

Lifepaths of Man: Lost Atlantean Setting

Last of His Kind

The Lost Atlantean represents a race of men now long gone—a relic from a dead civilization. In his youth, he wanders through the present in a near daze, unable to reconcile what he sees with the whispers and chanting that echo in his head. After years of study, he has learned all there is to know about Men and their culture. There is only one thing left to do—subjugate it. Mortal history is little more than a tale of a squabbling pack of dogs, better to lead the pack than to be torn asunder by the ceaseless infighting. First he conquers the flesh, but then the voices in his head erupt in a chorus of chants and obscure hymns, and he realizes that for ultimate power he must conquer the mind and ultimately the soul.

And so his journey to godhead begins...

| Lifepath | Time | Stat | Res | Leads |
|---|--------|---------|-----|------------------------------|
| Born Doomed | 6 yrs | — | 2 | — |
| <i>Skills:</i> 3 pts General | | | | |
| <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Immortal, Exotic Visage, Healthy (v2) | | | | |
| Taught by the Ghosts of Long Dead Gods¹ | 6 yrs | +1 M | 3 | — |
| <i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Obscure History, Reading, Scribner, Doctrine of Dead Gods | | | | |
| <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Faith in Dead Gods, Extrovert | | | | |
| Wanderer² | 7 yrs | +1 M, P | 3 | <i>Outcast</i> |
| <i>Skills:</i> 6 pts: Inconspicuous, Foraging, Streetwise, Appropriate Languages, Etiquette | | | | |
| <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Alienated | | | | |
| Grave Robber² | 8 yrs | +1 M/P | 10 | <i>Outcast</i> |
| <i>Skills:</i> 3 pts: Tomb-wise, Artifact-wise, Appraisal | | | | |
| <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Thirst for Knowledge, Pariah | | | | |
| Flesh Eater² | 6 yrs | +1 M | 3 | <i>Outcast</i> |
| <i>Skills:</i> 3 pts: Anatomy, Corpse-wise, Falsehood | | | | |
| <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Hunger for Flesh, Recluse | | | | |
| Scholar of Ancients³ | 20 yrs | +1 M | 15 | <i>Outcast, City-Dweller</i> |
| <i>Skills:</i> 6 pts: Ancient History, History, Obscure Languages, Symbology, Herbalism | | | | |
| <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Quick Study | | | | |
| Reaver⁴ | 3 yrs | +1 P | 8 | <i>Outcast</i> |
| <i>Skills:</i> 7 pts: Riding, Mounted Combat, Sword, Brawling, Armor Training | | | | |
| <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Brutal | | | | |
| Warlord⁵ | 10 yrs | +1 M, P | 30 | <i>Outcast</i> |
| <i>Skills:</i> 3 pts: Command, Bow, Intimidation | | | | |
| <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Thirst for Power, Imposing, Dispassionate, Riddle of Steel | | | | |
| Conqueror⁶ | 5 yrs | +1 M, P | 100 | <i>Outcast</i> |
| <i>Skills:</i> 2 pts: Interrogation, Administration | | | | |
| <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Commanding Aura | | | | |



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|---|--------|---------|-----|----------------|
| Hedonist^f | 5 yrs | +1 M | 5 | <i>Outcast</i> |
| <i>Skills:</i> 3 pts: Philosophy, Seduction | | | | |
| <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Jaded, Contemplation | | | | |
| Demagogue^s | 10 yrs | +1 M | 50 | <i>Outcast</i> |
| <i>Skills:</i> 3 pts: Oratory, Doctrine of Self-Deification | | | | |
| <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Booming Voice, Unmistakable Cadence, The Nature of Power | | | | |
| Demi-God^r | 20 yrs | +2 M, P | 200 | — |
| <i>Skills:</i> 2 pts: Meditation | | | | |
| <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Aura of Holiness, Dreamer | | | | |

Requirements

- 1: Taught by the Ghosts of Dead Gods requires Born Doomed
- 2: These lifepaths require Taught by the Ghosts of Dead Gods
- 3: Scholar of the Ancients requires Grave Robber
- 4: Reaver requires Flesh Eater
- 5: Warlord requires Reaver
- 6: Conqueror requires Warlord
- 7: Hedonist requires Conqueror, Warlord or Scholar
- 8: Demagogue requires Conqueror and Scholar
- 9: Demi-God requires *all* of the lifepaths in the setting

Lost Atlantean Lifepath Traits

Many of the lifepaths contain self-explanatory character traits, whereas other traits are straight from the Character Burner. The new die and call-on traits that require description follow:

Immortal

The Lost Atlantean cannot die from age or sickness, however age does weigh upon him to some degree. Rather than enjoying eternal youth like the elves, the Lost Atlantean simply stops aging when other men would die. Thus he will reach an age of frailty and white hair, but he may maintain (or regain) his strength through a vigorous lifestyle.

Use the standard Age and Stat Pool Chart for men for the Lost Atlantean.

Exotic Visage

Lost Atlanteans are possessed of a queer beauty and though familiar, always seem from a distant land.

If your campaign's racial stock is white-skinned and bearded, the Lost Atlantean might bear beautiful chocolate-colored smooth skin, broad features, coupled with shining eyes and straight hair. If your campaign is replete with dusky-skinned beauty, then the Atlantean might bear fine alabaster features in slightly distorted proportion. Whatever it may be, it must be exotic!

Healthy

This alternate version of the Healthy trait allows the character to round up when factoring his Health.



Faith in Dead Gods

This trait is similar to the Faithful trait, but with certain differences. See the Faith in Dead Gods section for a complete description.

Extrovert

Though something of an outcast, Lost Atlanteans possess a power of will that others don't. The character may reduce his aptitude for learning Social skills by one.

Quick Study

Character may reduce his Perception Aptitude by 1.

The Riddle of Steel

"This you can trust boy... but *flesh* is stronger than steel."

Contemplation

After years governing men and breaking their bodies, the Atlantean loses his taste for martial and worldly affairs. Abandoning his previous pursuits, he takes solace in the pleasures of the flesh and endless hours of contemplation.

The Nature of Power

This is a key revelation that the Atlantean arrives at as his worshippers flock to his words. The sword is weak, the power is in the mind.

Dreamer

Finally the voices return and the Dead Gods speak to him in echoing whispers sent across indigo gulfs of time and life.

Lost Atlantean Skills

Doctrine of Dead Gods

Root: Perception Skill Type: School of Thought

Wandering through empty and forgotten temples of his forefathers, the Atlantean learns to interpret the reliefs and sigils that adorn the walls. As he learns, an echo forms in his head—the voices of the dead gods begin to speak to him rumbling across broken aeons.

Languages

Root: Perception Skill Type: Academic

As a wanderer, the Atlantean travels from nation to nation in a vain search for his home. Opening this skill allows the Lost Atlantean to choose two additional languages at his Perception root (in addition to the two languages that come for free when starting a character).

Obscure Languages

Root: Perception Skill Type: Academic

The Lost Atlantean is forced to learn many dead and obscure languages as he studies the lost and fallen ruins of long gone civilizations.

Doctrine of Self-Deification

Root: Perception Skill Type: Sch. of Thght

After long years of wandering, searching, study and battle, the Atlantean may come to realize that he is indeed a vessel of the Dead Ones. He is destined for godhead. Belief in his ways is belief in the ancient ways.



Meditation

Root: Will **Skill Type:** School of Thought

Meditation is a way for a character to calm and center herself. It is both rest and a method for divining solutions to problems via deep thought.

While meditating a character is nominally aware of her surroundings—she is aware of changes in her environment like noise or the presence of someone come to interrupt her. She may also make Perception/Observation tests to detect Stealthy characters come to molest her.

Meditation can be used in place of sleep for rest. Each hour of meditation counts as an hour of rest for the purposes of recovering from wounds and Tax. This is an Ob 1 test plus 1 per additional hour meditated. Meditating for 4 hours is an Ob 4 test. Failing the test indicates that the character has fallen asleep.

While meditating a Sorcerer can maintain any spells he is currently sustaining. (She must still retest Tax as per *The Power Still Flows Through Her* rules on page 130 of *The Burning Wheel*.)

In addition, Meditation can be used to “center” oneself before undertaking a task. This centering allows the character to FoRK his meditation skill into the test, regardless of the type of skill it is! It can be a Martial, Academic, Physical, or even Social skill test.

In order to center, a character must spend one action per obstacle point of the test to be undertaken. If the obstacle of the test is equal to or less than the character's Meditation skill, the centering is automatic. If the test obstacle is greater than the Meditation exponent, then the character must test his skill. Artha, of course, may be spent on these tests.

If the test being centered for requires a series of rolls, the centering counts for the duration.

Obstacles for martial contests and versus tests are equal to the opponent's skill/stat.

Centering tests count toward advancement.

Thus a character with a G3 Meditation preparing for a fight with an opponent with a B4 Boxing skill must spend 4 actions centering and pass an Ob 4 Meditation test to earn his FoRK die. Artha will need to be spent!

This centering would count as a Challenging test for advancement purposes.

A character with a B5 Meditation skill attempting to center while starting a fire on a rainy night (Ob 4 test) would not have to test. He would spend 4 actions centering prior to testing his Firebuilding skill with the addition of his Meditation FoRK.

This would count as an Difficult test for advancement.

A character with a B4 Meditation attempting to center before using his Falsehood on a character with a Will of B4 would not have to roll the dice. He'd just need a few seconds to center before taking the test.



Faith in Dead Gods

The heir to ancient and forgotten traditions, the Lost Atlantean learns from whispering ghosts secrets of his ancestry and his power. But the ghosts truly only bring more questions, merely hinting at things past and days to come.

The gods of Atlantis are long fallen, given way—pushed aside, perhaps even murdered—by the new gods of men. But even in death their power still resonates across time and civilization. It was the priests and slaves of these now dead gods who gave ancient men knowledge of fire, soil and stone. Such heritage maybe forgotten, but its roots still grow beneath the modern cities and temples. A faded echo of power still rumbles through the bowels of humanity, and it is to this frequency which the Atlantean is attuned.

Faith in Dead Gods uses mechanics similar to Faith. However the power of these gods is diminished, and faith in them only grants the Atlantean miraculous power over himself. But this is due only to one special quality: Belief. It is belief that is needed to rejuvenate the dessicated bodies of these divine creatures—like blood infused into a dying heart. Once the Atlantean unlocks this mystery, he may affect both himself and those who *believe* in the Dead Gods. He may heal the believing sick, and bend the minds of the believing wayward. However, he has no dominion over non-believers and apostates—*he cannot affect them with the power of the dead ones.*

Starting Faith in Dead Gods

This faith ability begins play a bit differently than standard Faith. The trait grants a B2 Faith in Dead Gods. Advance it one step for each of the following traits or skills the Atlantean possesses: Doctrine of Dead Gods, The Riddle of Steel, Contemplation, The Nature of Power, and Dreamer.

The shade of Faith is that of the Atlantean's Will.

Faith in Dead Gods in Play

This faith ability may only affect the user/caster and other believers. These believers must have an appropriate belief that clearly states they adhere to the doctrine the Atlantean preaches.

This ability acts like and advances as Faith.

The Limitations of Faith in Dead Gods

The Atlantean may not call for Intercession, Miracle, Purification, Hindrance or Consecration.

The Twists of Faith

Lost Atlanteans may also manifest their faith in manners appropriate to the Dead One's idiom. For example, if the Atlantean is a Demagogue of the Snake God, he may use his faith to hypnotize his followers, bending their will to his. He may also learn to take on the form of his patron, transforming himself into a gigantic snake. So much better to comprehend the mysteries revealed!

Hypnotism (0b = Victim's Will)— This requires the Atlantean to his Exotic Visage and Unmistakable Cadence to lull and lure his prey to let down her defenses and become one with the Dead Ones and lost Atlantis.

Sublime Transformation (0b 5)— The priest of the Old Ones may assume his patron's mantle, absorbing the physical qualities and the senses of the



totem animal, but retaining his own thought and philosophy. Attaining this transformation requires hours of deep meditation (equal to the 10 minus the Atlantean's Will).

The Atlantean player and his GM should conspire to develop idiomatic miracles appropriate to the lost one's patron deity.

Closer to God

As his Faith in the Dead Gods rises, the Atlantean begins grow closer to his ancestors and their very existence. The span of time seems to fold around him and he begins to exist in the old temple as if it were new.

Once his Faith in Dead Gods reaches exponent 10, the Atlantean returns to the past and rejoins his people and their strange deities.

Atlantean Resources

The Atlantean can acquire many resources points in character burning. This abundance is not intended for spending on superior quality armor and weapons. It is intended for purchasing Temple Affiliations, regional and continental Reputations and hoards of loyal bodyguards and worshippers.

In light of this, the Atlantean Conqueror or Demagogue may spend 10 rps on a complete "band of followers". This band consists of a handful of men and women functionaries appropriate to the Atlantean's station. Loyalty may be bought at double cost as usual.

Atlanteans may not purchase *related* contacts unless they be sons or daughters. They may purchase other contacts (and powerful followers) as normal.

Artifacts

Ancient sigils, strange statues, runic texts, and massive stellae may be purchased using resource points. These artifacts cost 10 rps for small trinkets, and up to 20 rps for massive, imposing or significant items.

The exact significance of said items is up to the Atlantean player and the GM.

For example, the Atlantean might have, from his days wandering the dark temples, a jade carving of two snakes coiled and arched, pressing their foreheads together. This ancient relic could become the icon for his religion as he tries to sway the populace to his belief so that he might gain power over them. The original icon becomes a source of religious fervor itself and is thought of as an artifact of great power and significance.

Reincarnated Atlantean

Strains of this ancient and dead breed are said to still run through humanity at large, once in a long while a strange child will emerge from a mother's womb bearing exotic features and stranger tastes.

Players may create "reincarnated" Atlanteans using the standard Lifepaths of Man, certain traits and these lifepaths.



The Reincarnated Trait

A Reincarnated Atlantean is born and journeys along his lifepaths as a normal man. However, if the player pledges to purchase the Reincarnated trait (2 pts) for his character he may tap into his Atlantean heritage. He becomes aware of his ancestry and this knowledge changes him.

Reincarnated Atlantean Traits

Once it is determined a character is a Reincarnated Atlantean, the player may purchase any of the lifepath traits from Warlord down to Born Doomed for only one trait point. Immortal and Faith in Dead Gods are excluded from this.

Reincarnated Atlantean Lifepaths

In addition, Reincarnated Atlanteans may lead from any lifepath in the Outcast setting to the following Lost Atlantean lifepaths: Grave Robber, Flesh Eater, Scholar of Ancients and Reaver. No other Lost Atlantean lifepaths may be chosen.

Designer's Notes

First and foremost, the Lost Atlantean is an homage to Robert E. Howard's extensive and imaginative work. It is also a humble homage to James Earl Jones' portrayal of Thulsa Doom in the *Conan: The Barbarian* film. His poise, voice and contemplative expressions truly created a unique character and a memorable villain.

That said, these lifepaths aren't much more than an exercise for Burning Wheel. They lack the internal logic of the other lifepath sets and they severely curtail options. But they're fun. What they are best at—and what they are intended for—is to allow the GM to create a rich and awesome “villain” for his campaign. The motivation for the Lost Atlantean—to spread the belief in his Dead Gods so he might have power over his worshippers—is simple and provides for room for conflict and growth.

Who knows, perhaps the players could meet the Lost Atlantean in his younger days as a Warlord ravaging villages. Years later they hear of a strange cult gathering strength and find the Atlantean at the head of a new flock—more powerful than any king!

Whatever the case, be he a PC or NPC, have fun, enjoy him and play him to the hilt!

—Luke, December 2003, NYC

