

IS YOUR CHARACTER NORMAL?

(Conforming P&P Characters to Their Land)

by
Mike Olson

It comes to my attention that a Powers & Perils character, when created, can be living in a country or tribe that lives only in swamp and still enter the game with a skill like Mountain Survival. A Character who lives in a tribe that does not use horses can enter the game with Horsemanship. I feel that this is illogical. In Perilous Lands, a Powers & Perils expansion, it does touch on this problem (a short paragraph on page 66 of the Culture Book). However, it only covers the problem of characters using plate armor or crossbows, etc, in a low technological tribal state that prefers leather and spears etc. I don't feel that this optional paragraph of rules covers the whole story on conforming to a culture.

To correct this slight problem, for those players that want a more realistic game of P&P, I propose the following optional rules:

A) First of all, I retain the rule that the first weapon skill chosen by the player **MUST** be one of the favored weapons listed for his culture **BUT** I also add the following rules:

1) Any additional weapon skills, other than those favored by the character's culture, should cost **DOUBLE** to learn with costs of new expertise levels remaining the same.

2) Characters should make an **UNMODIFIED** Intelligence ability roll in order to deviate from the path of his culture and use the "exotic" weapon skill of his choice. If he fails the roll, he is a traditionalist and may not start the game with this weapon skill or possession of any weapon used with it. He can try to make other Intelligence rolls for different skills with failure having the result above.

3) Characters who fail the roll in (2) above will **NEVER** learn that skill. This represents the typical barbarian who only trusts his faithful axe, spear or what have you.

4) None of the rules above apply to wizards or magicians. They are considered to be abnormal for their culture and can learn exotic skills without worrying about the need to conform. He may learn any

weapon skills and start with any weapon that is reasonably available in his part of the world.

B) For armor, shields and helmets I retain the rule that a character must enter the game in his culture's armor types but again I would make some modifications:

1) If a character comes across a different form of armor in his travels he may make the Intelligence roll specified in **A2**. If he succeeds, he may use that form of armor freely. If he fails, he may never use it. This does not mean that a character that rejects chain mail will reject platemail. A separate roll is taken for each when he is exposed to them.

2) Characters from non-shield using cultures, or cultures that prefer a specific form of shield, must roll as specified in **A** above to see if they will use a new form of shield that they encounter. Failure indicates that their prejudice forbids it.

C) Now to move on to the original point I made about survival skills, horsemanship and such. I would apply the following limitations to all characters entering the game:

1) Characters may only begin the game as Assassins or Thieves if they belong to a civilized culture **OR** if they elect to be freelance thieves. This is because these guilds are only found in civilized environments. This does not mean that barbarian characters can not learn these skills in play.

2) A character may only start with Horsemanship skill if his culture uses horses, or other creatures, as mounts (as specified in the Culture Book in Perilous Lands. If the culture's description lists a cavalry force or mentions horses the character may start with horsemanship if he is from that culture.)

3) Characters may begin play as foresters only if their native land contains forests or hills within its borders.

4) Characters may begin the game with Navigation, Seaman or Swimming skill only if the appropriate bodies of water are found in their native land. For swimming, this restriction will only apply fully to Desert and Badlands dwellers.

5) Only characters from city backgrounds can start with Trailing as a skill. No limit applies on starting play with Tracking.

6) Players may begin play with survival skill in a given terrain only if that terrain type is found within their native land or along the most likely course from their native land to where the character is actually starting play if he is from a distant culture.

D) There are some special exceptions that apply to the rules given in this article. They are:

1) Characters who live in vast forests are eligible for the Forester skill. Where weapons listed as part of that skill are not part of his cultures preferred weapon list, ignore the rules about exotic weapons and skill and allow the character to use all aspects of the forester skill that he manages to get.

2) If a culture allows a character to use a longbow, he has **ELO** with the short and composite bows as well. He can use such weapons but he may not start with, or use, them unless he makes the roll specified in **A**. In this case the roll only means that the character cannot start with the weapon. It does not restrict him from ever using it in the future.

The rules above add a certain flavor to the game. You will find barbarians sticking to traditional weapons and armors while city folk wear heavy armor, use advanced weaponry and/or adopt "sneaky, conniving" ways. Because of this, the civilized character may gain an advantage over his barbarian counterpart. To offset this, barbarian characters should be allowed to have one of the following:

1) 40 extra Expertise Points
2) 10 extra Characteristic points
3) Some other slight advantage of the referee's choice

This will ease the pain of these restrictions and give barbarian characters that little extra strength that is the hallmark of their kind.

Happy trails . . .