to provide Game Masters with concrete information about how to create communities and places within them for use in their own fantasy roleplaying campaigns and to inspire them to develop places that are believable, colorful, and exciting for their players' characters to visit.

This book and the entire *City Builder* series have also been written so as to be fully compatible with the various existing Skirmisher Publishing LLC d20 publications, including *Experts v.3.5*, *Warriors*, and *Tests of Skill*.

Viewing This Book

This book has been designed to be as user-friendly as possible from both the perspectives of printing out for use in hard copy and viewing on a computer screen. It has been laid out like a traditional print book with the idea that each even-numbered page complements the odd-numbered page that it should face (e.g., the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse on page 24 are intended to face and illustrate the beginning of the section on "Disasters" on page 25).

With the above in mind, the optimal way to view and enjoy this book would be to print it out and organize it in a binder so that the pages are arranged as described above. This is by no means necessary, however, for using and fully benefiting from *City Builder Volume 1: Communities* and its contents.

Features of Communities

Most communities in the game world are inhabited by a populace with similar or overlapping backgrounds, goals, interests, and concerns (there can, of course, be marked exceptions to this rule, as with communities in the throes of division and crisis, or those in which there has been historic isolation and oppression of a weaker group).

Populations in smaller communities tend to be racially homogenous; generally have a relatively narrow gap between their richest and poorest members; are often comparatively egalitarian or democratic in nature; generally enjoy limited privacy, probably no anonymity, and tend to know everyone else; and generally suffer or benefit fairly equally from conditions affecting the community overall.

Populations in larger communities are much more likely to be racially diverse; to have a distinct economic gap between their richest and poorest members; to have power concentrated in the hands of a few individuals or families, to have a politically disenfranchised underclass, and to have the bulk of the residents fall somewhere between these two extremes; tend to value their privacy, to have many individuals about whom little is widely known, and who generally mind their own business as much as possible; and to enjoy benefits or suffer detriments that are often not distributed equally.

A single major community — anywhere between a large town and very large city in size — might compose a small nation-state. In addition to its main community, such a small state might also include a number of nearby villages or smaller towns, mostly dedicated to producing food for the capital. Despite their relatively small size, such countries that evolve from single cities can often become quite influential and powerful. Small states of this sort will likely be the norm in ancient, medieval, or fantasy game milieus.

A large nation-state might comprise many communities — including scores of cities, hundreds of towns, and thousands of villages and smaller communities. Such larger countries may be divided into several major regions, each containing perhaps one to three cities and numerous smaller communities. Although such states will likely have some form of central government and a unified foreign policy, individual communities might have significant control over the administration of local and regional affairs.

Even subject communities might operate with a great degree of independence, especially if they have suffi-

cient political clout or distance from their suzerain to insist upon it, or if such semi-autonomy is to the advantage of their ultimate overlords. Indeed, in certain looser forms of government — such as confederations, leagues, and weak feudal states — the overall ruler may hold power only by the cooperation of a number of lords or electors, or the central government body might only convene yearly or at longer intervals, or in times of crisis.

In any event, communities tend to value whatever independence they can obtain and many will engage in protracted negotiations or even military action to obtain charters granting them the rights they desire. Lords are often willing to grant such charters to mercantile and manufacturing communities, which can generate income far beyond that possible for rural estates, in exchange for cash payments (such cash-hungry aristocrats, of course, might seek to replace city governments that do not adequately serve their needs).

One way or another, individual community governments might operate and be constituted much differently than the national governments to which they are ultimately subject. Local governments might be influenced by such things as a desire to preserve traditions from the community's history, a drive to experiment with model forms of government proposed by various philosophers, and a need to adhere to unique local circumstances.

Regional Influences

Where a particular community is located is one of the most critical factors in how it will develop. Indeed, major terrain features like rivers, lakes, seas, mountains, valleys, forests, hills, swamps, islands, and deserts can be some of the most significant determining factors in why a particular community was established, the form it takes, its economic basis, and how large and successful it does or does not become.

Communities established in areas of rich farmland, for example, may be able to produce food in surplus of their needs, allowing them to both maintain a well-fed populace and engage in trade with communities less