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MONTE COOK'S ARCANA UNEARTHED

A Variant Player's Handbook

BY MONTE COOK

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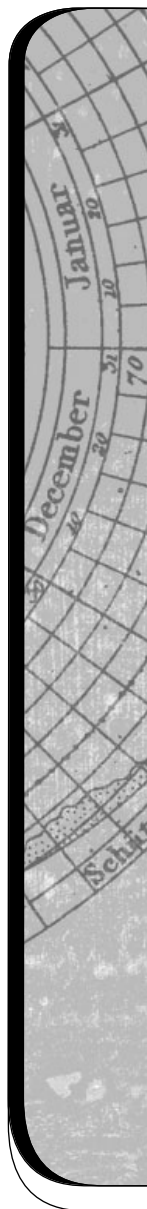
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A World of Possibilities

Take another look at the cover of this book. It shows an orrery: a mechanical three-dimensional depiction of the universe. Or at least, a universe. The whole thing is made up of interconnected spheres rotating around a central core. Within each sphere, we see a unique and independent aspect of the universe—a being or beings. Each sphere helps make up the whole. The whole is defined by the individual pieces: the spheres.

The cover serves as a metaphor for this book. *Monte Cook's Arcana Unearthed* attempts to represent a universe through rules. The rules are broken down into individual pieces—classes, races, feats, skills, spells—all to make characters. The rules that define how characters are created and how they act define the world as a whole.

Just as you can view an orrery from any angle, you can come at this book from many directions. Whether you want a supplement to your existing game, or a whole new game, *Arcana Unearthed* gives you what you need. Most likely you are already familiar with the central core around which the contents of this book revolve, but rest assured that each individual sphere of the orrery—each piece of the game—is new and fresh. All the pieces come together to provide a surprisingly original universe. Keep reading. You'll see what I mean.

WHAT IS THIS BOOK?

Monte Cook's Arcana Unearthed is a handbook for people who want to play a fantasy roleplaying game. It contains all the information you need to create a character, fight foes, cast spells, and play out adventures. Although this book is a stand-alone work, you can use it alongside other player's handbooks, mixing and matching the races, classes, skills, feats, spells, and even some of the rules, if you wish. This book will expand your available roleplaying options dramatically.

It should be noted that this book is intended for those who have already played roleplaying games in the past. Beginners looking for a simplistic, tutorial-style game book should look elsewhere. This is an advanced rulebook.

WHAT'S INSIDE?

Here's what you'll find in each chapter of *Arcana Unearthed*:

- 1. Abilities:** All you need to know about Strength, Intelligence, and a character's other abilities.
- 2. Races:** Nine all-new races, plus humans. Some of the races have special racial level progressions you can take like classes to gain unique racial abilities. Most of them start out as viable 1st-level characters, either with traditional classes or racial levels.
- 3. Classes:** Eleven brand-new core classes. They are balanced to work together and created to be complete in this book, covering all the traditional "roles" you enjoy in a fantasy game, but in a very different way.
- 4. Skills:** This chapter provides some new takes on skills and clears up some problem areas found in other games.
- 5. Feats and Talents:** In addition to traditional types of feats, this chapter offers two new types: the talent, a special ability you can choose only at the start of the game, and the ceremonial feat, which you can choose only after performing certain rituals.

6. Equipment: This chapter gives you new types of armor—including exotic armor—new weapons, new alchemical substances, plus all the basics.

7. Playing the Game: The core structure of the game remains familiar to established roleplayers, with a few variant twists for experienced players, or for those who simply want to take advantage of advanced development of the rules. Of special interest is a hero point system that allows players to accomplish amazing tasks.

8. Magic: Anyone who's a little tired of the traditional "prepare, then cast" method of handling spells will love the ability to alter a spell's power and weave together minor spells into larger ones. Also, spell templates let you customize spells to fit your character.

9. Spells: This book offers hundreds of new spells, each complete with guidelines for heightening and diminishing its effects and for creating a magic item from it.

Bonus source material and ideas to augment the information in *Monte Cook's Arcana Unearthed* appear on my website. Find the links to these free web enhancements at the book's product page online at www.montecook.com/mpress__MHB1.html.

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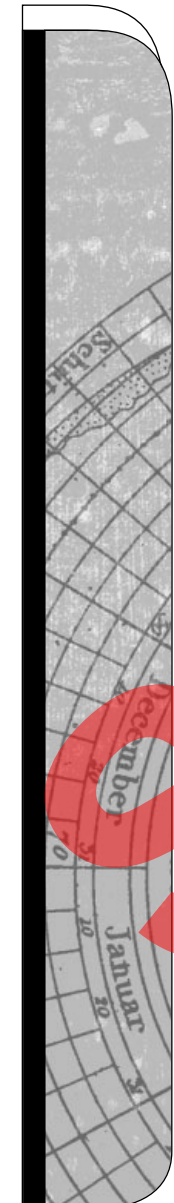
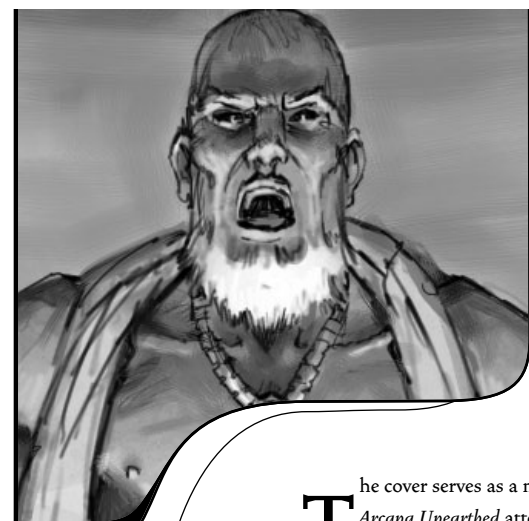
WHAT OTHER BOOKS

DO I NEED?

In theory, you don't need any other books. *Monte Cook's Arcana Unearthed* contains all you need to play the game. However, you will find mentions of some basic game concepts (such as certain conditions or specific magic items) explained more fully in the DMG. You will also read some references to monsters found in the MM.

The setting that serves as a backdrop for the new rules in *Arcana Unearthed* is called Dor-Erthenos, the Lands of the Diamond Throne. If you'd like more setting details, look for *The Diamond Throne* from Malhavoc Press. This sourcebook contains prestige classes, magic items, and monsters intended to be used with the rules in this book. It also contains more background material regarding the setting where all these giant warmains, sibeccai oathsworn, and verrik witches live. Of course, the book is written so that you can design your own campaign world with it, creating your own setting filled with unfettered, akashics, sprytes, litorians, and so on.

The rules in this book are entirely compatible with other fantasy roleplaying supplements you might already own. In fact, *Monte*



Cook's Arcana Unearthed DM's Screen and Player's Guide offers conversions to help you translate your existing campaign material, as well as character sheets and an extra-wide horizontal screen. *Plague of Dreams* from Fiery Dragon Productions and *Siege on Ebonring Keep* from Mystic Eye Games offer introductory adventures, but you can also use fantasy adventures meant to go along with the core rules. Monster books like the *Creature Collection* series and *Tome of Horrors* from Sword & Sorcery can add a nice variety, and *Counter Collection IV: The World of the Diamond Throne* from Fiery Dragon Productions adds to the gaming experience with full-color counters. If miniatures are more your style, check out the *Arcana Unearthed* line from Iron Wind Metals.

THEMES

Those of you familiar with previous Malhavoc Press products know that I like to play around with various ideas and build upon cohesive themes. Here are some of the themes I've grasped onto in this book:

OATHS AND CEREMONIES

Arcana Unearthed suggests a world in which people take rituals very seriously, and ceremonies constitute an important part of every aspect of a person's life. One imagines that characters in this world have short rituals to perform before they eat or sleep. Daily ceremonies cleanse the mind and refresh the soul. In game terms, big important ceremonies provide characters with powerful feats and tie into class and race abilities.

Oaths, similarly, carry much weight and seriousness as well. The folk of the Lands of the Diamond Throne take things like oaths, honor, and duty very seriously, as you can see from such character classes as the oathsworn and the champion.

Through ceremony, people realize the importance of that which lies beyond themselves. By placing importance on oaths, duty, and honor, they recognize the importance of that which lies within themselves.

CHARACTER CHOICE VS. DESTINY

Although chance and fate seem to guide one's life at times, *Arcana Unearthed* assumes a world where freedom of choice is more important than the unknown whims of fortune or the predestined plans of immortal beings. Characters choose to become mojhs, sprytes, or runechildren. Oathsworn choose their own oaths, and fulfill them because they want to. Champions pick their causes, totem warriors choose their totem spirits, and witches decide their witchery manifestations for themselves. Characters wishing to become great warriors can select the path of unfettered or the warmain.

In this world, characters make their own decisions—and they must live with the consequences. They have no game system to dictate their actions (and reactions), so they must take responsibility for their own behavior.

CONTRAST AND OPPOSITION

Characters range from the tiny spryte to the massive giants. For every champion of life there is a champion of death. There are more contrasting oppositions in a fantasy milieu than just good versus evil.

COMPLEX RACES AND CLASSES

Do the giants have a right to rule just because they freed the other races from slavery? Can a sibeccai ever be free of her self-imposed feelings of indebtedness to the giants? Why does a mojhs choose to give up its humanity? Just what is it that makes the verrik such ciphers? Each race you meet in this book comes with a complex set of inherent questions.

As previously stated, the reliance on ritual suggests that characters are very aware of their place in the world. Many character classes assume such a connection with the setting: Champions represent a cause, oathsworn swear an oath about some specific task, an akashic's abilities come from the memories of others, and greenbonds are tied directly to the land itself. Characters of any class must contend with concerns much larger than themselves.

GIVING POWER BACK TO DMs

The core rules of the 3rd Edition *Player's Handbook* were written to be as simple as possible—with very little need or room for DM adjudication. *Arcana Unearthed* is intended for gamemasters, or DMs, with a little experience, who are fully capable of making judgment calls and sensible rulings. This isn't to say that a careful eye didn't watch over the balance and playability of these rules. But that same careful eye also made sure not to overdefine concepts or regulate them too heavily-handedly. DMs have room to make the game their own.

TAILOR-MADE CHARACTERS

Players can easily adapt many of the classes in this book to make them more like what they envision for their characters. One can quickly create different types of champions, totem warriors, or witches, for example. Multiclassing has no restrictions. Any race is equally suited to any class.

A world of possibilities awaits.

NEW CONCEPTS

Although this book obviously offers new races, classes, spells, and so on, those of you familiar with the existing core rules will notice that in *Arcana Unearthed*, I've introduced a lot of new concepts even among rules that are, in general, already established.

Racial Levels. With the concept of racial levels, a character can focus on advancing within the nature of her race and racial abilities, rather than taking levels in a class.

Talents. Talents are feats that one can take only at 1st level. Some things you are simply born with.

Ceremonial Feats. New ceremony feats grant supernatural abilities bequeathed through the performance of certain rituals. The rituals require expensive components and the help of others.

Spell Flexibility. Spells in *Arcana Unearthed* are not just set, unchangeable programs, but flexible, customizable options for players. Each spell can be diminished or heightened to produce a spectrum of effects. It can be laden to hold more power. It can be woven with other spells to cast a more powerful spell. Adding spell templates can change the nature of a spell and its effects. Casters can add in new material components to change the effects. Magic is fluid and subject to the whims of the individual caster, thus it remains always mysterious and fascinating.

Hero Points. This rules subset allows players to take special, desperate actions not normally possible under the rules. Hero points allow game play to more closely resemble fictional stories in which the main characters perform some amazing feat just at the right moment. They also encourage heroic play.

“Death’s Door” Rules. Although a bit more complicated than the standard rules, the guidelines in *Arcana Unearthed* governing how long an injured character can stand before he drops allow the system to simulate tough characters who are “wounded, but still fighting.”

BEFORE YOU START...

Keep these important rules concepts and assumptions in mind as you read through *Monte Cook’s Arcana Unearthed*:

DICE NOTATION

The rules in this book use the following die notations:

d4 = four-sided die	d10 = ten-sided die
d6 = six-sided die	d12 = twelve-sided die
d8 = eight-sided die	d20 = twenty-sided die
d% = percentile dice	

Die rolls are expressed in the format:

[#] die type [+/- modifiers]

Example: 3d6 + 2 means: “Roll three six-sided dice. Add the result of the three dice together. Then add 2.”

ROUNDING FRACTIONS

In general, if you wind up with a fraction, round down, even if the fraction is one-half or larger.

Exception: Certain rolls, such as damage and hit points, have a minimum of 1.

MULTIPLYING

Sometimes a special rule makes you multiply a number or a die roll. As long as you’re applying a single multiplier, multiply the number normally. When two or more multipliers apply, however, combine them into a single multiple, with each extra multiple adding 1 less than its value to the first multiple. Thus, a double ($\times 2$) and a double ($\times 2$) applied to the same number results in a triple ($\times 3$, because $2 + 1 = 3$).

BASIC TASK RESOLUTION SYSTEM

These rules assume a standardized system for determining the success or failure of any given task. That system is as follows:

d20 roll + any modifiers vs. a target number

The modifiers and target number are determined by the type of task. If the result of the d20 roll plus the modifiers equals or exceeds the target number, the task is successful. Any other result means a failure. For example, on a saving throw or a skill check, the target number is the Difficulty Class (DC). In an attack roll, the target number is the Armor Class (AC) of the opponent.

A “natural 20” on the die roll is not an automatic success. A “natural 1” on the die roll is not an automatic failure. The exceptions to this are attack rolls and saving throws.

About the Author

Monte Cook started working professionally in the game industry in 1988. In the employ of Iron Crown Enterprises, he worked on the Rolemaster and Champions games as an editor, developer, and designer. In 1994 Monte came to TSR as a game designer. As a senior game designer with *Wizards of the Coast*, he codesigned the new edition of *Dungeons & Dragons*, authored the *Dungeon Master’s Guide*, and designed the *Book of Vile Darkness* and the d20 version of *Call of Cthulhu*. For *WizKids Games*, he designed the HeroClix system of superhero combat.

A graduate of the Clarion West writer’s workshop, Monte also has published short stories and two novels. In his spare time he runs games, builds vast dioramas out of LEGO building bricks, and reads a lot of comics.

Malhavoc Press

Malhavoc Press is Monte’s game imprint devoted to the publication of unusual magic, monsters, and evocative game elements that go beyond traditional fantasy. Malhavoc Press products exhibit the mastery of the 3rd Edition rules that only one of its original designers can offer.

Other Malhavoc Press titles in the *Arcana Unearthed* line include *The Diamond Throne*, a setting book containing source material, monsters, magic items, and more, and Monte Cook’s *Arcana Unearthed DM’s Screen and Player’s Guide*, which includes a three-panel horizontal screen, character sheets, and rules to convert your 3rd Edition and Revised 3rd Edition material into these rules. Most current titles are available to purchase in either print or electronic (PDF) format at www.montecook.com.

About the Illustrators

Cover artist **Mark Zug** early discovered the power of pencil and paper to bring to life things not available to the senses—dinosaurs, super heroes, starships, and races of ancient astronauts. After working as a machinist and flirting with a musical career, he put himself through art school. His first big break came illustrating Harlan Ellison’s *I, Robot* screenplay, for which he also did 160 pages of fully painted comics. To date, his work has appeared on the covers of numerous magazines, fantasy novels, and game products. He has been nominated for a Chesley Award and received the Jack Gaughan Award for Best Emerging Artist in 2001. Visit www.markzug.com to see more of his work.

Toren “MacBin” Atkinson is known by night as the lead singer of the Cthulhu rock band, *The Darkest of the Hillside Thickets*, but by day he collects Saturday morning cartoons and draws monsters for money. You’ve seen his work in the award-winning books *Delta Green* and *Death in Freeport*. His illustrations also appear in *If Thoughts Could Kill*, *Book of Eldritch Might II: Songs and Souls of Power*, *Skreyn’s Register: The Bonds of Magic*, and *Mindscapes*. You can see more of his art as well as his game design in the *Spaceship Zero* roleplaying game.

David Hendee is a California artist with a degree in Architecture from UC Berkeley. He worked as a drafter for a year before branching out as a level designer and modeler for video games. In 1994 he joined some friends in the Web industry and rode the wave of the dot-com boom and bust. Not wanting to sink with the ship, he left the industry in 2000 to pursue a career as a freelance illustrator. You can find his illustrations in products from such publishers as *Natural 20 Press*, *Backara d20*, and *Gilded Moose Games*. See more of his work at his website www.davidhendee.com.

Jennifer Meyer, sometimes considered a wanderer, currently resides in the mountains of Utah. This is her first product with Malhavoc Press. You can also see her work in books from *Green Ronin*, *Sovereign Press*, and *Goodman Games*. Check out her online portfolio <http://home.earthlink.net/~tabykat/main.html>.

Stephen Shepherd is a Florida-based artist who got his start with Malhavoc Press, illustrating *Book of Eldritch Might II: Songs and Souls of Power* and *Demon God’s Fane*. He has worked on a number of books for *Mongoose Publishing* and *Troll Lord Games*, as well as many others. He lives with his supportive wife, Julie, and his inspirational daughter Andi. He is currently plotting world domination. Visit his website at <http://woodoo.home.sapo.pt/>.

Sam Wood first crept out of the mists and rain of southeast Alaska and infiltrated *Wizards of the Coast* back in 1995. Since then he has been a few places, gotten himself educated, and done a number of different jobs for *Wizards*. Sam’s earliest work in the game industry was for the *BattleTech* TCG. He has since gone on to work on games like *Dungeons & Dragons*, *Magic: The Gathering*, *Alternity*, *Doomtown*, *Legend of the Five Rings*, and *Chainmail*. His most recent notable contributions have been collaborating with *Todd Lockwood* on *D&D (spikes and all)* and conceiving the vast majority of the *Chainmail* miniatures. He currently resides in north Seattle with his lovely wife, 3.7 cats, and the family hellhound.

CREATING CHARACTERS

More than anything, this book is a guide to help you create fantasy characters. It also offers the rules you need to have these characters take on challenges, such as casting spells and engaging in combat.

When creating a player character (PC), use a photocopy of the character sheet on page 250 and follow these steps:

1. Come up with a concept. This is the most important step. Don't think in terms of game mechanics or stereotypes. Come up with your own idea for a character. Don't use easy hooks like "good" and "evil," but imagine a realistic personality and outlook. Think in terms of the character's background, his goals, and his likes and dislikes.

2. Roll ability scores. Roll 4d6 six times. Drop the lowest die each time and assign the totals as you wish to your ability scores. (See Chapter One: Abilities.) While you do this, flip ahead to Chapters Two and Three to be aware of how your ability scores will affect your race and class. For example, a witch with a low Wisdom score won't

be as effective as one with a high Wisdom score. It's up to you, however. Use a pencil as you write your ability scores on your character sheet, so you can switch them around later if you need to.

3. Choose a race and a class. This step often takes place after you roll the dice in Step 2 but before you assign the scores to abilities. However, do it the way it feels most natural. Don't forget that many races have classlike racial levels that you can take in lieu of up to three levels of a standard class. Refer to Chapter Two: Races and Chapter Three: Classes. After you choose, fill in the appropriate spaces on your character sheet with special racial and class abilities, your base attack bonus, initiative modifier, and saving throw modifiers. If

you've chosen to play a spellcasting character, jot down the spells you'd like to have ready to cast, as well as your available number of spell slots and the Difficulty Class of each level of spell.

4. Buy skills. Every class has a number of starting skill points you can use to buy skills for your character. Remember that class skills cost 1 point per rank, and all other skills cost 2 points per rank. Select your skills from those described in Chapter Four and note them on your character sheet.

5. Choose feats and talents. Every character starts out with at least two feats; one of them might be a ceremonial feat, and one or both might be a talent. Humans get an additional starting feat (see

"Humans" in Chapter Two). Only starting characters can choose talents, so consider them carefully. You can't go back and get a talent later. You'll find feats and talents described in Chapter Five. Add your selections to your character sheet where indicated.

6. Figure hit points. Each class has an associated Hit Die listed in Chapter Three. Assume that you rolled the highest number on the die, then add your Constitution modifier to the total. The result is your hit point total at 1st level. Note it on your character sheet.

7. Buy equipment. Roll 5d4 and multiply the result by 10. That's your starting amount of gold pieces to buy equipment. You'll probably want to make sure you get a weapon (or perhaps two—one for melee and one for ranged attacks) and maybe some armor, but that depends on your class. See the equipment listed in Chapter Six. Once you've listed your equipment on your character sheet, you can also determine your Armor Class and carrying capacity.

8. Complete your character sheet. Now that you know your character's basic abilities and skills, and you have an idea of what he owns and what he can do, you can fill out the rest of your character sheet. Name your character, and jot down some details about his background, age, appearance, and personal goals.

GAINING LEVELS

You gain new levels by earning experience points (XP), as described at the beginning of Chapter Three. When your character has earned enough experience points to advance a level, follow these steps:

1. Choose class or racial level. When you gain a level, the most common thing to do is to take the next highest level in your current class. However, you are free to take the first level in another class (or sprytes, giants, litorians, mojh, sibeccai, and verrik can choose a racial level instead). Taking levels in two or more classes is called multiclassing. You can advance in as many classes as you wish, but you can only gain a level in one class at a time.

2. Apply changes to base attack bonus, base saving throw modifiers, and spells. Refer to the chart associated with the class for your new base attack bonus, saving throw modifiers, and spell slots and spells readied per day (if any).

3. Record new class abilities (if any). Many classes gain special abilities when they acquire a new level.

4. If the level is 3rd, 6th, 9th, 12th, 15th, or 18th, choose a new feat. All characters get a new feat at these levels. Some characters gain additional bonus feats based on their class. This feat can be a general feat, an item creation feat or a ceremonial feat—but remember that the ceremony requires costly components, time, and often aid from others.

5. If the level is 4th, 8th, 12th, or 16th, add a point to one ability score. At these levels, you can add 1 point to any ability score you choose. If the change alters your modifier, make sure you change all other relevant scores, such as skill bonuses, saving throw bonuses, attack bonuses, and so on.

6. Buy skills. Use your class' skill points to buy new skills. Remember that class skills cost 1 point per rank and all other skills cost 2 points per rank.

7. Roll for hit points. Each class has an associated Hit Die. Roll the die, add your Constitution modifier to the result, and add that result to your current hit point total.

No Alignments

There are no alignments in Arcana Unearthed into which you must shoehorn your character's outlook. This rulebook does not attempt to define good or evil, nor does it address law or chaos. Characters should decide for themselves what is good and what is evil, the way real people do. There are no spells that reveal whether a character is evil or good—his actions and the perspectives of those around him determine that. No (or at least very few) characters think of themselves as evil. The truth is, such concepts are relative.

Yet even without alignments, villains still do terrible things to further their own goals. Heroes still make great sacrifices to stop them. The classic conflicts all remain. But now there are even more. Two noble and altruistic characters might oppose each other. Their personal ideologies might even cause each of them to define the other as "evil."

Characters with a conscience still act responsibly, and those with a code of conduct still adhere to it: having no alignment is not an excuse for all characters to act wantonly. As in the real world, things are much more interesting if there are not nine alignments but, in fact, an infinite number of them—each character becomes his own alignment.