

Cultural Template

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Part I. The context and setting

Subtitle of First Part

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Chapter 1. Physical Setting

Subtitle of Chapter

Backdrop

Subtitle of Section 1

Locale

What does it look like?
What is the geography?
How accessible is this area?
What natural features mark the borders?
What are the most striking features of landscape, climate, animals, etc. in this area?
How will these features affect travel time, communication, etc.?

Climate

What is the climate?
What kinds of clothes and shelter are needed?
Will the climate only allow survival activities or will there be time for leisure developments such as art, philosophy, etc.?

Flora

How much of the country is farmland? Forest? Desert? Mountains? Plains?
What are the primary crops (e.g., potatoes, cotton, tobacco, coffee, rice, peanuts, wheat, sugarcane, etc.)?
Are any grown mainly for export?
What are known delicacies.
What plants can be used to make medicine, guys, poisons, liquors, For miscellaneous things like cloth and rope?
Are there predatory plants?

Fauna

What animals are especially helpful to your world?
What is a creature that preys on other nuisance creatures?
What are the domesticated animals?
What are the food animals?
Whether the food taboos?
Which animals are used in medicine.
What animals are used for poisons.
What wild animals, actual or imaginary, live in this area?
Are any of them potentially useful — e.g., for fur, whale oil, hides, magical ingredients, hat feathers?
Which animals, actual or imaginary, are commonly domesticated in this area?
Which aren't here, but are elsewhere? (Example: water buffalo in India vs. oxen in Europe vs. camels in desert areas.)
If there are imaginary animals (dragons, unicorns, etc.), how do they fit into the ecology?
What do they eat? How much habitat do they require?

Can they live anywhere, or do they prefer or need specific kinds of climate or terrain?
Are they intelligent and/or capable of working spells, talking, etc.?

Natural Resources

Where are mineral resources located?

Which animals, birds, fish, and other wildlife are commonly found in which areas?

Which resources (e.g., coal, oil, iron ore, gold, diamonds, limestone, etc.) are particularly abundant, and in which areas?

Which are scarce?

Are there places where there are rich deposits that haven't been discovered yet, or where they haven't been fully exploited?

What water resources available, and for what uses ?

What are the contested resources?

Magical Resources

Chapter 2. Past

Subtitle of Chapter

Where did civilization begin?
What directions did it spread?
How was its development affected by the presence of magic?
The presence of non-human races, if any?
The actions or direct interventions of the gods?
Which peoples/countries/races have traditionally fought, allied, traded, or been rivals?
Where are there still hard feelings about old events?
Which peoples/countries/races have been in conflict in the recent past?
Why?
When and why was the most recent war?
Who won?

Prehistory

Subtitle of Section 1

Text

History

What happened before there was writing

Text

Succession of rulers and/or changes in the form of government
Invasions, movements of peoples, or dramatic mass migrations
Disaster related to plague, fire, disease, famine, pestilence, etc.
Victory in war, establishment or expansion of colonies, major changes in borders, etc.
Take note of dates when a natural event reduced or increase the amount of natural resources (food, water, timber etc.)
Take note of dates when a unnatural event change the resources as well
Keep in mind recovering from war takes about a generation without any major wars.
Track specific dates one power shifted in civilizations (through who, death of a monarch that something) and one of the powershift was smooth.
How far back are there records or tales of historical events?
How widely known are these stories?
Do average people believe old tales, or do they dismiss some that have a basis in fact (e.g., Troy)?
Who are the neighboring countries/peoples and what are they like?
Why did people settle in this country in the first place — strategic location, trade route, water transport, minerals, good farming, etc.? \

Have things changed much since, or do they still depend on whatever brought them in the first place?
Who are the rivals or enemies of this country? How close are they physically? How powerful?
Who are the heroes and villains of each country's history (e.g., Washington and Lincoln in the U.S.; Henry V in England, etc.)?
Why are they heroes/villains and what do this say about the country and the people who admire them?
Which peoples/countries/races have been in conflict in the recent past? Why? When and why was the most recent war? Who won?
Which peoples/countries/races fought, allied, traded, or were traditional rivals? Where are there still hard feelings about old events?

How do the weapons of this country compare with those of surrounding cities and countries?

Have there been recent innovations that may upset the balance of power, or is everyone more or less equal?

How many people are there in this country?

How does this compare with world population?

What is considered a small town/large town/city in terms of number of people?

How diverse is the population of this country — how many different races (human or non-human), creeds, etc. normally live in various cities and towns in this country?

In what percentages?

How do the weapons of this country compare with those of surrounding cities and countries?

Have there been recent innovations that may upset the balance of power, or is everyone more or less equal?

Chapter 3. Present

Subtitle of Chapter

Cities

Subtitle of Section 1

Text

Architecture

Subtitle of Section 1

Text

Part II. What are they like

Subtitle of First Part

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Chapter 4. Description

Subtitle of Chapter

Physical

Subtitle of Section 1

Text

Fashion and Clothing

What do people wear?

How expensive is it?

Can the material be produced locally, or must some or all of it be imported?

Are weapons a standard part of dress for any/all segments of society?

Are certain clothes customary for certain occupations — e.g., military uniforms, judges robes/wigs, sports teams uniforms, etc.?

How much variation is allowed — could a scholar wear a day-glow green robe as long as the cut is right, or would that be too much?

Is it color or style that is most important?

Are the dyes for certain colors — purple, indigo, etc. — rare, making cloth of that color more expensive and/or reserved for nobility or other high-status people?

Are there sumptuary laws, defining who can wear what?

What are the penalties?

Who decides when changes are needed?

How often are they adjusted?

Are there fashions/fads in things besides clothes — styles of carriages, furniture, etc.?

Are there fashions/fads in magic — are herbal spells “in” this year and ritual spells “out,” or vice versa?

How many changes of clothes can a normal person afford?

A noble person?

A peasant?

What is the current fashion in clothes?

Hats?

Jewelry?

Shoes?

Do such fashions differ for humans/non-humans?

Between city and country?

What materials are appropriate to the climate?

What materials must be imported, and are therefore for expensive upper-class clothes only?

What things are considered tacky and vulgar, and what things are stylish?

What types of decorations and accessories are common?

What colors and combinations of colors are thought to look well or to clash?

Do opinions on this vary from race to race?

What physical types and characteristics are currently fashionable — tan vs. pale skin, the “consumptive look” vs. robust good health, fat vs. thin, blonde vs. brunette, muscles vs. “dead poet”, etc.?

Language

Subtitle of Section 1

How many languages are there?

Which ones are related (e.g., the Romance languages) and why?
Which languages borrow words or phrases from other languages?
Which is likely to be most widely spoken?
Is there a “trade language” that facilitates commerce between countries that don’t speak the same tongue?
Is there a “universal language” spoken by educated or noble persons, as Latin was in the Middle Ages?
What languages are spoken?,
How is the language recorded?,
How are messages and information passed along?,
How is history recorded?,
is the society literate or illiterate?,
Who provides education?,
Who receives education?,
Are some or all people bilingual?
Is there a common second language many people know?
Are there “secret” languages or codes known only by priests, soldiers, wizards, guild members, etc.?
Why were they developed?
What are the variations in speech patterns, syntax, and slang from one social class to another?
One occupation to another?
One region to another?
One race to another?
What areas do local slang phrases come out of?
(Example: in a fishing town, referring to good luck as “a good catch,” while people in a farming town refer to it as “an unexpected harvest”.) What kinds of colorful turns of phrase do people use?
What is the cultural worldview and how does it arise in language ? (Typically as distinctions or lack of distinctions in a given area)
Are there words that must never be spoken except at particular times, in ceremonies, or under particular circumstances?
Are there words that must not be spoken in polite company?
Do these words differ from culture to culture or race to race?
What will people swear a binding oath by?
What do people use as curse words?

Beliefs

Subtitle of Section 1

Myth

One of the popular beliefs that have nothing to do with religion but they are fundamental to the worldview and shape what people see?
Who are the great heroes of the past or present and why are they heroes?

Ritual

Religion

Are there actual gods/godlike beings?
If so, do they take an active role in a) the temples, churches, and religions that worship them, or b) the lives of everyday people?
Why or why not?
How many gods are there, and is there a hierarchy among them?

Which ones are good or evil, or is this meaningless when speaking of gods?
Is there tension, rivalry, or outright hostility between any of the actual gods?
How does this affect church politics?
People's everyday lives?
Do the gods care how people behave?
Why or why not?
If there are actual, demonstrable gods, what part does faith play in their worship?
Why are the gods interested in people?
Are they like the Greek pantheon (quarrelsome, larger-than-life humans), or are they transcendent and incomprehensible?
Do the gods have limits to what they can do?
To what they will do?
Can the gods make mistakes?
What are the beliefs of the society concerning life and death?
What is considered good and what is considered evil?
Who do they worship?
Where do they worship?
Are there any sacrifices?
What role does religion play in their social lives?
How do various religions, if any, view magic?
Do any require priests/priestesses to be magicians?
Do any forbid it?
How do various religions view non-believers?
Foreigners?
Non-humans?
Which support the state/ruler/government, and which are interested mainly in ordinary people?
Where does religion fit into this society?
Is there a state church?
Is freedom of religion the norm?
Do people generally think of the temples/churches as parasites or as a useful part of society?
Which ethical/moral decisions are considered the province of religion, and which are not?
What are their various rites like, and why?
What offerings are considered good, better, best?
Are people supposed to pick one or more gods to worship and ignore the others, or does everybody officially worship everyone?
How do people decide whom to worship?
How do they decide which temple to be affiliated with?
How much of a part do various religions and philosophies play in public and private life?
Are philosophers and theologians considered ivory-tower academics, or do they debate in the marketplace, like Socrates?
How much influence do their theories have on the way people actually behave?
Are priests and philosophers full-time workers, or do they need day jobs?
If they are full-time, who supports them — the congregation, a wealthy patron, the temple's investment fund, the god they serve?
How do the various temples and philosophies explain the classic "problem of evil"?
Do they think bad things are always a just punishment for some transgression, a character-building exercise, the result of an evil antagonist (Satan, Loki) or just something the gods can't prevent?

Ethics, morals, and mores

Subtitle of Section 1

What will people swear a binding oath by?
What do people use as curse words?

What is the most desired/most valuable stuff in this society — gold, jewels, drugs, money, furs, reindeer, etc.?

Why is it desired/valued?

Do different races value different things?

Is there a race/culture for whom non-material things (information, time) are the most valuable things?

How did they get that way?

What things are considered normal and acceptable in this society that would not be considered normal or acceptable in yours?

What things are considered shocking in this society that are not considered shocking in yours — e.g., eating left-handed, reading in public?

What would be the reaction of an ordinary person who sees someone doing one of these things — to turn away, call the cops, challenge the offender to a duel,

What are the acceptable limits to honor and/or honesty in this society?

Are “white lies” acceptable socially, or is lying in any form considered beyond the pall?

Is thievery an accepted, if disreputable, occupation, or is it a crime?

Is a binding oath unbreakable no matter what, or can you get out of it if the other party turns out to be evil scum or if you weren’t fully informed?

What is considered the right thing to do if two oaths come into conflict — do you have to decide as best you can, hold to the oath to the most/least powerful person, commit suicide?

What are attitudes toward ownership?

What constitutes “theft” and what can be stolen — gems, gold, someone’s good name or reputation?

Are thieves independent criminals, members of an illegal guild, business people licensed by law, or what?

What are the controversial subjects in this culture?

What things can you start a friendly argument about in any bar?

What things will automatically start an unfriendly argument?

What are the social taboos — what things are “not done,” like wearing a bathing suit to the office?

What things are not talked about?

What would happen if someone did?

How do these taboos vary among the different races?

What are the biggest social faux pas — burping loudly, drawing steel in the presence of a queen/noble, asking a dwarf whether it’s male or female?

What subjects or actions cause embarrassment or discomfort?

Who are the arbiters of ethics (as opposed to law)?

How did they get to be arbiters?

Who are the social arbiters?

Ditto, ditto.

Which ethical/moral decisions are considered the province of religion, and which are not?

What are the society’s mores regarding courtship, marriage and family?

Is marriage primarily a civil or a religious institution?

Who are the persons or groups to which one automatically has a duty simply by being born — one’s family, one’s town/city, one’s country, one’s ruler/president, the gods?

What is the hierarchy of duty among them — is it considered more noble to follow your mother’s teaching or to follow your emperor’s orders?

What are the standards of beauty for people?

Paintings and sculpture?

Clothes and furniture?

How do they differ from the standards in your culture (example: a country which considers fatness a highly desirable beauty trait)?

How do standard of beauty reflect the physical traits of the various races (examples: dwarves might consider excessive height unattractive; werewolves might be attracted by long teeth or a particular scent)?

What is the ideal life that people aspire to?

Do people mostly want to retire to a little house in the country, buy the most “toys,” serve in the army/navy?

What kinds of people are the rebels and outcasts of this society?

How does society deal with them?

What actions or ideas will get you made an official outcast/exile?

What happens to people who don't fit the accepted social order — do they have their own sections of town, or are they invisible ("in the closet"), or do they get kicked out of the country altogether?

Customs and traditions

Subtitle of Section 1

Does the weather or climate contribute any habits or customs, such as the mid-afternoon siesta in hot countries?

Greeting and Meeting

When meeting someone, how are they greeted — wave, handshake, bow, some other gesture And how did that greeting originate?

Is there a special I-am-not-armed gesture for wizards?

Is there a difference between the greeting offered to an equal and that offered to a superior or inferior?

Is there a difference between the greeting offered a man or a woman?

Human/non-human?

Is there a way of changing a greeting gesture to make it insulting?

How are two people who have never met normally introduced to each other?

What is the order of precedence when there are several people of differing sex or social status present, all of whom need to be introduced to each other?

Are there classes of people/beings who are never introduced to other classes of people/beings?

Are "true names" significant, and if so, under what circumstances would someone be given another person/being's true name?

Are there customs involving the way in which someone is named when being introduced

Is there any difference in the way you greet someone you already know, compared to greeting a stranger (or does everybody just always hug or shake hands?

How does someone acknowledge seeing an acquaintance at a distance (passing on the other side of the street) — by a nod, tipping the hat, wave, smile, or not at all?

Are gestures and body language in this society generally subtle or not?

Do people talk with their hands, or is that considered vulgar?

What is a comfortable and polite speaking distance for people in this culture?

Other cultures/countries/races?

How aware are people of these differences?

What gestures are insulting?

What do they mean?

Do some gestures differ in meaning depending on the culture, race, or time (example: the American "V"-for-victory sign, which became the peace sign, and which is/was highly insulting in Europe)?

How do gestures and body language differ between countries?

Between species?

Are there things that don't matter in one area that are mortal insults in another (eating with the left hand, etc.)?

What are the ways of showing respect (bowing, saluting, etc.)?

To whom is one expected to show such respect — one's elders, superiors in rank, teachers, priests, etc.?

Visits

Are there questions that must be asked or avoided (how's the family, how's the business, never talk politics or religion, etc.)?

Are there topics that can only be raised by the host?

The guest?

How seriously does the culture take the responsibilities of host and guest?
What rules define when someone becomes a host or guest (e.g., in mid-eastern countries, giving bread and salt to someone makes the person your guest; giving a 5-course meal without bread or salt doesn't)?
What things are considered courteous to offer a guest: food, reading material, personal guards or attendants, music/entertainment, a person of the opposite sex to sleep with?
What is considered a courteous response to a host's offer?
Are there things it is considered rude to accept?
Rude to turn down?
Rude to ask for?
Rude not to ask for?
When a guest arrives, is food or drink offered immediately, after an interval, or only on request?
Is there a particular food or drink that is customary to offer a newly arrived guest?
How do different eating customs of the various cultures and races interact and conflict?
Example: a person from a culture that considers it impolite to refuse an offer of food being the guest of someone whose culture considers it impolite to stop offering food until the guest says "when."

Eating

Do men and women, parents and children, servants and master, eat separately, or does everyone eat together?
How is status displayed at the table (seating above or below the salt, near or far from the head, etc.)?
What dishes are considered holiday food?
What foods/drinks are associated with particular holidays, events (e.g., funerals, weddings) or times of the year?
What distinguishes a formal, high-court dinner from an ordinary meal, besides quantity and variety of food?
How do high-court manners differ from everyday ones?
What eating utensils are used, if any?
Forks, eating knife, spoons, chopsticks?
What is the order of a typical upper-class meal — do they start with wine, then a sweet, then a stew, then a salad, or do they bring everything in at once?
Are special arrangements necessary for entertaining guests of different races/species — taller chairs for dwarves, raw meat for werewolves, perches for harpies, etc.?
How do the eating customs of different races reflect their cultures and biology?
How difficult does this make social interaction among the races?
Is sanitation good enough for untreated water to be safe to drink?
If not, what do people drink instead?
What shapes are tables/eating areas (round, oblong, square, rectangular, etc.)?
Where is the "place of honor" for a guest?
Where do the important members of the household sit/recline/whatever?
What things, while edible, are never eaten (what's not kosher)?
Why?
Are some common human foods poisonous to dwarves or elves (or vice versa)?
What types of food or seasoning are characteristic of different races?
Different cultures?
Different countries?

Wedding

Bedding

Birthing

What customs surround a birth and the introduction of a new child to the family?
Is the mother sequestered for some period?
Is the child?
Is there a formal presentation of the new child to parents, grandparents, overlord, priest?
Is a feast and celebration declared, or does everyone keep a low profile to keep from attracting demons or bad luck?
Who is normally present for births?
Is it strictly a matter for women, or are men involved, or is the only woman present the expectant mother?

Battle

Burying

What customs surround death and burial?
Is there a special class of people (doctors, priests, funeral directors, untouchables) who deal with dead bodies?
What things must be done and why (burn hair to free spirit, burn body to prevent necromancy, coins on eyes for ferryman, etc.)?
Are the dead feared, revered, or ignored?

Other

Manners

What distinguishes a formal, high-court dinner from an ordinary meal besides quantity and variety of food?
How do high-court manners differ from everyday ones?
What are the rules of precedence — who gets to go through doors first?
Who gets introduced first?
Is there a distinction between “formal” or high court good manners and informal, everyday good manners?
When and where are people supposed to be on their best behavior?
How important are “good manners” in this society?
What constitutes everyday good manners?
How do “good manners” differ from race to race?
How do people/dwarves/elves/dragons react when someone has just been, by their standards, unspeakably rude?
When a guest arrives, is food or drink offered immediately, after an interval, or only on request?
Is there a particular food or drink that is customary to offer a newly arrived guest?

Leisure and Recreation

In what sports does people participate?,
What games are played?,
What institutions or organizations provides recreation?
What type of sports are considered spectator sports?

What toys does children use?,
What other types of participatory recreation exist?
What other types of spectator recreation exist?
What do people at various levels of society do for fun?
What sports or pastimes are common (hawking, hunting, skiing, baseball)?
Which ones take skill, money, and/or leisure time?
What games are commonly known — chess, dice, poker?
Which are common among everyone, and which are limited to the peasantry or nobility?
Are certain countries/cities known for a passion/expertise for particular games or pastimes?
Do non-human races have their own games and leisure pastimes?
How do they differ from human games?
How do they reflect the physiology and/or particular magical talents of the various non-human races?

Art, and Symbolism

What are the standards of beauty for people?
Paintings and sculpture?
Clothes and furniture?
How do they differ from the standards in your culture (example: a country which considers fatness a highly desirable beauty trait)?
How do standard of beauty reflect the physical traits of the various races (examples: dwarves might consider excessive height unattractive; werewolves might be attracted by long teeth or a particular scent)?
What is the status of the arts (dance, music, theater, etc.) in this society?
Are artists revered or mistrusted?
Are they considered noble or immoral?
Who supports the arts?
Which arts are most highly valued and why?
Are there permanent theaters or concert halls for the performing arts?
If so, who owns and runs them?
Are they profitable?
Are there also traveling troupes of players/musicians/dancers?
How do their performances differ?
Can magic be used in the arts, and if so, how — paint that glows, pictures that move, flutes that play themselves, etc.?
How do “normal” artists feel about this?
Is there a separate branch of purely magical art, such as illusion?
Have paper-making and the printing press been invented, or are books and scrolls rare, expensive, handwritten items?
What things are considered appropriate subjects for representational arts such as painting and sculpture?
Which are not?
(Examples: some cultures/religions forbid the painting or sculpture of the human figure, and have abstract art; some have limited painters to doing only “uplifting” religious works, etc.)
Are there non-human races who tend to be naturally talented painters, dancers, etc.?
How does this affect human practitioners of these arts?
Are certain races/cultures considered better at some arts than other races/cultures?
Where do the best dancers, painters, musicians, actors, etc. come from?
Have paper-making and the printing press been invented, or are books and scrolls rare, expensive, handwritten items?
What things are considered appropriate subjects for representational arts such as painting and sculpture?
Which are not?
(Examples: some cultures/religions forbid the painting or sculpture of the human figure, and have abstract art; some have limited painters to doing only “uplifting” religious works, etc.)

Are there non-human races who tend to be naturally talented painters, dancers, etc.?
How does this affect human practitioners of these arts?
Are certain races/cultures considered better at some arts than other races/cultures?
Where do the best dancers, painters, musicians, actors, etc. come from?

Art

What are the mediums of the graphic arts?
What dances do the people do?
What types of music are there?
What themes are present in art, music, dance?
What is the source of these themes?

Architecture

Music

Dance

Literature

Part III. Communities

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Chapter 5. Racial

Subtitle of Chapter

Section1 Title

Subtitle of Section 1

Text

Chapter 6. Urban

Subtitle of Chapter

Urban

How many people are there in this country?

How does this compare with world population?

What is considered a small town/large town/city in terms of number of people?

Is population shifting from rural to urban, south to north, mountains to coast, etc.?

Why — invasion, plague, gold rush, etc.?

What effects has this had on the places being left?

The places gaining people?

Does city layout reflect some philosophy (religious or otherwise), such as that the “head” of the city must be at the center or at the highest point or at the most strategic location?

Or were layout considerations mainly practical?

Or did most cities “just grow”?

Are there public or private parks in most/any cities?

Are cities generally laid out on a square-grid system of streets, or do they just grow?

How wide are the streets and alleys?

What are the landmarks in each city?

Where are the interesting neighborhoods, like Chinatown or the dwarvish section, and what gives each its special character?

Do the neighborhoods have names?

Where do people go to shop?

To eat?

To have fun?

To do “touristy” things?

What sorts of goods/food/entertainment are available in large cities that are not available in the country?

Chapter 7. Rural

Subtitle of Chapter

Rural

Is population shifting from rural to urban, south to north, mountains to coast, etc.?

Why — invasion, plague, gold rush, etc.?

What effects has this had on the places being left?

The places gaining people?

Given the magical/technological level of this society, what is an appropriate ration of farmers or food producers to urban residents?

If farm production is based on magic, how many urban residents are going to starve if the spells supporting farming (weather, land fertility, etc.) fail suddenly?

Are peasants/farmers/yeomen/serfs tied to their land by law or custom, or can they move to town if they feel like it?

Can they own their farms and property, or is it all “common land,” or is it rented from a lord or landholder?

Given the state of roads and transportation, how much food is it possible to ship to a given location before it spoils?

(This limits the size of cities.)

Are rural areas primarily farms, forests, fields for grazing, or “waste land”?

In outlying areas where there aren’t many people, how many roads are there, who builds them, and who maintains them?

How reliable is the weather from year to year — is crop production relatively dependable, or do people have to cope with regular famines due to drought or floods?

What kinds of catastrophic weather are common — tornadoes, hurricanes, blizzards, waterspouts, dust storms?

How do people cope?

How do non-humans cope?

How are farming/food-producing areas divided up between humans/nonhumans?

What kinds of conflicts are likely to result?

(Example: Expanding human farms encroaching on a forest that dragons or werewolves use for hunting.)

Can peasants/yeomen own their own land, or does it all belong to the lord?

What kinds of rights over land, crops, game, etc. does a lord/landowner have?

Is poaching a problem?

Chapter 8. Magical

Subtitle of Chapter

Section1 Title

Subtitle of Section 1

Text

Chapter 9. Classed Based

Subtitle of Chapter

Section1 Title

Subtitle of Section 1

Text

Chapter 10. Social

Subtitle of Chapter

Section1 Title

Subtitle of Section 1

Text

Chapter 11. Political

Subtitle of Chapter

Section1 Title

Subtitle of Section 1

Text

Chapter 12. Economic

Subtitle of Chapter

Section1 Title

Subtitle of Section 1

Text

Chapter 13. Military

Subtitle of Chapter

Section1 Title

Subtitle of Section 1

Text

Chapter 14. Family

Subtitle of Chapter

Section1 Title

Subtitle of Section 1

What is considered a normal family unit?

How extended is an extended family?

How important are family connections and responsibilities?

Part IV. Structures

Subtitle of First Part

Part IV. Structures

Subtitle of First Part

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Chapter 15.

What are the rules?
Who made the rules?
How does society get its rules?
What is the source of power?
How is justice dispensed?
How are criminals apprehended?
What punishments are used?
Who are the rulers?
How are the rulers chosen?
How is power passed on to the next leaders?
What groups have the most political power?
How has the presence of magic and magicians affected law and government?
Are wizards barred from certain kinds of government jobs or offices?
Do some government jobs require that their holder be a wizard?
What is the basic style of government: feudal, aristocratic, oligarchy, absolute ruler, democracy, what?
What forms are used in neighboring countries, and why are they the same or different?
What services does the government or head of state provide: schools, wells, courts, an army to protect people from the Vikings?
What services are provided locally or privately?
Who has the right to levy taxes?
For what?
On what or whom?
Can taxes be paid in kind, or do certain things require money?
Who provides support services for the head of state?
What are they called: King's Counselors, Cabinet Ministers, Secretary of State, Good Ol' Girls?
Are they hereditary offices, civil servants, appointees, military, elected?
Is the relative power of a country or ruler usually measured by the size of its army, the number and ability of its wizards, or the amount of money/trade flowing through it?
Who is considered a citizen, with the rights and privileges thereof?
What are those rights and privileges (voting, protection from thieves, the right to a hearing in Rome) and what responsibilities go along with them (jury duty, providing funds or knights for the lord's army)?
Are there certain classes of people (wizards, foreigners, children, peasants, women) who have fewer legal rights or less recourse than full citizens?
Why?
Are they considered mentally or morally deficient, a danger to the state, or is there some other rationale?
What are the easiest/most common ways to advance in status — amass more money, marry well, get the ruler's eye, etc.?
How much resistance is there to someone advancing in social status?
Who will take over running the government if the current head of state is incapacitated?
How is this determined?
Is there an heir apparent (either actual or political)?
What happens if the heir is a minor?
Who gives orders?
How are they picked?
Who is responsible for protecting the head of state?
His personal guard, the Secret Service, an elite group affiliated with the regular military?
What safeguards have they got against assassins, poisoning, direct assault, magical attack?
Who can give orders (to military, to tax collectors, to servants, to ordinary folks on the street)?
How are such people chosen?
Who is responsible for coinage: the ruler, local barons, someone else (merchant guilds)?

Are there generally acceptable standards?
 How easy/common is counterfeiting?
 Is there an organized system of education?
 If so, who provides it: government, churches, private persons?
 How is it supported?
 Who can call up men for an army, and how?
 Does the ruler ask the nobility for men, who in turn draft their peasants, or can the ruler go straight to the bottom?
 How much formal spying and intelligence gathering is normally done by governments?
 The military?
 Merchant guilds and wealthy tradesmen?
 Are there actual organizations, or is spying done by diplomats and/or freelance agents?
 How effective is it currently?
 Do relations between countries depend mainly on the relations between the heads of state, or can two rulers hate each other's guts without being able to just declare war and drag their countries into it?
 Are there times when people are expected to fast, or feast (e.g., before solstice, after the birth of a child, during Lent or Ramadan, after the death of a ruler, etc.)?
 Are there occasions when the ruler is expected to provide a celebration or spectacle for the people to enjoy, (e.g., the Roman gladiatorial games)?
 How much influence do "special interest groups" such as merchants, wizards, or various religions, have on court politics?
 How do they exercise their influence — indirectly (by talking nobility or council members into taking their sides) or directly (by bribery, coercion, having their own representatives on the council)?
 Are there any shaky political alliances between disparate groups?
 Why were they formed?
 How long is it likely to be before they fall apart?
 When they do, what will the effects be?
 What ancient rivalries and hatreds still affect current attitudes and political positions (examples: Scottish and Welsh separatist groups; Catholics vs. Protestants vs. Muslims; dwarves vs. elves; Hatfields vs. McCoys)?

In terms of political systems themselves - there is a vast spectrum of possibilities -Anarchic, Aristocratic, Autarchic, Authoritarian, Autocratic, Bureaucratic, Capitalist, Collectivist, Colonialist, Commercialism, Communist, Confederates, Constitutional, Constitutional monarchy, Democracy, Despotism, Direct Democratic, Dynastic, Ecclesiastical, Ethnocentric, Expansionist, Fascist, Federalist, Fundamentalist, Gerontocratic, Imperialist, Internationalist, Interventionist, Isolationist, Matriarchy, Meritocracy, Monarchy, Orthodox, Parochialism, Paternalist, Patriarchy, Pluralist, Plutocracy, Police State, Protectionist, Regionalist, Republican, Separatist, Socialist, Theocratic, Totalitarian, Utilitarian, Utopian. Each system experiences different forms of intrigue. Feudalism and other aristocratic forms of governance tend to be subsumed by court intrigues revolving around legacies, dynasties, succession, etc. Republics, on the other hand, obsess over questions of law, rights and public resources. Finally, just as in the real world, a nation might call itself one thing, yet behave quite the opposite. Humans might be treated quite well, but minorities of other races (or the same race), might be subject to entirely different laws, slavery, forced exile, etc.

Chapter 16. Calendar

Calendar

Is there a single, generally accepted calendar (including time measurements), or do different countries or peoples or races have different ones?

How is the day divided into smaller time units?

What are they (Hour of the Lark, Sunrise Bell, Nones, etc.)?

Are the names relevant to anything?

Is the length of an hour fixed, or does it vary depending on changes in the length of the day as the seasons change?

What are the names of months, and how many days in each?

How many days in a week?

Months in a year?

Are there leap years?

If so, who keeps track?

Which days are general holidays or festival times?

What do they celebrate?

Are there any that are only celebrated in particular countries, cities, or regions?

What event(s) do people use to date years?

Do they use a single event (the creation of the world, the end of the Great War, the invention of atomic power, etc.) or are events dated based on recurring things (the 12th year of Tiberius' reign, the 301st year of the Han Dynasty)?

How do people tell what time it is?

Are there clocks, watches, sundials, etc., or do people have to just listen for bells from the castle or church, or just eyeball the sun?

Are there any days that are considered "outside the year," like Mardi Gras or the Feast of Fools?

How are these days customarily observed?

How did they originate?

Chapter 17. Education

Education

How much does it cost to get various levels of education?
Is there an organized system of education?
If so, who provides it: government, churches, private persons?
How is it supported?
Is magic considered part of the general college curriculum, or do you have to study it privately?
What sort of education is available, and where?
Are there schoolhouses in every town, or do ordinary people have to travel if they want to be educated?
Are there universities?
Private tutors?
What is the level of literacy in the general population?
Is literacy considered a useful/necessary skill for nobility, or something only scribes/clerks/wimps/
bourgeoisie need?
How common are books?
How are they produced?
Who are the teachers?
How are they trained?
Who pays them?
How much education is considered usual at each of the various levels or classes of society?
What things are considered absolutely necessary for a gentleman/noble to know?
A tradesman?
What things are considered absolutely necessary knowledge for a courtier (poetry, languages, skill at arms,
etc.)?
Which are nice but not necessary?
Which would be highly embarrassing if anybody found out about them (a passion for comic books, etc.)?
How respected are teachers and scholars?
Who supports them?
If magic requires study, where do you go to learn about it?
How do people fund their training?
Is there an apprenticeship system, or are there wizard schools, or is it one-on-one tutoring/mentoring?
Is an untrained wizard dangerous, or just an ordinary person?
Do wizards have a special language that is used for magic?
If so, where do they learn it?
Is it safe to chat in this language, or is everything said in it automatically a spell?
If so, how can it safely be taught to new students?

Chapter 18. Racial

Subtitle of Chapter

Section1 Title

Subtitle of Section 1

Text

Chapter 19. Urban

Subtitle of Chapter

Section1 Title

Subtitle of Section 1

Text

Chapter 20. Rural

Subtitle of Chapter

Section1 Title

Subtitle of Section 1

Text

Chapter 21. Class Based

Subtitle of Chapter

Section1 Title

Subtitle of Section 1

Text

Chapter 22. Social

Subtitle of Chapter

Section 1 Title

Subtitle of Section 1

What classes exist?,
How is the hierarchy of classes organized?
Upon what is the stratification of the classes based?
What are the roles of the men, women, children?
What is the family structure?
What social problems exist?
Who cares for and provides education to the children?
Is there prejudice, persecution, etc.?
If so, what groups are involved?
How are the children socialized?
Who provides care for the infirmed?
Who cares for the elderly?
Are there non-human/foreign residents of the culture?
Do foreigners tend to take up different trades from humans?
Are they legally limited to certain trades?
Who is considered a citizen, with the rights and privileges thereof?
What are those rights and privileges (voting, protection from thieves, the right to a hearing in Rome) and what responsibilities go along with them (jury duty, providing funds or knights for the lord's army)?
Are there certain classes of people (wizards, foreigners, children, peasants, women) who have fewer legal rights or less recourse than full citizens?
Why?
Are they considered mentally or morally deficient, a danger to the state, or is there some other rationale?
Is there a group of people who do not have full rights in this culture?
Why not?
Are they considered mentally or morally deficient, a danger to the state, or is there some other rationale?
What are the various ranks and titles and proper forms of address for the aristocracy/nobility?
Is everybody "my lord" and "my lady," or are there more distinctions (your grace, your highness, your majesty, your holiness)?
What occupations are respected?
Looked down on?
Why?
How many levels are there in this society: peasant, bourgeoisie, warrior, noble?
How difficult is it to rise or fall from one social level to another?
How firm are the divisions between social classes — is it disgraceful for a noble to engage in trade or for a warrior to help with the harvest?
How difficult is it to rise or fall from one social level to another?
How much social mobility is there?
How much do people think there is?

Rites of Passage

What are the rites of passage in this culture?
Are they formalized rituals, such as being dubbed a knight, or are they informal?
Are they different for men and women?

For nobility and peasants?

Chapter 23. Political

Subtitle of Chapter

What are the major political factions at present?

How long have they been around?

Which factions are allies, which enemies?

Are there any potential new forces on the political scene (e.g., a rising middle class, a university gaining unexpected power because of certain magical discoveries, etc.)

Are magicians a force in politics, or are they above it?

Are there national politics that revolve around magic/wizards (i.e., trying to outlaw, protect, or promote certain kinds of magic, trying to draft wizards into a ruler's army, licensing of magicians, etc.)?

Do wizards have a lobby?

Do they need one?

Is magic a profession, an art, or just a job?

What is the status accorded to magicians in this society?

Are they forbidden overt political action, or are wizards and the wizard's guild knee-deep in court intrigue?

Are magicians a force in politics, or are they above it?

Are there national politics that revolve around magic/wizards (i.e., trying to outlaw, protect, or promote certain kinds of magic, trying to draft wizards into a ruler's army, licensing of magicians, etc.)?

Do wizards have a lobby?

Do they need one?

Is there tension, rivalry, or outright hostility between any of the actual gods?

How does this affect church politics?

People's everyday lives?

Does the level of technological advancement match the level of social and political advancement?

What kinds of people are likely to face prejudice: dwarves, werewolves, merchants, women, undertakers?

Is this institutionalized (i.e., a matter of law) or is it mostly a matter of public attitude?

Is the ruler powerful enough to defy this prejudice and appoint a dwarf as Chief Councilor or Secretary of Defense and make it work?

Who will take over running the government if the current head of state is incapacitated?

How is this determined?

Is there an heir apparent (either actual or political)?

What happens if the heir is a minor?

Are there people who have great influence on government/politics, but who do not hold any official position?

Who are they?

Why do they have influence?

Is this considered a normal thing, or a bad thing?

Section1 Title

Subtitle of Section 1

Text

Chapter 24. Economic

Subtitle of Chapter

Economics

Sweeping adventure means nothing if you cant buy a bite to eat.

How important is trade to the economy?

How is currency exchange handled, and by whom?

What is the system of coinage, and who mints it?

Resources

Transportation

Scarcity

Production

Distribution

Type of economy

decision-making

technology

division of labor

needs

Trading partners

What does this country import?

Export?

Which peoples/countries/races fought, allied, traded, or were traditional rivals?

Where are there still hard feelings about old events?

Is there a “trade language” that facilitates commerce between countries that don’t speak the same tongue?

Is there a “universal language” spoken by educated or noble persons, as Latin was in the Middle Ages?

What does this country import?

Export?

How important is trade to the economy?

How is currency exchange handled, and by whom?

How much do official attitudes toward other countries affect commerce and trade?

Do merchants pretty much ignore tensions between government as long as they can make a profit, or will this get them into trouble?

Are there Customs inspectors or their equivalents at border crossings?

Is the export/import of some technologies/magics/commodities regulated by the government, or by non-governmental cartels?

How does this affect political relationships between countries?

How is business organized?

Are there trade unions?

Guild structures?

Multi-state corporations?

International cartels?

Are people able to cross-craft, I.e., learn or perform different trades?

Does cross-crafting require guild permission, a writ from an overlord, or is it automatically guaranteed by law?

How strict are craft restrictions — are carpenters the only people allowed to build houses?

What types of trades would be represented in a small town?

A middle-sized town?

A large city?

Is currency and coinage standardized, or is there a system of exchange?

What are typical denominations?

What types of currency is a traveler or merchant likely to carry on a trip?

What are different coins called, and what are they worth?

Are industrial processes (e.g., swordmaking, weaving, etc.) considered “trade secrets,” or are they common knowledge?

What is the process a young person goes through to enter a craft or trade?

An apprenticeship?

Four years of college?

Are the craft requirements for various skill ranks (such as apprentice, journeyman, master, or med student, intern, doctor, specialist) standardized, or does rank depend more on the good favor of a master craftsman than it does on skill?

Do different regions/cities specialize in specific crafts, processes, or products (examples: Damascus steel, Bordeaux wines, Chinese silk, Wisconsin cheese)?

Do different races specialize?

What regulations, if any, has the government/ruler placed on business practices?

Are there antimonopoly laws?

Anti-pollution?

Are there standardized systems of weights and measures, or does a merchant have to specify “a London bushel” of grain rather than “a York bushel”?

How do differing systems affect shipping and trade?

Are any new industries developing?

Which old ones do they compete with or make obsolete?

How are records kept — tally sticks, parchment, clay tablets, beads?

Is there a merchant class?

Where do they fit in society?

Are there trading guilds?

If so, how are they organized?

How much power do they have to control trade?

How much infighting is there among them?

Are there trading organizations that transcend countries (like the Hanseatic League)?

How large a presence do they have locally?

Is this a money-based economy, or mostly barter?

What goods are commonly available in small town markets?

In large towns?

In cities?

How do goods get to market?

What industries — mining, fishing, shipbuilding, lumber, farming, manufacturing, etc. — are important, and in which areas?

Which depend on materials from other areas (as shipbuilding on wood, or weaving on wool)?

What happens if supplies are disrupted?

Who is responsible for coinage: the ruler, local barons, someone else (merchant guilds)?

Are there generally acceptable standards?

How easy/common is counterfeiting?

How much smuggling is there?

Of what, from or to where?

Chapter 25. Technology

Subtitle of Chapter

Technology

Is the level of technology in this society comparable to that of ancient Rome, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the Industrial Revolution, what?

What important inventions or advances have been made (the wheel, gunpowder, printing, flush toilets)? Have any of them reached the point of affecting the daily life of the average person, or are flush toilets a luxury for the nobility only?

What inventions or advances have not been made that you would normally expect to see at this stage of technological development?

Which ones are about to be made?

How much is known about the laws of nature, physics, and magic?

How much of what is commonly known is wrong (e.g., Aristotle's ideas about human anatomy, which were wrong but accepted for centuries)?

Are the laws of nature and physics actually different in this world, or are they the same as in real life?

How does magic fit in?

How do magical beasts fit in?

Where is scientific and/or magical research done — universities, private labs, under the auspices of the ruler/government, etc.?

In what areas might magic replace technology, and thus suppress its development (example: if a spell to keep food cold is easy and cheap, there's no need to invent refrigerators)?

In what areas might magic cause more rapid technological or scientific development (example: common use of crystal balls might lead someone to think of inventing the lens or the telescope sooner)?

General

Medical

What do people do for pain?

What are do they do about disease?

How do people heal?

Are there hospitals, healers, infirmary's, or medics?

What level is medicine at?

Who are the healers?

Do you have to have a talent to heal, or just training?

Who trains healers, herbalists, apothecaries, surgeons, magical vs. nonmagical healers, etc.?

What customs surround death and burial?

Is there a special class of people (doctors, priests, funeral directors, untouchables) who deal with dead bodies?

What things must be done and why (burn hair to free spirit, burn body to prevent necromancy, coins on eyes for ferryman, etc.)?

Are the dead feared, revered, or ignored?

How accurate is the diagnostic process?

Do healers have ways of telling two diseases with similar symptoms apart?

Do they depend on standard physical medical tests — reflexes, temperature, contracted pupils — or do they normally use spells for diagnosis?

How expensive is a healer?
How available are such services to ordinary people?
How much is known about anatomy, physiology, pathology, etc.?
Are treatments based on purely practical experience (“We know this works but we don’t know why”), or do healers understand at least some of what they are doing?
How much training does a healer normally get?
Where?
From whom?
Is healing generally a magical process?
If so, how does the magical healing talent work?
Does a magical healer have to consciously direct the healing process (meaning that lots of knowledge of anatomy, etc., would be required), or does magical healing simply speed up the normal, unconscious healing process in the patient?
Is there more than one kind of magical healer (as there are surgeons, eye doctors, etc.)?
Are there both magical and non-magical healers, and if so, are they rivals or simply different specialties?
Is there a reliable method of birth control?
Who normally handles births — midwives or doctors?
What is the mortality rate for pregnant ladies, new mothers, and children?
What level is medicine at?
Who are the healers?
Do you have to have a talent to heal, or just training?
Who trains healers, herbalists, apothecaries, surgeons, magical vs. nonmagical healers, etc.?
How much need is there for healers — how much sickness, plague, injury, etc. is there in this society?
Are there enough healers to meet this need?
What kinds of treatments are available — herbal brews, vaccinations, acupuncture, spells, etc.?
How effective are they?
Is it possible to resurrect/resuscitate someone who has died?
If so, how long does it take before this becomes impossible?
Before serious brain damage sets in?
How is insanity treated?
Are there asylums or treatment centers, or is it handled case-by-case?
How effective are treatments for insanity?
How much do the physical differences between humans and non-humans affect their medical treatment?
Are there diseases that only affect non-humans, or only humans?
Are there diseases that affect everybody, but with different degrees of severity — a mild cold in a human is galloping pneumonia in a dwarf?
Are some treatments lethal to one species but effective for others?
Do doctors or healers have to specialize to do a good job of treating non-human patients?

Weapon

Weaponry

How do the weapons of this country compare with those of surrounding cities and countries?
Have there been recent innovations that may upset the balance of power, or is everyone more or less equal?
Are magical weapons available?
Can magic be used in warfare?
In what ways?
Are spells fast enough to be useful in hand-to-hand combat, or is magic more of a siege weapon, used only for long, slow things?
How has the presence of magic affected weapons technology?
Can magic make weapons more effective?

Do you have to do anything special to walls, armor, or weapons to make them better able to resist enemy spells?

How much has the presence of magic affected strategy and tactics in general?

Is magic used primarily for intelligence gathering (spells of invisibility, scrying, etc.), or are there spells that are of use on the battlefield (summoning a demon to attack the enemy, casting fire storms at them, etc.)?

If battlefield magic is possible, how can it be defended against?

How has the presence of magic affected weapons technology?

Can an ordinary, non-weapon-type object be enchanted to make it extremely lethal (the Frying Pan of Death) or will this work properly only on things that are already weapons?

Can ordinary objects be enchanted to make them (or their user) supremely good at something (the Frying Pan of Ultimate Gourmet Cooking, the Comb of No Bad Hair Days Ever)?

How common and useful are such enchantments?

What personal weapons are available to anyone who can afford them?

Are some considered “for nobles only” either by custom or by law?

Are there laws forbidding certain classes from being armed at all?

What is the level of weapons technology?

Are there guns, and if so, how sophisticated (flintlock, matchlock, rifle, Uzi)?

What major weapons of war are available (e.g., siege towers, catapults, cannon, A-bombs)?

What weapons and armor are standard for armies?

Mercenaries?

Nobility?

Your average peasant trying to defend his/her home?

Are weapons, such as swords or pistols, a standard part of dress for any/all segments of society?

What are the accepted conventions of making war (e.g., only fight in winter when nobody is busy with crops; don’t make war on civilians; only certain kinds of weapons are available, etc.)?

Chapter 26. Transportation and communication

Transportation and Communication

What are the common domesticated animals used for transportation at various levels of society — e.g., oxen, horses, donkeys, camels, etc.?

Are there magical means of transportation (teleport spells, magic carpets, dragon-riding)?

How do they compare in speed, safety and expense to non-magical means?

Are there any drawbacks to magical travel (for example, teleport sickness)?

How commonly are they used, and for what purposes (industrial shipping vs. travel for fun)?

For traveling short distances within a city, what are the alternatives?

Can people hire a cab, a litter, a rickshaw, or do they have to walk or rely on their own servants or horses?

How are messages sent when necessary?

Is there a public/private postal system, or does everyone of importance have to send messengers?

How fast can news get from A to B?

How available is water transportation?

How reliable?

How dangerous?

How expensive?

How common is travel (for any reason)?

Does the concept of travel “to see the world” or for fun, even exist?

How dangerous is travel?

How large a group is considered safe?

How much traffic is there inside and outside the main cities?

Which areas are best/worst?

What is the fastest means of traveling long distances over land?

Over water?

Which methods are safest?

What is transportation like?

Are there good roads?

Who built them?

Who is responsible for maintaining them?

Where would a traveler stay at night?

Are there enough travelers to support inns, or do people have to stay at some equivalent of medieval monasteries?

Are some classes of people (slaves, peasants) not expected to travel at all?

Are some (heralds, messengers) expected to travel constantly?

How do people find out what is happening in the world — rumor, town crier, newspapers, TV and radio?

How slanted is the news they get this way, and in what direction?

Is there freedom of the press?

If not, who controls/censors it and by what means?

How are books produced?

Are they common (has the printing press been invented) or are they rare, valuable, expensive, hand-written objects?

If the latter, who has the time and skill to produce them?

Where are the great libraries or collections of books/scrolls/manuscripts?

How accessible are they to scholars, wizards, the general public?

Who supports them?

Chapter 27. Magic

Subtitle of Chapter

Magick

General

These need to be generally answered but they are also culture specific...

What things can magic not do?

What are the limits to magical power?

How do magicians try to get around these limits?

What is the price magicians must pay in order to be magicians — years of study, permanent celibacy, using up bits of their life or memory with each spell, ...

Does anyone ever try to get around the price of magic?

Is there a difference between miracles and magic?

If so, how are they distinguished?

Where does magic power come from: the gods, the “mana” of the world, the personal willpower of the magician?

Is magic an exhaustible resource?

If a magician must feed his spells with his own willpower, life-force, or sanity, what long-term effects will this have on the health and/or stability of the magician?

Do different races/species have different sources for their magic, or does everybody use the same one?

How does a magician tap his/her magic power?

Does becoming a magician require some rite of passage (investing one’s power in an object, being chosen by the gods, constructing or being given a permanent link to the source of power) or does it just happen naturally, as a gradual result of much study or as a part of growing up?

What do you need to do to cast a spell — design an elaborate ritual, recite poetry, mix the right ingredients in a pot?

Are there things like a staff, a wand, a familiar, a crystal ball, that are necessary to have before casting spells?

If so, where and how do new wizards get these things?

Do they make them, buy them from craftsmen, inherit them from their teachers, or order them from Wizardry Supplies, Inc.?

Is there a numerical limit to the number of wizards in the world?

What is it?

Why?

How long does it take to cast a spell?

Can spells be stored for later, instant use?

Does working spells take lots of long ritual, or is magic a “point and shoot” affair?

Can two or more wizards combine their power to cast a stronger spell, or is magic done only by individuals?

What makes one wizard more powerful than another — knowledge of more spells, ability to handle greater levels of power, having a more powerful god as patron, etc.?

Does practicing magic have any detrimental effect on the magician (such as becoming addictive, fomenting insanity, or shortening life-span)?

If so, is there any way to prevent these effects?

Are the effects inevitable to all magicians, or do they affect only those with some sort of predisposition?

Do they progress at the same rate in everyone?

Are they universal in all species, or are some races (dwarves, elves, whoever) immune to these detrimental effects?

How much is known about the laws of nature, physics, and magic?
How much of what is commonly known is wrong (e.g., Aristotle's ideas about human anatomy, which were wrong but accepted for centuries)?
What general varieties of magic are practiced (e.g., herbal potions, ritual magic, alchemical magic, demonology, necromancy, etc.)?
Do any work better than others, or does only one variety actually work?
Are certain kinds of magic practiced solely or chiefly by one sex or the other?
By one race or another?
Is this because of inborn ability, natural preferences, or legislation?
Does a magician's magical ability or power change over time — e.g., growing stronger or weaker during puberty, or with increasing age?
Can a magician "use up" all of his/her magic, thus ceasing to be a magician?
If this happens, what does the ex-magician do — die, retire, take up teaching, go into a second career, start a freelance consulting business?
Can the ability to do magic be lost?
If so, how — overdoing it, "burning out," brain damage due to fever or a blow, etc.?
Can the ability to work magic be taken away?
If so, how and by whom?
How do various religions, if any, view magic?
Do any forbid it?
Why or why not?
Do any require priests/priestesses to be magicians?
Do any forbid magicians from holding some or all religious offices?
How long does it take to learn magic?
Is magic a profession, an art, or just a job?
What is the status accorded to magicians in this society?
Are they the equivalent of shyster lawyers, politicians, and used car salesmen, or are they considered average working stiffs, or are they looked up to and admired?
Are wizards organized?
How?
What hierarchy, if any, do they recognize?
What happens if the person/people at the top get killed?
Who takes over?
How soon?
Can anyone become a wizard, or does one need to be born with some special talent or gift?
Are different races/intelligent species good at different types of magic?
If so, what types are associated with what races/species?
Are there species that use magic more or less unconsciously?
Can you make a living practicing magic, or do you have to have independent means?
If you can make a living, what are you doing — making magic swords, or making it rain for local farmers?
What's a wizard's job market like?
What's a wizard's average income, relative to the rest of society?
Are magicians a force in politics, or are they above it?
Are there national politics that revolve around magic/wizards (i.e., trying to outlaw, protect, or promote certain kinds of magic licensing of magicians,
Do wizards have a lobby?
Do they need one?
Does it require a license to be a wizard?
Who certifies wizards: government, wizard's guild/AMA, local priests?
How do local people view wizards?
Are they good guys, bad guys, Clint Eastwood (call in only to get rid of dragons), regular working stiffs, ivory-tower academics, nuisances who make it rain when you're plowing, dangerous folks to stay away from?
How do you get to be a wizard/magician?

Does it require inborn talent, study and hard work, practice, or all of the above?
Are wizards barred from certain kinds of government jobs or offices?
Do some government jobs require that their holder be a wizard?
If magic requires study, where do you go to learn about it?
How do people fund their training?
Is there an apprenticeship system, or are there wizard schools, or is it one-on-one tutoring/mentoring?
Is an untrained wizard dangerous, or just an ordinary person?
Do wizards have a special language that is used for magic?
If so, where do they learn it?
Is it safe to chat in this language, or is everything said in it automatically a spell?
If so, how can it safely be taught to new students?
Is magic considered a science, or are scientists and wizards enemies or rivals?
Are magic and science compatible?
To what degree does the presence of magic, magical objects, and wizards replace technology ?
Duplicate technology?
Supplement technology?
Can two or more wizards combine their power to cast a stronger spell, or is magic done only by individuals?
What makes a powerful magician?
What do you need to do to cast a spell — design an elaborate ritual, recite poetry, mix the right ingredients in a pot?
Are there things like a staff, a wand, a familiar, a crystal ball, that are necessary to have before casting spells?
If so, where and how do new wizards get these things?
Do they make them, buy them from craftsmen, inherit them from their teachers, or order them from Wizardry Supplies, Inc.?
Where does magic power come from: the gods, the “mana” of the world, the personal willpower of the magician?
Is magic an exhaustible resource?
Are there fashions/fads in magic — are herbal spells “in” this year and ritual spells “out,” or vice versa?
Are certain spells (as opposed to magic generally) illegal?
Why — because of the effect of the spell, or because of the ingredients or procedures needed to cast it, or what?
If so, how would a criminal magician be detected?
Apprehended?
Punished?
Is catching and punishing illegal magicians the responsibility of the magician’s guild, or do the ordinary courts have to handle it?
Are there magical means of transportation (teleport spells, magic carpets, dragon-riding)?
How do they compare in speed, safety and expense to non-magical means?
Are there any drawbacks to magical travel (for example, teleport sickness)?
How commonly are they used, and for what purposes (industrial shipping vs. travel for fun)?
Are there magical means of rapid communication?
How commonly are they used?
For what purposes?
Are magical weapons available?
Can magic be used in warfare?
In what ways?
Are spells fast enough to be useful in hand-to-hand combat, or is magic more of a siege weapon, used only for long, slow things?
How has the presence of magic affected weapons technology?
Can magic make weapons more effective?
Do you have to do anything special to walls, armor, or weapons to make them better able to resist enemy spells?
How has the presence of magic affected weapons technology?

Can an ordinary, non-weapon-type object be enchanted to make it extremely lethal or will this work properly only on things that are already weapons?

Can ordinary objects be enchanted to make them (or their user) supremely good at something (the Frying Pan of Ultimate Gourmet Cooking)?

How common and useful are such enchantments?

Can spells and/or magical items be mass-produced?

Are there magic carpet factories and boutiques selling magic rings?

Can spells and/or magical items be used to increase the efficiency of manufacturing or mass production?

Do businesses keep a wizard on retainer, as modern businesses might keep a lawyer or efficiency expert?

What, exactly, are they paying for?

Are there magical artifacts (rings, swords, etc.)?

If so, who makes them and how?

Are the spells permanent, or do they wear off after a while?

Where is scientific and/or magical research done — universities, private labs, under the auspices of the ruler/government, etc.?

Given the magical/technological level of this society, what is an appropriate ration of farmers or food producers to urban residents?

If farm production is based on magic, how many urban residents are going to starve if the spells supporting farming (weather, land fertility, etc.) fail suddenly?

Are the laws of nature and physics actually different in this world (to accommodate magic), or are they the same as in real life?

How does magic fit in?

How do magical beasts fit in?

In what ways can magic or spells be abused?

How often does this happen?

Is magic legal?

All magic, or only some types?

Do laws vary widely from country to country, or is the attitude generally similar?

Is magic legal here?

All magic, or only some types?

Do laws vary widely from country to country, or is the attitude generally similar?

Is the relative power of a country or ruler usually measured by the size of the army, the number and ability of his wizards, or the amount of money at his disposal?

We have classic sorcery, wizardry, psionic, as well as divine power.

The big question is how rare is divine intervention

what effect do spell books have do they exist?

Hedge wizards or witches and wise women

Make a list of the magic items and actions that are impossible.

What cannot be done in this world?

What are the actions that are now possible that cannot be done in the real world.

Is forensic magic possible?

Commonly used?

Used only for certain types of crimes (and if so, what)?

Are the results of forensic spells admissible in court as evidence?

Is it something any wizard can do, or do you have to specialize?

Can magic be used in the arts, and if so, how — paint that glows, pictures that move, flutes that play themselves, etc.?

How do “normal” artists feel about this?

Is there a separate branch of purely magical art, such as illusion?

Where is scientific and/or magical research done — universities, private labs, under the auspices of the ruler/government, etc.?

Does it require a license to be a wizard?

If so, is it more like a driver’s license (something nearly everyone in our culture gets upon coming of age) or like a doctor’s license (something only a small percentage of the population will ever get)?

Who certifies wizards: government, wizard's guild/AMA, local priests?
Are mages and wizards respected feared or loved?
Magic items. How common are they?
Are they all belong to the forerunner and the
Tor?
Who made them and when?
What about magic foci?
Who uses them?

Medical

Is healing generally a magical process?
If so, how does the magical healing talent work?
Does a magical healer have to consciously direct the healing process (meaning that lots of knowledge of anatomy, etc., would be required), or does magical healing simply speed up the normal, unconscious healing process in the patient?
Is there more than one kind of magical healer (as there are surgeons, eye doctors, etc.)?
Are there both magical and non-magical healers, and if so, are they rivals or simply different specialties?

Battle

How much has the presence of magic affected strategy and tactics in general?
Is magic used primarily for intelligence gathering (spells of invisibility, scrying, etc.), or are there spells that are of use on the battlefield (summoning a demon to attack the enemy, casting fire storms at them, etc.)?
If battlefield magic is possible, how can it be defended against?

Chapter 28. Legal

Subtitle of Chapter

Legal System

How has the presence of magic and magicians affected law and government?
Are wizards barred from certain kinds of government jobs or offices (judge, jury, police)?
Do some government jobs require that their holder be a wizard?
What are considered normal and legal ways of gathering evidence and determining guilt?
Is torture allowed?
Are arbitrary judgments by the lord or landowner allowed, or is there an independent standard of justice?
What personal weapons are available to anyone who can afford them?
Are some considered “for nobles only” either by custom or by law?
Are there laws forbidding certain classes from being armed at all?
Are there laws requiring certain classes to learn particular weapon skills, as England for some centuries required yeomen to be proficient with the longbow?
Is forensic magic possible?
Commonly used?
Used only for certain types of crimes (and if so, what)?
Are the results of forensic spells admissible in court as evidence?
Is it something any wizard can do, or do you have to specialize?
Are certain spells (as opposed to magic generally) illegal?
Why — because of the effect of the spell, or because of the ingredients or procedures needed to cast it, or what?
If so, how would a criminal magician be detected? Apprehended? Punished?
Is catching and punishing illegal magicians the responsibility of the magician’s guild, or do the ordinary courts have to handle it?
Are there separate civil and criminal courts?
Human and non-human courts?
Is there a separate court or procedure for magical crimes?
What is different about each type of court?
Are judges or other court officials required/forbidden to know magic?
Is evidence obtained by magic acceptable in court?
Is evidence obtained by magic considered more reliable or less reliable than physical evidence or eyewitness accounts?
What things are considered truly serious crimes and why?
What are the normal punishments for serious vs. minor crimes?
Are there prisons, or are people punished and released?
Are there degrees of punishment — branding vs. cutting off ears vs. cutting off a hand vs. decapitation — or do they just hang everybody?
Who is responsible for catching criminals?
Who pays the crook-catchers — the ruler, the city government, a consortium of merchants, somebody else?
How are they organized — into independent police precincts, or into overlapping districts, or just according to whoever wants to hire them?
Are they full-time, part-time, or volunteers?
Private or public?
What sort of facilities do they have?
What arms are the allowed to carry?
Are there lawyers or advocates?
Who can afford them?
Who trains/certifies them?

Are people guilty until proven innocent, innocent until proven guilty, or does it depend on the mood the lord is in when they bring the case before him?

Are there judges other than the ruler, lord, or landowner?

If so, how are they chosen, how are they paid, and who pays them?

Are appeals possible, and if so, to whom?

How often are outlying areas likely to see a judge?

Is “mob justice” common or uncommon?

Approved of or disapproved of?

Are there sumptuary laws regulating what different classes/races may wear?

Do judges and lawyers wear special clothes (robes, wigs) to indicate their calling?

Are wizards above or below the law i.e., do they have full rights as citizens, no rights, or can they do as they like without regard to anyone else’s rights

Are highwaymen, muggers, and pirates common or rare? What sorts of crimes is the average citizen likely to run across during his/her lifetime?

Who can make or repeal laws — a group (an elected Senate, an appointed Council, or an hereditary House of Lords), or only the ruler or head of state?

How much can the nobility, middle class tradesmen, etc. influence the laws that are made?

How are alleged criminals treated before and after their convictions?

Do the police/military/city guard make a practice of roughing up suspects, or is this frowned upon?

Are there separate civil and criminal courts?

Human and non-human courts?

Is there a separate court or procedure for magical crimes?

What is different about each type of court?

Are judges or other court officials required/forbidden to know magic?

Is evidence obtained by magic acceptable in court?

Is evidence obtained by magic considered more reliable or less reliable than physical evidence or eyewitness accounts?

What personal weapons are available to anyone who can afford them?

Are some considered “for nobles only” either by custom or by law?

Are there laws forbidding certain classes from being armed at all?

Judicial Structure

Making the Laws

Enforcing the Laws

Legal Code

Making the Laws

Enforcing the Laws

Ownership of Goods

Land

Male and Female Roles

Church and State

Death by Suicide

Death by Anothers Hand

Death in Self Defense

Chapter 29. Military

Subtitle of Chapter

Military

Which peoples/countries/races have been in conflict in the recent past?

Why?

When and why was the most recent war?

Who won?

Who is still mad about that?

What major weapons of war are available (e.g., siege towers, catapults, cannon, A-bombs)?

How much has the presence of magic affected strategy and tactics in general?

Do army commanders have unusual formations or techniques to deal with various magical attacks?

How can magic be used as part of a battle plan, given various levels of technology (example: getting a weather magician to make it rain so that enemy cannons will be harder to maneuver in the mud)?

Is magic used primarily for intelligence gathering (spells of invisibility, scrying, etc.), or are there spells that are of use on the battlefield (summoning a demon to attack the enemy, casting fire storms at them, etc.)?

If battlefield magic is possible, how can it be defended against?

How are armies usually structured?

Is there a formal, independent command structure, or is everybody officially under the command of whoever brought them to join the ruler's army, or what?

If there is a formal structure, what are the various ranks and titles used?

Is weapon usage restricted according to social class, such as only knights being allowed to use sword and armor, yeomen using bows and staffs, peasants using whatever scythes, hammers, etc. are available?

Are there restrictions, either legal, customary, or biological, on the types of weapons different races or magical beings can use (e.g., elves not being able to wield weapons made of cold iron)?

Are battlefield commissions or knighthoods possible during wartime, or must such promotions wait on formal ceremonies?

Do normal social restrictions apply during times of war, or is everyone equal on the battlefield?

Who can call up men for an army, and how?

Does the ruler ask the nobility for men, who in turn draft their peasants, or can the ruler go straight to the bottom?

Are there professional soldiers/mercenaries?

Is a career in the army possible, or would you have to become a mercenary or sell-sword in order to make a living as a soldier?

Does the army accept volunteers, or only draftees?

Can you rise to officer level by displaying courage and merit on the battlefield, or are officer positions reserved for a particular type of person only — people who bought commissions, people who graduated from military school, sons of famous warriors, etc.?

How large is a typical army?

What percentage of the soldiers in it will be trained (knights, professional soldiers, guards, mercenaries) and what percentage will be untrained recruits?

Are recruits given training, or are they expected to learn on the job (i.e., in battle)?

How is the army supplied?

Are soldiers allowed to live off the peasantry, or do they pay for what they take?

What happens if the supply caravan gets lost or captured?

How are supplies handled during long campaigns?

How many days' worth of supplies can the army haul along with them?

(Ref. Alexander the Great and the Logistics of the Macedonian Army for the math on how much a horse can carry, how much it needs to eat, etc.)

What are the accepted conventions of making war (e.g., only fight in winter when nobody is busy with crops; don't make war on civilians; only certain kinds of weapons are available, etc.)?

Do they differ from race to race?

How does the presence of non-humans (dwarves, vampires, etc.) affect strategy, tactics, and battles generally?

Are special weapons required if an army is facing certain kinds of non-human armies?

How could non-human soldiers turn their physical differences from humans to their advantage?

Are particular non-human races traditionally better with certain weapons (e.g., dwarves with axes, elves with bows)?

Why — because they have greater strength, better eyesight, more manual dexterity, etc.?

Do relations between countries depend mainly on the relations between the heads of state, or can two rulers hate each other's guts without being able to just declare war and drag their countries into it?

If there's a long-term war in progress, how has the home front been affected?

Are people being drafted much younger/older than they used to be?

Have people been forced to step into nontraditional roles — peasants managing a business, women shoeing horses, children making bullets, etc.?

How have these changes affected society?

How will they affect relationships between races/clans/saxes/social classes when the war is over?

Is the army integrated (i.e., men, women, elves, dwarves, purple people, and green ones, all serving together)?

How does this affect battle formations?

Strategies?

Are certain races or groups isolated in particular units?

If so, are those units considered elite troops or the most expendable soldiers on the battlefield?

How do these attitudes affect strategy?

Has science or magic been advanced in general by specific developments in the fields of weaponry, tactics, or strategy?

Are there natural or imposed limitations prohibiting the development or use of certain types of weapons (e.g., only muscle-powered weapons because the "laws of physics" in this world don't allow the combustion of gunpowder)?

To what degree has technology changed the face of war?

Are there internal combustion engines useable for large troop movements, or steam powered ships?

Standing

Command

Routine

Arms

Outfitting

Theory

Chapter 30. Family

Subtitle of Chapter

Section1 Title

Subtitle of Section 1

Who raises the children?

At what age do they begin to be educated or trained?

By whom?

Are they considered mini-adults?

Do they dress differently from adults?

If so, when do they change to adult dress?

Chapter 31. Architecture

Subtitle of Chapter

Architecture

What is the most common building material?

Why is it used (availability, cheapness, legal requirement)?

Does it have any major drawbacks (e.g., the Great Fire of London)?

How tall a building can be constructed at a reasonable cost and in a reasonable time?

What are typical floor plans like — can people afford to waste space on hallways, or do they just have a series of rooms opening into other rooms?

Are buildings normally built square, triangular, domed, what?

How many people usually live in a typical house?

How large is a typical house?

What are the differences in materials and appearance between a lower-class, middle-class, and upper-class type house?

How do people decorate buildings (e.g., carvings vs. paint vs. patterns resulting from the use of different building materials)?

Are there differences in ornamentation depending on the purpose of the building (e.g., gargoyles and carvings of saints used mainly on cathedrals)?

Has technology or magic progressed to the point of making window-glass?

If so, how expensive is it?

If not, what do people use to cover windows necessary for ventilation and light?

How are living quarters arranged?

Are bedrooms on the top floors for privacy or on the ground floor for convenience?

Are parlors or libraries common?

How are houses heated/cooled?

Are wars and insurrections common enough that castles and cities are built with an eye to military defense first and appearance later, or are palaces and wall-less towns the rule?

Chapter 32. Diet

Subtitle of Chapter

Diet

What dishes are considered holiday food?

What foods/drinks are associated with particular holidays, events (e.g., funerals, weddings) or times of the year?

What distinguishes a formal, high-court dinner from an ordinary meal, besides quantity and variety of food?

How do high-court manners differ from everyday ones?

When a guest arrives, is food or drink offered immediately, after an interval, or only on request?

Is there a particular food or drink that is customary to offer a newly arrived guest?

A guest who is just departing (stirrup cup)?

Is sanitation good enough for untreated water to be safe to drink?

If not, what do people drink instead?

What things, while edible, are never eaten (what's not kosher)?

Why?

Are some common human foods poisonous to dwarves or elves (or vice versa)?

Given the magical/technological level of this society, what is an appropriate ration of farmers or food producers to urban residents?

If farm production is based on magic, how many urban residents are going to starve if the spells supporting farming (weather, land fertility, etc.) fail suddenly?

How many meals are considered normal in a day?

When are they served?

Which are substantial and which are smaller?

Are certain foods (e.g., eggs and bacon) reserved mainly for a particular meal?

What dishes or seasonings would be considered typical of this area?

What wines or beers?

What foods are considered peasant food?

What foods are staples, commonly eaten every day?

What foods are rare?

What foods are normally eaten cooked/raw?

What is the food like?

What herbs and spices are readily available, and what must be imported?

How common/expensive are imported foods and spices?

What spices and herbs are produced locally, and which are rare and expensive?

Which are most commonly used?

Do people tend to like highly spiced food or not?

How is food preserved for use during the off-season — smoking, canning, salting, drying, etc.?

How reliable are the methods used — how often does “preserved” food spoil?

When food is in limited supply, who gets first crack?

The laborers and farmers who have to work to produce more, or the children who are the next generation, or the wise and revered elders, or the nobility?

What foods and seasonings do non-humans like, and how do these differ from those favored by humans?

Are some foods poisonous or distasteful to one species that are delicacies or necessary to another?

Are there times when people are expected to fast (e.g., before solstice, after the birth of a child, during Lent or Ramadan, after the death of a ruler, etc.)?

Given the state of roads and transportation, how much food is it possible to ship to a given location before it spoils?

(This limits the size of cities.)

Part V. Interactions

Subtitle of First Part

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Chapter 33. General

Established religion

Interactions with Other Cultures

Interdependence between groups of people brings change.

Conflict between people brings change.

Communication may bring change.

Is population shifting from rural to urban, south to north, mountains to coast, etc.?

Why — invasion, plague, gold rush, etc.?

What effects has this had on the places being left?

The places gaining people?

Chapter 34. Foreign Relations

Subtitle of Chapter

Foreign Relations

Does this country have formal relationships with other countries?

If so, who can be an ambassador?

Are there standing embassies and consulates, or are special envoys sent only when something comes up?

How are treaties arranged?

Are there any significant ones currently in force or coming up for signing?

How much do official attitudes toward other countries affect commerce and trade?

Do merchants pretty much ignore tensions between government as long as they can make a profit, or will this get them into trouble?

Are there Customs inspectors or their equivalents at border crossings?

Is the export/import of some technologies/magics/commodities regulated by the government, or by non-governmental cartels?

How does this affect political relationships between countries?

How much formal spying and intelligence gathering is normally done by governments?

The military?

Merchant guilds and wealthy tradesmen?

Are there actual organizations, or is spying done by diplomats and/or freelance agents?

How effective is it currently?

Which countries/races are traditional allies?

Which are traditional rivals?

How do these traditions affect present-day relations between countries and races?

Which heads of state are related by blood or marriage, and how important is this in determining foreign policy?

Chapter 35. Racial

Subtitle of Chapter

Section1 Title

Subtitle of Section 1

Text

Chapter 36. Classed Based

Subtitle of Chapter

Section1 Title

Subtitle of Section 1

Text

Chapter 37. Social

Subtitle of Chapter

Section1 Title

Subtitle of Section 1

Text

Chapter 38. Political

Subtitle of Chapter

Section1 Title

Subtitle of Section 1

Text

Chapter 39. Economic

Subtitle of Chapter

Section1 Title

Subtitle of Section 1

Text

Chapter 40. Military

Subtitle of Chapter

Section1 Title

Subtitle of Section 1

Text

Part VI. Daily life

Subtitle of First Part

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Chapter 41. Daily life

Subtitle of Chapter

Daily Life

How do ordinary people feel about foreigners?

Non-humans?

How ready are they to accept different ideas?

How cosmopolitan are they?

How much social mobility is there?

Is it easy or hard for a person born a peasant to advance to the middle class, or a middle class person to the upper class or nobility?

How much resistance would there be?

Would such a person ever be accepted socially?

What items or foods or materials are luxuries — chocolate, coffee, silk, spices, flush toilets?

Why?

What do people generally look like?

Would a blonde (redhead, brunette) stand out in a crowd?

Someone 5' 10?

tall?

Do non-humans stand out in a crowd, or are there enough of them around that they're considered ordinary?

What are accepted norms of personal hygiene?

Do most people bathe regularly, or is bathing considered a health hazard?

How is garbage and other waste material disposed of?

What is furniture like — big and blocky, delicate, simple, elaborately carved, painted?

What is it mostly made of — cloth, wood, stone?

Are certain things (like chairs with arms) reserved for high-status individuals?

In what ways does furniture design reflect the customs and lifestyle of the people (example: beds with bed-curtains for privacy in medieval homes where servants wandered through rooms without warning; futons that can be rolled up and put away instead of beds in a country with little house-space)?

What are the plumbing and sanitary systems like?

Who builds and maintains them?

How reliable are they, and who do you call when the drains back up?

How do they differ from city to farm?

How do people cope with various disasters — fire, floods, tornadoes or hurricanes, blizzards, plague, etc.?

How common are such disasters?

How early do people get up in the morning in the city?

Country?

Are clocks common, or do people tell time by the sun or by listening for church bells?