

## PRIME ATTRIBUTES

Intelligence and Charisma

## GRIOT CLASS SKILLS

Artist, Business, Combat/Any, Culture/  
Any, Language, Navigation, Perception,  
Persuade, Ride, Security, Scholar, Trade

## BONUS SKILLS FOR NEW CHARACTERS

Artist, Scholar, Any One Class Skill, Any One Skill

Every society needs its guardians- not only those who bear sword and spear, but also those who maintain the traditions and memory of the people. In the Three Lands, the griots are these guardians, those men and women who stand responsible for judging the good and the shameful. Through their praise-songs and castigations, they elevate the righteous and scourge the wicked, confirming the timeless truth of the virtues their people hold dear.

Most griots (pronounced “GREE-ohs”) are employed by noble houses or sheltered by their chosen village. They earn their keep by their memories, their praise, and their counsel. They remember all that has gone before and all that was once decided, and a chief or nobleman without a griot to advise him is sure to stumble. In Kirsi and Nyala, a noble family dares not show itself in ceremonies of state without a troupe of griots to sing their virtues, and a king without a griot vizier is no king at all.

Many griots are content to be fed and to say what their patrons wish them to say. These are small and careless men, quick to remember but slow to speak what they should. Others are less easily managed. They insist on naming the wicked and praising the good, whether or not it suits the great lords. Nobles fear such truth-tellers, for the words of a master griot can whip a city into a frenzy or raise a rebellion in the bush. The greatest of their number can strike a man dead with the blazing fury of their castigation.

## GRIOT SONGS

As griots increase their skill and fame, their words gain an almost supernatural power to inspire and compel those who hear them. These songs may take the form of actual chants or lays or be performed as spoken oratory. Whatever the form, listeners soon recognize that something remarkable is being uttered and that the griot’s words are more than mere entertainment or idle opinion.

Griots begin play with the knowledge of any two minor songs listed in the Magic chapter. Every time they gain an experience level, they may add one song of a type they can use as a product of their own creativity. Other songs must be learned from other griots or from suitable ancient lore, and a griot cannot learn a song he is yet unable to use. At first level, griots may learn minor songs. At fourth level they may learn great songs, and at seventh level they may utter the mighty verses of the ancient songs of their elders.

Griots can learn songs they are skilled enough to use, acquiring them from other griots or from rare, exhaustive tomes. Most NPC griots will only teach good friends and proven allies. Mastering a new song requires one week for a minor song, one month for a great song, and three months for an ancient song. The griot may adventure normally while perfecting his or her mastery of a song.

Griots may sing or speak any song they know, but finding the right words for them is difficult. Expressions must be fresh, music must be suitable for the occasion, and wit must be sharp and well-aimed. A griot has a pool of Inspiration points that increase as they level. Each song costs a certain number of Inspiration points: 1 point for a minor song, 3 points for a great song, and 5 points for an ancient song. When the pool is exhausted, the griot can no longer find the right artistry to invoke their supernatural arts. A good night’s rest will restore all Inspiration.

The greatest of praise-singers are perfectly inspired that they may utter their most familiar songs without hesitation or effort. At 10th level, the griot may choose any two minor songs known to them. They may use these songs at no cost in Inspiration, as often as they desire. Once chosen, these songs cannot be changed.

## GRIOT CLASS DETAILS

LEVEL	HIT DICE	XP NEEDED	CLASS POWERS	INSPIRATION POOL	ATTACK BONUS	PHYSICAL EFFECT	MENTAL EFFECT	EVASION	MAGIC	LUCK
1	1d6	0	Learn Minor Songs	2	+1	14	12	13	16	15
2	2d6	2,000		3	+2	13	11	12	15	14
3	3d6	4,000		4	+2	13	11	12	15	14
4	4d6	8,000	Learn Great Songs	10	+4	12	10	11	14	13
5	5d6	16,000		12	+4	12	10	11	14	13
6	6d6	32,000		14	+5	11	9	10	13	12
7	7d6	64,000	Learn Ancient Songs	22	+5	11	9	10	13	12
8	8d6	128,000		26	+7	10	8	9	12	11
9	9d6	256,000		30	+7	10	8	9	12	11
10	10d6	512,000	Song Mastery	34	+8	8	6	7	10	9

# MAGIC

Magic is an accepted reality for almost all the peoples of the Three Lands. Even the dumbest peasant understands that there are certain men and women with the power to exceed the common laws of the world, and that these sorcerers and marabouts can work wonders with their arts. Sometimes this knowledge is leavened with fear, and innocent souls are made to suffer because of the witch-terrors of others.

Spears of the Dawn and other adventurers often number magic-wielders among their numbers, both for their great usefulness in performing mighty deeds and for the camaraderie and acceptance they can find among such social outsiders. A nganga who might never be more than courteously dreaded by his neighbors can find friendship and trust in a band of adventurers, and a marabout can relax from constant struggles with temple priests. At the edges of the civilized world there is room for such envoys of the unknown.

Magic in the Three Lands comes in two varieties- the natural miracles of the marabout or experienced griot, and the *ashe*-wielding of the nganga. The two forms of magic are very different in the effects they are able to create.

Miracles are fundamentally the product of natural law. The marabout appeals to the spirits to create the effect they desire because the spirits have authority over the natural laws of the world. When the gods bring forth a sudden spring of freshwater or heal a comrade's bleeding limb, they are not violating any physical laws, they are simply exercising the discretion which is their right. The potent spiritual relationship between the marabout and the gods gives a mortal the ability to ask for such favors.

In the same fashion, a powerful griot's songs can have miraculous effects due to the strength of the social laws and cultural mores he invokes. The power of tradition and custom is not merely an empty convention, it is something tangible and physical, and a griot can wield this power against those who transgress its limits.

Because both marabouts and griots are simply invoking the aid of another or enacting an existing social rule, it is comparatively easy for them to call up their powers. They do not need to prepare them beforehand as a nganga does, or laboriously discipline their minds and bodies to receive their powers. Some marabouts aren't even aware of their special gifts, but instead just spontaneously manifest the gifts of the spirits who favor them. A griot must labor to learn the songs and lore of his role, but once he has mastered the subtleties he may wield his gifts for as long as inspiration lasts.

However, miracles are fundamentally limited in scope. Because they merely implement existing law or work through a reigning spiritual power, they cannot show the flexibility of a nganga's sorcery. All their arts must be approved or allowed by the existing powers, and these powers are likewise limited in what they are allowed to enact. It is for this reason that miracles almost never create a long-lasting effect or permanent physical change- the spirit world would never permit one of its number to simply go around adding to creation at the behest of a marabout. Even healing spells

simply restore a subject to their prior condition rather than adding to what exists. Marabouts and griots also have great difficulty in developing new miracles or songs, for they must somehow find a new loophole in the laws of the spirit world or devise a new use of the intricate laws of tradition. Such miracle-workers are limited to the powers that already exist.

Ngangas wield something very different- *ashe*, the fundamental potency of all which exists. Every act and substance has potency because of *ashe*. A fire's heat, a wise man's cunning, a warrior's determination, a stone's hardness- all of these traits are simply different manifestations of *ashe*. A skilled nganga can gather and channel this power to create marvels in obedience to his will.

*Ashe* has nothing to do with the gods and the spirits. It is something more essential, more fundamental to the substance of the world. It can be used to affect the divine powers if properly channeled, but it is more oriented toward the physical world and the creation of action or substance. Because it is fundamentally in defiance of natural law, it is mistrusted and disliked by many among the priesthood. "Magic spoils the gods," they say, and many claim that witchcraft ruins the relationship between humans and spirits.

While *ashe* is remarkably versatile in its effects, it is limited by the understanding of the wielder. A nganga cannot create an effect he does not understand. It is for this reason that very subtle and complex works cannot be performed by ngangas. Healing wounds, restoring the dead, conjuring complex objects, or foretelling the future are all examples of tasks too complex for a common sorcerer to accomplish. Cunning ngangas are sometimes able to surpass the limits of their arts by finding a simpler shortcut to the desired end; the experienced nganga may transform himself into a beast, for example, by simply copying the form of an existing type of animal. Such tricks often come with unanticipated limitations.

Sorcery is particularly potent in matters of curses and maledictions. It is always easier to destroy than to create, and a skilled nganga can poison the *ashe* within a victim to rob him of the power to enact his will upon the world. This may take the subtle form of bad luck and sudden illnesses or the dramatic disintegration of the victim's flesh. These curses cling to those bewitched, and it is often necessary to find a nganga to lift the taint upon the victim's *ashe*. Few marabouts have the ability to ease these curses, and so even those villages that fear their arts are often obliged to tolerate a local nganga for the sake of the cures he can dispense.

The power to wield *ashe* is something innate, either born with the nganga or produced by some powerful supernatural contact. A few ngangas go through life completely unaware of their powers, instinctively channeling *ashe* to blight their enemies and strengthen their aims. It is for this reason that some villages are so worried about witches in their midst; they might be harboring a curse-monger among their own people without the malefactor even realizing his crime. Most sorcerers are marked from youth, however, and are taken by a more experienced nganga for an apprentice to aid in their work.

# GRIOT SONGS

The powers of a griot are great but sharply focused. Their praise-songs and castigations defend the principles they uphold, rebuking the wicked and glorifying the righteous. Yet as judges of the deeds of men they are every bit as susceptible to inducements and corruption as any other magistrate. A griot may use his powers as he sees fit, and there is no greater law to constrain him.

## THE SONGS OF THE WISE

Every griot is expected to be versed in matters of mundane history and custom, but aside from these ordinary lays and chants he or she also knows one or more potent *songs*. These songs are imbued with near-magical powers, allowing the griot to shape the passions of those around him and enlighten himself with truths that others might overlook. At their most powerful, the songs can work physical changes on the world around the griot, even blasting his foes with the tangible force of his judgment. Songs need not take the form of music- they might also be expressed as chants, fiery oratory, or witheringly appropriate proverbs.

Songs come in three degrees: *minor*, *great*, and *ancient* songs. Novice griots can use only minor songs. At fourth level, they are learned enough to master great songs, and at seventh level they have attained such mastery of their arts that they can begin to use the ancient songs of their ancestors.

There is no limit to the number of songs a griot may learn, provided he has a teacher or one of the rare, encyclopedic tomes that lay out the details of a song. A song's fundamentals can be learned in a very short time, but it requires much more to master it. Mastering a minor song requires a week, a great song requires a month, and three months of practice is needed before an ancient song can be perfected. A griot may adventure normally while mastering a song, but he can learn only one song at a time. Other griots are often jealous of their knowledge, and will require favors and inducements to persuade them to teach their arts. Outright payment of gold is unheard-of, however, as bartering such lore for mere money would be a humiliating disgrace to a griot.

Griots may record their songs in written form, but the creation of such texts is long and laborious, and few do so save at the end of their lives. Scribing a minor song takes three months, a great song requires a year, and an ancient song requires five years of effort and a dozen volumes to encompass its truth. Such tomes can only be

SONGS AND INSPIRATION		
SONG LEVEL	INSPIRATION COST	MIN. GRIOT LEVEL
MINOR	1	1st
GREAT	3	4th
ANCIENT	5	7th

inscribed by a griot- a mere scribe trying to copy one would inevitably introduce such errors and typographic blunders as would make the whole series worthless to a student.

## INSPIRATION

To know a song is not enough. A griot must have the wit and scintillating genius necessary to fit it to the present situation, finding the right words to suit the immediate need. This grace is measured in Inspiration, and each griot has a pool of Inspiration points that refreshes each morning. Singing a song requires expending these points, and when a griot runs out, his muse has deserted him until he has had time to formulate new words. A minor song requires 1 Inspiration, a great song requires 3, and an ancient song requires 5 Inspiration points to sing.

## SINGING THE TRUTH

Beginning a song requires a griot's action for the round, but he can maintain it thereafter unless struck unconscious, stunned, or otherwise prevented from speaking. Damage to a griot will not interrupt his song unless the wound strikes him down. A griot can maintain only one song at a time. Praising-songs can be applied only to allies, and not to the griot himself. One griot may praise another, however, if the circumstance arises.

Songs affect even deaf creatures or those that cannot understand them, but the creature must normally have at least a roughly human intellect to be affected. Any creature within earshot of the griot is a valid target for one of his songs, and his voice can cut through the clamor of a battlefield or a thunderous rainstorm.

Griot songs are not subject to wards against magic or supernatural detection, and their effects cannot be dispelled by magic. Their effects are strictly in accordance with natural law and are treated as perfectly mundane for purposes of magical defenses.

GRIOT SONG LIST		
MINOR	GREAT	ANCIENT
<i>Condemning the Wicked Man</i>	<i>Compelling the Heart of a Friend</i>	<i>Absolving the Unjustly Accused</i>
<i>Praising the Artisan's Hands</i>	<i>Compelling the Stillness of Spears</i>	<i>Condemning One Worthy of Death</i>
<i>Praising the Fearless Defenders</i>	<i>Condemning the Miserable Outlaw</i>	<i>Condemning the Breaker of Laws</i>
<i>Praising the Young Warrior</i>	<i>Encouraging the Darkened Mind</i>	<i>Praising the Unconquered Hero</i>
<i>Remembering the Correct Words</i>	<i>Inspiring the Multitude's Passion</i>	<i>Praising the Wisdom of Kings</i>
<i>Remembering the Customs of the Elders</i>	<i>Praising the Enduring Warrior</i>	<i>Singing the Path to Glory</i>
<i>Remembering the Old Kings</i>	<i>Praising the Wise Leader</i>	
<i>Welcoming the Friendly Stranger</i>	<i>Remembering the Spears of Heroes</i>	

# MINOR SONGS

## CONDEMNING THE WICKED MAN

**TARGET** | One enemy

The griot hurls fearsome castigation at a foe, condemning their evil look and wicked deeds. The subject's breath becomes short, his hands weak, and his courage falters in his heart. He suffers 1d6 damage, +1 for every two full levels of the griot. This damage cannot reduce a target's hit points below 1, as it steals their courage and luck rather than their life. This song cannot be used on the same target more than once per day.

## PRAISING THE ARTISAN'S HANDS

**TARGET** | One ally

The griot tells a story of some fitting artist or cunning craftsman, reminding an ally of how a mighty work was done in ancient days. The insight aids the ally in performing some skill, granting a +1 bonus on a skill check. As might be imagined, this aid cannot be conferred on Stealth or other skills requiring discretion in their attempt.

## PRAISING THE FEARLESS DEFENDERS

**TARGET** | All allies except the griot

The griot sings of fearless stands against overwhelming foes, calling out similarities between ancient heroes and present allies. Those who hear his words gain a -1 bonus to their AC and take 1 fewer point of damage from any source of injury. This decrease may result in a blow doing no harm at all.

## PRAISING THE YOUNG WARRIOR

**TARGET** | One ally

The griot calls out encouragement, reminding a combatant of the great deeds of their ancestors and the courage that is expected of them. The subject gains a +2 bonus to hit rolls, a +1 bonus to saving throws, and becomes impervious to non-magical fear.

## REMEMBERING THE CORRECT WORDS

**TARGET** | Self

The griot always knows just what to say- even when he doesn't speak the language. With this song, the griot remembers enough snatches of foreign music and verse to pick out a basic conversation with a human stranger, speaking and understanding the language to a rudimentary level. To reflect this, the griot may speak to the stranger, but can use only proper names and words of one syllable. The benefits of this song last for one hour per level of the griot, and it need not be maintained during that time to aid him.

## REMEMBERING THE CUSTOMS OF THE ELDERS

**TARGET** | Self

The griot is never at a loss in understanding the ways and expectations of a community. By recalling old verses and the customs of similar people, he may gain an understanding of the important laws, customs, and traditions of a community and acquire a



near-mystical insight as to whom he should contact for particular common goods, services, or favors. This song grants the relevant Culture skill at level-0, with the understanding lasting for one hour per level of the griot. The song must be used once for every particular good or service that is sought in a community. It will not reveal purveyors of sternly forbidden things such as assassinations, but it might well direct to illegal but less widely-condemned services.

## REMEMBERING THE OLD KINGS

**TARGET** | Self

The griot knows many truths long since forgotten to others. By reciting old poems, songs, or legends, the griot may sift out a fact useful to himself and his friends. When this song is sung, the griot may answer any one historical question about a person, place, or event that has not been kept secret from the learned.

## WELCOMING THE FRIENDLY STRANGER

**TARGET** | Self

The griot knows words to charm and please those who meet him, and he can turn the tensest encounter into a friendly exchange of words. With this song, the griot gains a +2 bonus on a reaction roll. This song may be performed after the roll has been made, if he does so immediately.

# GREAT SONGS

## COMPELLING THE HEART OF A FRIEND

**TARGET** | One subject

The griot knows words to beguile and charm a listener, convincing them of the griot's great friendship for them. If the subject fails a saving throw versus Mental Effect, they will treat the griot as a confidante and perform any act for them that they would reasonably perform for a good friend. The good feeling lasts for one day, and will break if the griot performs some obviously hostile act against them. A successful saving throw merely leaves the subject unimpressed with the griot's appeal.

## COMPELLING THE STILLNESS OF SPEARS

**TARGET** | Chosen listeners

The griot cannot contain violence forever, but he can force a temporary peace upon angry listeners. All those who hear his words must save versus Mental Effect or cease any violence for one round per level of the griot. If a subject is attacked during that time or obvious preparations are made to harm them, the effect is broken for the subject.

## CONDEMNING THE MISERABLE OUTLAW

**TARGET** | One subject

The griot rails violently at some subject within earshot, accusing him of innumerable crimes and perversions. The bystander with the best Mental Effect saving throw must then make a save- if he fails, he and all other onlookers will temporarily view the subject as outside the laws of their community, unworthy of their protection. Anyone may attack or rob the subject of this song, and only his kinsmen or close friends will aid him. The induced outlawry lasts for ten minutes per level of the griot, but crimes committed during that time will not be reported or begrudged by those bystanders who were affected, as they seemed perfectly justified at the time.

## ENCOURAGING THE DARKENED MIND

**TARGET** | One subject

The griot's calm words or stirring song lifts unnatural confusion and enchantment from the mind of a subject. Both the subject and the griot may make saving throws versus Mental Effect. If either succeed, the subject is immediately freed from any mind-affecting effect, including the songs of a griot. If sung for a subject who is not currently influenced, it allows them to automatically succeed on their first Mental Effect saving throw made within the next hour.

## INSPIRING THE MULTITUDE'S PASSION

**TARGET** | Chosen listeners

The griot can whip up fierce passions in those who listen to his songs and words. When this song is sung, all targets who hear must save versus Mental Effect or be filled with a particular strong emotion. The griot can loosely control the focus of this emotion, fixing it on a person or group, but fine nuance is impossible. Common people may resort to beatings or vandalism if infuriated, or flee in headlong terror if affrighted. Hardened warriors may make a Morale check to withstand terrors or maintain order in the face of obvious danger. The emotions last for one minute per level of the griot.

## PRAISING THE ENDURING WARRIOR

**TARGET** | All allies except the griot

The griot sings a song of strength and defiance in the face of hardship, filling his friends with a determined vigor. All allies who listen gain 1d8 hit points, plus one hit point per level of the griot, even if it raises them above their usual maximum. The effect ends ten minutes later or at the end of the battle, whichever comes later, and any hit points in excess of the maximum are lost. This song may help a subject only once per day.

## PRAISING THE WISE LEADER

**TARGET** | Chosen listeners

The griot's words laud a particular person, praising their wisdom, virtue, and prowess. All listeners must save versus Mental Effect or be inclined to view the subject of the song favorably, cooperating with any requests made within the scope of their accepted authority and believing the best of their decisions and judgments. Even a brutal, foolish leader can be made to appear a model of wise statesmanship by a gifted griot, though the charm lasts only one day. People will tend to maintain their good opinion of the leader even after the effect ends, provided no reason for reconsideration is given.

## REMEMBERING THE SPEARS OF HEROES

**TARGET** | One item

The griot knows much about great weapons and war-harness of old. This song teaches the innumerable scraps of legend and tale-telling which allow a griot to recognize famous weapons and armor, or the products of famed artisans. The griot may determine whether or not a weapon, armor, or miscellaneous item is magical and can identify its general use and powers.

# ANCIENT SONGS

## ABSOVING THE UNJUSTLY ACCUSED

**TARGET** | One set of judges

The griot stands to defend a person accused of a crime, either proclaiming the person's innocence or weaving such a poetic and elaborate justification that the judges cannot find it in them to condemn the accused. The person in the judging group with the best save versus Mental Effect must roll a saving throw; if he fails, the group is swayed by the griot and will find the accused undeserving of punishment, regardless of the proof. If he succeeds in the save, the judges will make their judgment as they see fit. This song is entirely natural in its effects, and cannot be repelled by wards against magic. It does require that the griot be allowed an opportunity to plead his cause, however, even if the judges have no intention to judge the matter fairly.

## CONDEMNING ONE WORTHY OF DEATH

**TARGET** | One subject

The griot utters such a scorching condemnation of a subject that the victim's very life trembles within his veins. His skin pulls away from his flesh in revulsion at his crimes, and his bones seek to tear free from his hateful body. This castigation inflicts 1d6 points of damage on the subject for every two full levels of the griot, with a Physical Effect save for half damage. A failed save will also stun the target, leaving them unable to act for 1d4 rounds. This song can be used on a particular target no more than once per day.



## CONDEMNING THE BREAKER OF LAWS

**TARGET** | One subject

The griot draws upon his knowledge of the target's crimes to scourge him cruelly. The griot must first accuse the subject of a particular crime under the laws of the community to which the subject belongs. If the griot is mistaken in this and the subject is actually innocent, the griot must save versus Magic or his mouth is stopped for 1d6 minutes, leaving him unable to make a single sound. If the griot speaks true, the subject may make a saving throw versus Mental Effect; on a success, nothing happens, but on a failure, the subject is compelled to loudly announce every detail of his crime and motivation. This condemnation may be used only once on a particular target for a particular crime.

## PRaising THE UNCONQUERED HERO

**TARGET** | One ally

The griot's assurances of victory and shining glory fill the subject of his praise with an unquenchable vigor and unflinching resolve. The target gains 3d6 hit points immediately, even if the total exceeds his normal maximum, and is allowed to roll twice on all attack and damage rolls and take the better dice. The effect ends after ten minutes or the completion of the battle, whichever is longer, and any hit points over the maximum are then lost. An ally may be affected by this song only once per day.

## PRaising THE WISDOM OF KINGS

**TARGET** | One subject

The griot instinctively utters those verses or songs which provide the most useful guidance to the subject in the matter of some significant choice. To benefit from this song, the subject must declare a desired end and then describe some action he intends to take in furtherance of his goal. If the action would actually be unhelpful or counterproductive he gains a vague impression of why the action is unlikely to serve his end. The helpfulness or unhelpfulness of an action is determined at the GM's discretion. This counsel can be given on any particular topic only once per week.

## SINGING THE PATH TO GLORY

**TARGET** | Self

The griot is so exquisitely aware of the consequential figures of the land that he may divine the proper means to reach them through his choice of verse. The griot must seek to find a particular person of importance, whether identified by name or role. The target must save versus Mental Effect; on a success, the griot gains no insight and cannot attempt this song again for a week. If the save fails, for one hour per level the griot gains a perfect knowledge of the direction in which the person or place may be found and a vague sense of distance in hours of travel required to reach them. This spell will not reveal hidden roles; seeking to find "the assassin of the Mai's eldest son" will not work.