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Orc Culture



JOSHUA RAYNACK





DESIGN

Joshua Raynack

EDITOR

Heather Raynack

COVER ILLUSTRATION

Joshua Raynack
Pegaso Models
Sade

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Joshua Raynack
Ryan Rawls
Johannes Wiebel

**WEB PRODUCTION
AND DEVELOPMENT**

Ryan Rawls

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Introduction



Joshua Raynack and Pegaso

There are many minor orc chieftains infesting the lands of Terra, each competing and trying to force their influence over one another and the other races in the area. However, their chaotic nature lends to unusual interactions with characters. For example, read the following from the *Chronicles of Yrza the Crow*:

Our small camp was surprisingly awakened by the plodding footsteps of orcish soldiers on the move toward Argos. One of the beasts casually broke rank, sniffed the remains of our cooked pheasant from the night before, and greedily ate his fill. While doing so, he asked our interpreter whether if my sister or I were available for trade and would offer many fine slave-warriors if we were good breeders. He was interested in finding wives that would bring him strong and healthy sons. My interpreter explained that we were not for trade and, more importantly, that he worked for me. The orc, seemingly disgusted with this concept, immediately took his leave. None of the other creatures bothered us as they passed through our camp. Although, they took the rest of food supplies, they left us with our lives and freedom, which surprised us all.

ORC ORIGINS

Heldeofol, the dwarven word for *hell devil*, was the name granted to the orcmen nearly a century ago during the Siege of Ahngrin. Orcs are the progeny of vile, metalsmith trolls and northmen of the Gaeth clan. Since that time, the orcmen pillaged and plundered across the known lands eventually concentrating heavily in the south.

Their voracious appetite for all worldly affairs puts them at direct odds with the Church of the Eternal Spirit of Man, as church doctrine states spiritual





release comes from true abstinence of material goods that satisfy the flesh. Though the Church of the Eternal Spirit cares little for other races and their practices, they deem orcs a deliberate abomination of man and natural law. It is one of many reasons that led for the Popa to call for a crusade to the southern Hill Lands against the numerous orc tribes that dwell in that area.

Scholars still debate the rapidity of the orc race and believe orcs reach maturity between eight and ten years of age. Coupled with the fact that orc females often bear healthy twins and triplets with every other pregnancy, sheds a bit of enlightenment to the hasty expansion of the orcish peoples. Furthermore, orc males have the ability to mate with almost any race which ultimately leads to a half-orc child. Such children might reach maturity slower than their orc cousins, however should a male half-orc mate with any race, their progeny almost always results in an orc child. Such a perversion of natural laws led many divine scholars to the conclusion that troll wizardry allowed the foul creatures to mate with humans to ensure strong and dominating offspring.

ORC ENCAMPMENTS

Orc encampments portray the strange and diverse orcish culture. The orcish attitude of less is more is prevalent in the layout of a common site chosen by the orc chieftain. Usually, sites are often chosen around ruins, however small, and especially if a hearth is present. This presents less work for the warriors and often the smith can immediately begin work hammering out weapons and armor. Orc shamans, for the spiritual presence an area might possess, sometimes choose other sites.

Slaves are used in menial labor tasks rather than camp construction or similar heavy labors. It is the duty of an orc warrior to construct the defenses of an encampment, for it further represents their worth to the chieftain should defenses hold. The chieftain oversees the construction and usually participates in the building of the tower entrance or delineates this task to his finest warrior or eldest son. However, soon, as work tires orc muscles, they give in to drinking and debauchery, thus it is common to find an orc encampment with unfinished wooden walls and disorganized layout. However, a strong orc chieftain might bully his warriors to finish such tasks, however find himself without any allies to prevent his enemies within the tribe usurping his title.

Although at first glance the defenses look weak,

however due to orcish deception, the site hides their numbers well. While the warriors construct the defenses, slaves dig various tunnels that interconnect with the tents surrounding the main encampment. This not only hides the exact number of orcs per tent from scouts and spies, but also presents safe travel between tents and other parts of the encampment from ranged attacks. It also serves to confuse the enemy.

However, such bulwark encampments are uncommon for all save the most resourceful orc lord. Most common encampments surround networks of natural caverns with little or no additional defense work.

ORC FEMALES

Usually, orc females are of a low social status, save for the chieftain's various wives and the rare female orc warrior. There are important taboos orc women must follow. They are not allowed to wear clothing, offer advice to any orc male without his consent, or carry a weapon larger than a dagger. Their tasks usually consist of preparing food, armoring their mates for battle (due to male orcs do not trust one another for such an important task), and caring for the horses. If the encampment comes under attack, it is their duty to fight as well, and in which case, are allowed to temporarily wield larger weapons. However, they must relinquish them if they spot a male disarmed and defenseless. Depending on the circumstances and only if directed by her mate, an orc female might kill a defenseless orc male if it allows her mate to rise socially. To say the least, she better succeed in the task.

However, though rare, orc females occasionally become warriors. They are allowed to wear clothes, light armor, and carry medium-size weapons. Needless to say, they are not allowed to be the first in battle unless charging another female.

If they are seen breaking these conditions, these females are met with a quick death by any number of males despite the situation. It must be said, in spite of this, female chieftains also exist if on the death of her husband she is strong enough to hold the position. Though no other orc tribe will trade with one known to have a female chieftain, it leads tribes with such leaders to trade with other races or some human tolerant settlements.

WARRIORS

Orcs and half-orcs favor the barbarian class, however,



most of the strongest warriors train as fighters while adopting better combat methods on campaign. Their chaotic nature also furthers the chaos of a battlefield. Many orcs may occasionally turn on their kin during the confusion of battle in hopes of eliminating a rival within the tribe. Furthermore, they usually never possess organized battle tactics; each trying to display personal acts of glory and courage.

Another, yet dangerous, act of glory an orc utilizes is to subdue his opponent in combat, especially if the opponent is seemingly superior. A subdued superior opponent is worth a great value for trade as a slave or used as a trophy in hopes to raise one's social status.

In addition, such a prize is also a great gift for a chieftain. This is done in hopes of being allowed to use the forge to enhance a weapon or have the chieftain's smiths forge a new weapon or armor.

SHAMANS AND MAGICIANS

Shamans and adepts continually struggle against one another seeking a favored position with the chieftain or orc warlord. Additionally, like many other races, the orcish peoples worship a variety of gods, and thus every shaman struggles to dominate other priests under their control. It is not uncommon, when in battle, that followers of one shaman viciously attack followers of another despite the foes they face. Thus, a strong and wise orc chieftain usually kills all but his favored shaman. However, doing so is difficult, since a shaman sometimes rivals the power of a chieftain.

Shamans and their followers also frequently use hallucinogens and other mind-affecting drugs, especially in battle for guidance and protection. While most orc warriors disdain the use of drugs during battle, they usually submit when promised an increase in strength. Orc chieftains usually become addicted to such drugs and thus a puppet in the hands of a powerful shaman.

Female orcs also make promising shamans and sorcerers and are not as uncommon as female warriors. However, many orc chieftains keep these dangerous individuals close usually forcing them to become concubines or wives. This increases their power from internal enemies and many such orc chieftains become tempted in the divine or dark arts.

Shamans are also sometimes found in the position of chieftain. Usually, this comes about when a shaman survives an attack by a superior shaman in a fight of dominance. These wise witch doctors choose

to leave the tribe with those faithful to his cause, rather than stay and fight for position.

Usually, one or two magicians of one sort or another are found in a typical encampment. The over-dominating shamans and superstitious warriors tend to offer many challenges for a sorcerer or wizard and their rise to power. Most of the time, unless the magician is a concubine and under the protection of a chieftain, they live within a mile of an encampment with a select chosen few. These few serve as bodyguards usually out of a prior disgraceful action more so than loyalty. Many guardians of magicians and shamans are thus usually female warriors. A wise sorcerer or wizard usually holds great sway over female warriors through love potions or mind-affecting spells.

ORC RELIGION

Of the known religions, presented in *Adventurer's Guide to Cthonia*, orcs usually worship and follow the tenets of the most powerful shaman within the tribe or clan. This often leads to much chaos as with each death followed by the rise of a stronger shaman marks a change in religious beliefs amongst clan members. Most orc tribes worship shamanism or elementalism, while more secluded tribes follow the practices of animism. Occasionally, wily human cults dedicated to the Fallen of Men will manipulate an orc tribe through a dominated shaman to spread havoc to human settlements.

The Church of the Eternal Spirit often makes great strides to embrace abandoned half-orc children or forlorn mercenaries into their fold. While some believe a new tolerance recently entered into church doctrine, those more skeptical believe it is to promote abstinence among half-orcs.

ORC MONSTER ABILITIES

This section offers alternate and additional orc powers to make new, interesting orc opponents.

BRASS CLAW

Many grand orc warriors live long enough to receive a brass claw from their chieftain or warlord. It is a higher sought gift and usually denotes bodyguard or war council status.

Brass Claw (minor; at-will) † **Weapon**

Grappled targets only; level+2 vs. Reflex; 1d4 + Constitution modifier damage.



BRUTAL SHOVE

This power is great for orc brutes, soldiers, and even skirmishers, especially if they shift after an attack.

Brutal Shove (standard; recharge ☉, ☺) † **Weapon**

This orc makes a bull rush attack. If successful, it may also make a basic melee attack against the bull rush target.

BRUTE STRENGTH

Mystical tattoos and a shaman's elixir, imbued by an orc warrior just before battle, often empowers their already impressive physical prowess. *Brute strength* is an ability that offers a boost to elite or solo orc villains.

Brute Strength (minor; encounter)

This orc gains a +3 to attack and damage rolls until the end of its next turn.

I DECIDE YOUR FATE

This is a perfect example to showcase the brutal hierarchy of an orc chieftain or another elite orc over his subordinates while on the battlefield.

I Decide Your Fate (minor; encounter)

Targets I ally with the marked condition; end that condition.

ORC BOMBARD

Without proper materials and the needed patience to work with such weapons, orkish explosives often proves deadly to those that wield them. This power is great for expendable troops that usually last only a few rounds before adventurers cut them down. With a little modification, this power is good for high level minion as well.

Orc Bombard (standard; recharge ☉, ☺, ☻, ☼) † **Fire, Weapon**

Area burst 2 within 10; level+2 vs. Reflex; 1d8 + Dexterity modifier fire damage and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends). Mark this power with a fuse counter each time this power recharges.

Orc Bombard Mishap (no action; when *orc bombard* is marked with 4 fuse counters) † **Fire**

Close burst 3; level+2 vs. Reflex; 3d8 + 1/2 level fire damage and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends); Miss: half damage; this creature is destroyed.

ORC MASTER'S WHIP

Orc master's whip and *tug of the master* makes an interesting orc solo monster, especially if coupled

with the *taskmaster* power.

Orc Master's Whip (minor; at-will) † **Weapon**

Reach 2; level+2 vs. Reflex; 1d4 + Dexterity modifier damage and the target is marked until the end of this orc's next turn.

Tug of the Master (minor; at-will) † **Weapon**

Slide target marked by *orc master's whip* 1 square. Cannot slide target beyond the reach of the *orc master's whip*.

ORC WEAPON

Orcs, like other savage races, are scavengers usually equipping themselves from fallen foes. However, those with access to a forge are able to re-cast their weapon into an unstable, but deadly blade with an array of spikes and sharp edges.

Orc Weapon (no action; recharge ☉, ☺) † **Weapon**

Reroll any damage die for that weapon that has the result of a 1 or a 2 until the result is higher than a 2.

TASKMASTER

Taskmasters usually command goblin warrior slaves or orc warriors captured from feuding tribes. The *taskmaster* power is good for leaders coupled with orc or goblin minions.

Taskmaster (minor; recharge ☉, ☺, ☻)

Targets two orcs or goblins; slide targets 1 square.

FEATS

Some of the following feats fall into special categories that adhere to different rules than those of general feats.

FATIGUE FEATS

Fatigue feats signify your character stretching beyond their normal capabilities to produce some extraordinary action. Each time you use a fatigue feat, you must first lose a healing surge. If you cannot lose a healing surge in this manner, you cannot use the feat. If you lose healing surges in this manner equal to your Constitution modifier, become weakened until you take a short rest.

ARCANE ASSAULT [HALF-ORC, FATIGUE]

Herioc Tier

Prerequisite: Half-orc, any arcane class

Benefit: Once per encounter, you may increase your *furious assault* extra damage to 1d10 extra damage if it is not a weapon attack.





Fatigue: Once per day, you can benefit from this feat without spending a healing surge. However, you must first spend a healing surge before you benefit from this feat a second time in a day.

ASSAULTING ACTION [HALF-ORC]

Paragon Tier

Prerequisite: 11th level, half-orc

Benefit: When you spend an action point to take an extra action, if you use *furious assault* during this extra action, the attack instead deals 2d6 extra damage.

BLOODY SURGE [HALF-ORC]

Paragon Tier

Prerequisite: 11th level, half-orc

Benefit: When you spend a healing surge, instead of gaining hit points, you gain a +2 bonus to damage rolls until the end of your next turn.

FURIOUS ACTION [HALF-ORC]

Epic Tier

Prerequisite: 21st level, half-orc

Benefit: When you spend your last action point during an encounter, you regain the use of your *furious assault* racial ability.

ORC WEAPON [HALF-ORC, FATIGUE]

Paragon Tier

Prerequisite: Str 15, half-orc, any martial class

Benefit: Choose a weapon with which you are proficient. Once per encounter, you may reroll any damage die for that weapon that has the result of a 1 or a 2 until the result is higher than a 2.

Fatigue: Once per day, you can benefit from this feat without spending a healing surge. However, you must first spend a healing surge before you benefit from this feat a second time in a day.



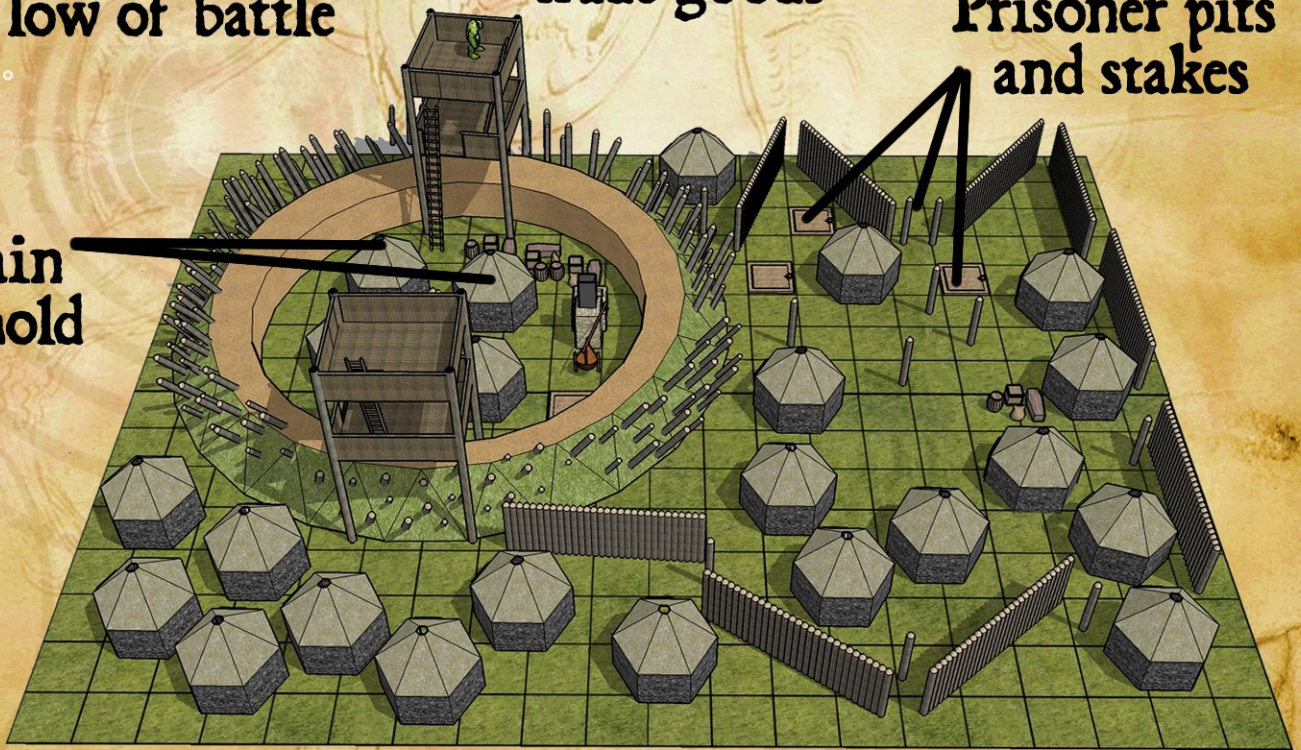


Walls placed to control the flow of battle

Forge and trade goods

Prisoner pits and stakes

Chieftain Household



Stone huts serve as walls and mazes to confuse enemies