

SKYREALMS OF JORUNE An Introduction.

SkyRealms of Jorune

Andrew Leker, Miles Teves and
Amy Leker.

Exquisite science-fantasy system based on a completely original alien world. There are three player races (varieties of humans) and 14 alien races, colorful magic, and ancient Earth technology. The 1st ed. was a one-volume book; the 2nd ed. is greatly expanded and includes the "Player Manual" (56 pp., covers character creation, skills, magic and combat); the "Sholari Guide" (72 pp., GM's book covering the running the game, encounters, intelligent races, alien animals, equipment and an over view of Jorune); the "Tauther Guide" (32 pp., a more detailed description of Jorune: history, geography, and cultures); a booklet of character record sheets; and "The SkyRealm of Kolovisandra" (16 pp., description of a flying mountain, a unique campaign setting). The entire Jorune series features striking art by Miles Teves.

718-010.1/744-84. 176pp

SkyRealms Publishing., 1984 (1st ed.).

718-010.2/784-86. Boxed: four books (72, 56, 32, and 16 pp.), booklet. SkyRealms Publishing, 1986 (2nd ed.).

The above extract is taken from "Heroic Worlds: A History And Guide To Role-Playing Games" by Lawrence Schick. The only encyclopedic reference to the RPG hobby it contains over 250 entries for individual games plus thousands of entries for supplements and adventures. For "SkyRealms of Jorune"

(hereafter SoJ), it only has five and as you can see only the first and second editions are detailed. Heroic Worlds was published in 1991 and despite several reprints has not been updated since, that indeed, would be a task of Herculean proportions.

The reason I include the extract here is precisely because it details only the first and, more importantly, the second editions of SoJ. For many Joruni's in this country, the second edition was their first exposure to SOJ.

SoJ was launched in the UK on a cold, dry day in October, 1986 when SkyRealms Publishing came to London and their own trade stand at Games Day '86. The game, with its large eye-catching box, mystifying slogan of "Leave Your World Behind" and captivating art proved popular and sold out. I was there and wish now that I had bought a copy of the game, instead I bought a much treasured SoJ tee-shirt.

"Leave Your World Behind." It sums up everything about the game. A totally alien world with strange creatures and stranger abilities where you adventured to do daring deeds and fight for the common good in an effort to attain citizenship. Whole mountains floated across the sky and around the planet flowed a stream of ambient energy that could be harnessed to your will. It was so unlike all the other games I had seen or played with their Earth-like settings, cultures and so on. Well, that is not entirely true, for there is one game to which SoJ bears some similarities and that is "Empire of the Petal Throne".

Like SoJ, Empire of the Petal Throne (hereafter EPT) is

a game with cult status. It began not as game but as an exercise in languages, to which rules were added and only recently has there been published a decent set of rules for the game. The setting of the planet, Tekumel lost contact with the rest of humanity in its ancient history, but far into our future, is the creation and brainchild of M. A. R. Barker, a professor of languages. The planet of Jorune, like Tekumel, is also a colony of Earth, which it also has lost contact with. Whereas Tekumel has had to survive tens of thousands of years, Jorune has a human history only lasting three millennia or so. In both games there are strange, alien creatures and access to ancient technologies, although in EPT, it is treated as magic not actual Earth technology. There are probably many other similarities, but to suggest that in creating SoJ, the designers were ripping off EPT would not only be pure speculation, but also libellous as well . . .

Personally I like both games, but SoJ is my favourite because I have had the chance to play it. For more information on EPT, I would suggest the excellent fanzine, "The Eye of All-Seeing Wonder" or the novel "Man of Gold" if you can find it in second hand book shops.

The history of SoJ is far different to that of EPT. It is based on a personal campaign run by Andrew Leker. The game system he used was TSR's "Metamorphosis Alpha". This 32 page book described how players could explore the "Warden" a lost colony ship travelling at sub-light speeds, the population of which had degenerated into tribes of humans, and mutated humans and animals. Later this game would evolve into Gamma

World, now in it's fourth edition. Metamorphosis Alpha, out of print for over a decade and a half, has recently been resurrected by TSR as a sourcebook for their Amazing Engine game system.

The campaign evolved from Metamorphosis Alpha into one set on Earth and then onto a planet of it's own in 1981. The name of that planet was, of course, Jorune. Andrew Leker's sister, Amy, helped him form SkyRealms Publishing in 1983 and the company launched the first edition of SoJ at Gen-Con in 1984. This consisted of a single book, which would later be broken up into four books for the second edition.

The game itself described an alien world over three and a half thousand years into our future. Long ago man had developed the ability to travel to distant stars and Jorune was the first suitable colony they had found, but it was already inhabited: "Shanthas", tall, eyeless natives of the world able to master the ambient energy or "isho" winds that flow across the surface of the planet. They readily allowed the establishment of a colony and it prospered with the support provided from home. The loss of communication with Earth after what was presumed to be a war, meant that the colony could not survive without certain resources and that meant expanding onto land that was sacred to the shantha. Facing little other choice the colony took the land and initiated a war that destroyed the colony. Shanthic use of isho allowed them to strike through the colony's shields with devastating destruction. Mankind found itself to be on the losing side and in a desperate measure developed and released a plague that all

but wiped out the shantha population.

In the three thousand years since the war there have been many changes. Humanity has endured much hardship to form it's own place of safety in the realm of Burdoth and it has also evolved. Alongside and sometimes against humans are the boccord, bigger and stronger, able to disrupt the use of isho; and the muadra, smaller and weaker, but like the shanthas, capable of mastering the use of isho in order to cast dyshas (a cross between spells and psionics). Only humans though, can operate the powerful weapons and equipment found in the caches of Earth-tec hidden by fleeing colonists.



Stranger still were the other races found on Jorune: the fearful and xenophobic Ramian; the Thriddle, fig-shaped bipeds who control vast resources of knowledge in their libraries; and the iscin races. A scientist part of the original colony, Iscin was a bio-engineer who developed stronger and more intelligent strains of various Earth animals which he felt would not survive

on Jorune - almost all native plant and animal life is poisonous to Earth life. Some of these, such as the Bronth, Crugar and Woffen, as well as the human races, are available to play as characters in the third edition.

Character generation was quite a lengthy process in SoJ with 4D6 rolled and the lowest discarded for twelve attributes. These are broken down into four groups and a bonus of 1D3 rolled for each group. Modifiers are applied for the race to be played. There is no intelligence attribute, what you know is derived from the education statistic which also represents points that can be spent three times: on career packages, practical knowledge and finally on developing a character's interests. Careers are quite varied from the typical soldier or thief, through to the scientists and innkeepers. Muadra must also purchase the dyshas that they know, although some careers offer them the chance to gain a limited number.

Although the generation of the characters has changed little in the transition from the second to the third editions of SoJ, the game system has. In the second you rolled character attribute checks and combat damage on D6; skill checks on percentile dice; and combat manoeuvres and dysha use on a D20. All this meant that the character record sheet consisted of four sides of A4 paper, which like many things for the third edition has been streamlined. The sheet is now a standard double-sided sheet of A4 and a D20 is used for all rolls except for determining combat damage and the initial attributes.

The notion of similarities between SoJ and EPT rears it's head once again when considering the classic

campaign for each game. In EPT, the players were simple foreign fisherman, arriving at the docks in the city of Jakalla. They must not only survive in the city, but also work to gain acceptance and possible recognition in the eyes of the native population. In SoJ, the players are natives of the human realm of Burdoth, who have decided to travel from their homes to the capital, Ardoth. There they will register their application for citizenship or "drenn" status, for only then will they have the right to own land, to vote and to ask for the use of Earth-tec. Once registered they are known as "tauther" and through their future deeds may gain the respect of individual drenn who may then support their continued application. Humans have the least difficulty in attaining drennship, with boccords and muadra finding it harder, and the Iscin races having the hardest time of all - crugar in particular.

In both these campaigns the aim is not for the players to focus their attention on the acquisition of wealth, bigger and better weapons or other resources, but primarily on attaining both social recognition and status and how to live up to the standards of that status. Loss of face and honour can have a potentially devastating effect on your standing with others and in extreme cases can be dangerous to your health.

Just as important as being able to protect yourself in a fight, if not more so in some cases, is the ability to interact with others in the correct manner and to respect their cultures. So remember that thriddle only sit in friendly company (they are slow runners and they lose a few seconds in having to stand up), to always look a bronth in

the eye and never, ever mispronounce "Chaun-Tse", the language of the Crugar. In SoJ there are language, etiquette and interaction skills for all of the intelligent races found on the planet and it is useful to at least one or two. With Jorune being so potentially hostile because of the number of volatile races, the failure to observe such rules can be a matter of life or death...

There are plenty of other options in both games for adventure other than that of gaining social recognition, though in EPT it remains the major focus of the game. In SoJ, you can investigate the ancient underground ruins of the shanths with their strange technologies; explore the floating skyrealms full of hidden secrets or home to a band of the feared ramian; cross through the East Trinnu jungle lands, once again infested by raiding parties of the uncommunicative cleash; or travel in style to your destination, sailing through the skys on a Jaspian crystal schooner.

Jorune is a world with seven moons, it is so unlike our home planet of Earth, lost long ago. A place of mystery, wonder and intrigue. It literally is a chance to "Leave Your World Behind".

I am indebted to an interview with Andrew Leker that appeared in issues #1 and #2 of the fanzine "Sholari". For a more detailed account of the history of SkyRealms of Jorune, straight from the horse's mouth, I would recommend both of these.

Matthew. W. J. Pook.

SKYREALMS OF JORUNE MATERIAL (3rd Edition) IS AVAILABLE IN THE UK FROM:

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