

JORUNE REVIEWS

The Sobayid Atlas
Sourcebook, \$16.00/£10.50 (approx).
Reviewed by Matthew Pook

This is the fourth and most recent publication supporting SkyRealms of Jorune. The 64 page book supports a full colour cover by Miles Teves and on the strength of it I would suggest that he stick to his superb black and white style of the main SoJ rulebook. The woman it depicts is posed so unnaturally, unless she is posing for the camera. On the back is the Atlas's only map of the region and without a key. The map is reasonably clear though, but a double spread inside the book would have been better.

Inside the Atlas details the Sobayid desert that lies between Gauss and Ardis to the north and the East Trinnu Jungle Lands to the south. It is all laid out in a wonderfully clear manner with new artwork that, whilst not by Miles Teves, is extremely good. Material that is for the eyes of the Sholari only is placed in sidebars and marked by the symbol of a sarceen (although why the general topographical layout of the region is thus marked is a mystery) and at the end of the book you do get a decent index.

The contents of the book cover the region's history, geography, secrets, flora and fauna, bio-tec, it's closeness to the dangerous cleash infested East Trinnus, and its settlements. The villages are only covered by a thumbnail sketch of just one paragraph, but these are detailed enough for any Sholari to embellish. The larger settlements that are the towns and cities receive a lot greater coverage. Approximately a page is devoted to each, and that includes a detailed map. The largest of the cities, Miedrinth, receives five pages including the centre spread. All the maps are clear and have important or notable buildings marked.

Three short chapters cover the history of Muadra in the region, their societies (including one or two that are highly secret and militant) and new dyshas. The latter are used to manipulate the physical world and generally could not be used for combative purposes (except maybe for field engineering). It is unlikely that the average maudra would have access to them, but getting the chance to do so could be an adventure or two in itself.

Reasonably detailed, The Sobayid Atlas presents a good overview of the region, but it is a little

expensive. With this as a model any further regional sourcebooks would be highly welcome.

The Sobayid Atlas
Second Opinion by Ray Gillham

I agree with all of Matthew's findings, but I'd just like to add an observation or two of my own. The illustration on the front page looks unnatural, I believe, because it is modelled on a sunbather lying on her *back*; Teves seems to have used this as a basis for a standing figure, probably from a photograph. The right leg and the hair cannot be in that position unless the model is horizontal, so perhaps what we have is a holiday snap of the artist's wife/girlfriend extrapolated to a Sobayid lakeside. Teves has used this trick before of course, when he used me as a model for the boccord in the 3rd ed rulebook (ahem...). Also, is that a Talmaron in the background? Doesn't look like the one in the main rulebook. A tamed duradon?

The premise of this sourcebook - to give characters a different starting point than Ardoth - is something I've always supported. Ardoth is huge (as fantasy cities go) and it can be overwhelming for both players and Sholari: "Ooh, let's go to Arkin. No, er, I want to visit the Bep Clep, or Shandane" etc. I find myself winging it so hard in places like this that I'm practically ready for take-off. The Sobayid city of Laindis receives challisks from Ardoth, and Miedrinth has a mini Hall of Drenn, so the PCs don't have to trek to the capitol to declare tothis.

This fits in with my preference for Jorune gaming (in fact gaming in general) - the low fantasy approach, where the characters know little about the wider world (or are ill informed) and can discover it along with the players themselves. Sort of Luke Skywalker before he left Tatooine, or a rather less prim Sam Gamgee (who knew a lot about the land around the Shire for 20 miles, but bugger all beyond that). See the article on character generation for more wibbling on this.

That's the good news, the bad news is that - maps aside - most of the specific information about the cities is lifted almost verbatim from the 3rd edition rulebook. This is plain lazy. Do they assume we haven't got the rules? I don't like paying for the same material twice, it's a rip-off too common in RPG publishing. The maps are well drawn and clear, but lack genuine detail. The cities still need quite a lot of attention to bring them to life.

The Muadra chapters are very welcome, giving us an insight into the political, philosophical and religious communities of the most interesting human variant. This is some of the best material in the book - really setting the Sobayid apart - and includes "The Story of Seyat", Jorune fiction relevant to the NPCs at hand.

Interior art is very good, especially the action intensive stuff by Janet Aulisio Dannheiser. The flora and fauna sections are also impressive, giving beastie descriptions along with group illustrations showing the ecological niche of each creature. An extremely good idea and well executed. The critters in question range from the old staples (so that's what a pibber looks like?) to the wickedly new (the triffidesque Trinnu beagre trap). I'm still a bit uncomfortable with bio-tec; maybe I'm just a 2nd edition fuddy-duddy, I mean there weren't any cute Recos back then.

So, what we have is a good looking supplement that is great as far as it goes, but could have been much more. There is a feeling that some topics were glossed over (the history of the whole region covers two pages) and the Sholari cannot just pick up and play this material. That said I still rate The Sobayid Atlas as the second best SoJ support product. I'd take it over "Innocents of Gauss" anyday, and I'd rather have it than "The Gire of Sillipus". Buy this, "The Sholari Pack", and of course the 3rd edition rules, and you're more than equipped to pay your 20 'yules for the Tauther Guide and a step into the wide wide world of SkyRealms of Jorune.

Sholari, Issue 3
SkyRelams of Jorune fanzine
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First off let me thank Joe Coleman and Owen Smith for providing me with this issue of Sholari. The fanzine is edited by Joe, who will be familiar to all as Jorune alumni and editor/writer of most of the 3rd edition supplements. Initial quibble though, as there is some confusion over the price of the zine for overseas subscribers. Front cover says \$6.45, inside front cover says foreign sample is \$8, and also says that foreign subscribers should write for rates. Not that I should be throwing stones in this particular glass house. According to Owen, a 6 issue sub is \$27.50 and a 3 issue one is \$15.75.

Sholari looks and feels wonderful. There's great

cover art by David Ackerman and the the zine has a lovely solid texture with cream coloured 'parchment' type paper. If you've taken a look at the reviews in the zine section you'll know that I'm rather enamoured of pretty page layout and other DTP niceties. Sholari is no exception, with attractive headers, borders, box-outs, and other jiggery pockery that is beyond the ken of my humble hardware.

Sholari is a lean publication, and by that I mean there is very little wastage within its covers. It's wall to wall Jorune without so much as a nod toward fanzines as a whole. The editorial covers the production process and an appeal for material (particularly artwork). It's nice to see that there is a substantial UK contingent in Issue 3, with oodles of material supplied by Cambridge based Jorune gamers 'Team Heridoth'.

The Heridoth material makes up a fair portion of this issue, including a pull-out guide to York, written by the Danstead Society in a Tauther Guide kind of way. I liked this a lot. Koistra and Ellemin also get the treatment. Also extremely interesting is an article on Shanthic skills and structures, and one about Ramian social structure. Both are world building pieces that have gaming applications.

And there's more: new character occupations, new artwork, a spoof Jorune piece, a listing of Jorune online sites, and an adventure. The latter, entitled 'Slam Desri, Boy Yord' is set in Miedrinth (in the Sobayid) and is an investigative scenario. Plenty of small details make for insights into Jorune culture as well as adding to overall playability.

This is very highly recommended, but I do have a couple of worries. First, the Jorune review section is fine, but is there a conflict of interest here? "The Gire of Sillipus" isn't reviewed by Joe Coleman, but it is reviewed by a friend of his, so you'd hardly expect a pasting for the product. Joe put it together after all. In fairness this will always be a problem in specialist zines.

Secondly (as I've already opined in the letter col) I find the reliance on the net rather worrying. It is implicit throughout "Sholari" that the SoJ gaming community lives and breathes through the internet. Not true, at least in my case and for all the Jorune gamers I know. OK, this isn't particularly unique, but I still find it a bit galling. 'Snail-mail' doesn't quite cut it I guess. For those with the hardware it's great, so maybe I'm just jealous. To sum up, buy "Sholari" asap. Oh, and still subscribe to BF of course.