



Art from THE SHOLARI PACK by George Barr, ©1993-1994 Chessex

THE SHOLARI PACK

REVIEW

A GAMEMASTER'S SUPPORT PACKAGE

I was delighted when asked if I would peruse a prepublication copy of the *Sholari Pack* by Chessex. As one of the people who worked on the original game, let's see how objective I can be. At one 80 page and one 32 page book, as well as a four panel GM screen, it certainly seems a fair value. But does it give you what you need as a sholari?

Well, you'll find the *Sholari Companion* packed with all sorts of useful items, beginning with the errata for the Third Edition rules (unfortunately, all *too* useful). This is followed by rules clarifications and expansions which flesh out various aspects which we didn't have the space to cover in the basic game. The Occupations portion is especially good as it streamlines the character creation process by gathering all of the information into one area for easy reference. This is followed by a two-page Player's Glossary, which can be photocopied and given out to players as an introduction to the world and as an ongoing reference tool. The *Jorune Timeline* adds immeasurably to the background detail of the world and is worth a close read for scenario ideas.

The middle 16 pages of this saddle-stitched book are designed to be removed for ease of use and include a variety of forms as well as a complete calendar of the *Jorune* year. This last can be exceedingly helpful in keeping the unique feel of *Jorune* throughout those long, cross-country adventures, when you simply must know how many and which moons are up (and all of you caji out there know just how important that

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info is). Most of the rest of the book is a *Sholari Glossary and Gazetteer* which puts a *great* deal of necessary and colorful information at the sholari's fingertips. Some of this is from older works no longer in print and much is created fresh for this publication. Next is a solo micro-adventure designed to give a beginning sholari a taste of *Jorune* life. It was a bit too simplistic for me, however, and the continuity was rough. This will supposedly be addressed before it goes to press (ah, the joy of playtesting!). An index for both the *Sholari Pack* and the Third Edition rules is thoughtfully compiled for your use as the last two pages of this book.

The adventure book included, "*Voyage of the Aylon Star*", starts in *Jasp*, a human nation to the north of *Burdoth*, and concerns the flight of a crystal schooner, one of those wondrous ships that ride the air above the subterranean (subjorunean?) molten crystal flows. This adventure reads more like a *Jasp* supplement than a scenario with most of its pages dedicated to the history of *Jasp* and the nature of the crystal schooners. This information is handled well,

but the adventure elements seemed tacked on and almost an afterthought. A sholari will have to do some very real fleshing out on these, but the source material on *Jasp* makes this book a value all by itself. You just may want to think of it more as a supplement than an adventure. Still, one hopes for some truly "*Jorune*" scenarios in the near future.

The combat screen itself was unavailable for review.

My overview of this product was generally quite good with some mild reservations. The material will all prove tremendously helpful to *Sholaris* out there who have been dying for more information and tools to help them gamemaster. As a set of game aids and source material, it succeeds. The organization of the materials is a bit haphazard, however, making reference difficult (thank god for the index!). In addition, the adventure elements are weak and would require some imagination to work into something usable. But then, since when have sholaris lacked imagination?

- David Ackerman S

THE ORACLE DIE AN ALTERNATIVE TOOL FOR SHOLARIS

There are times in *SkyRealms of Jorune™* (and any other game) when the existing game system doesn't meet the needs of the game. To meet these challenges I use the game dice as an oracle - asking questions and requiring my players to roll on some occasions to determine the direction of the adventure. This is a little different from rolling on behalf of the NPCs or rolling against the players and becomes more important in games like *Jorune* where the action is not always combat.

I phrase my questions to the dice and the meaning of the outcome (not out loud, of course - players get nervous when they think the referee doesn't know what happens next). For example: "Do the players avoid being hit by pieces of an abandoned detonated throw-ex-

plode? Low is better." I roll a "9" on one d20 which tells me someone is in danger. I count of my players (again, silently), then - according to the number of players in the team - roll a 1d3, 1d4, 1d5 (a d10 divided by two) or 1d6 to determine who needs to evade.

Or, the players need to be able to smell the chemicals of a cleash capsule but the game provides no "scent" skills - I tell my human characters to roll on their Spot -3, woffen and crugar to roll on Spot +2 and bronth roll on Spot -1. (You may disagree with my assignments, but you can create your own).

Key responses to players by the quality of their success on the roll - a 1 gets much more than a 7, and a 17 isn't worth beagre poo.

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