

SEE AFRICA AND DIE!

OR,

MR. STANLEY, MEET DR. LIVINGSTONE

A Review, Complete With Some Suggested Rules Alterations and Additions, of SOURCE OF THE NILE

By Gary Gygax

Ross W. Maker and David A. Wesely have created an excellent game. *SOURCE OF THE NILE* is a semi-role playing game dealing with the exploration of the Dark Continent in the first part of the Nineteenth Century. It is very important to say from the outset that the game is a campaign type. A L-O-N-G time is required to explore all of Africa below the region of the Sahara (the part depicted on the mapboard), and it is highly doubtful — even with the most outrageous of luck that many of the earliest explorers will still be alive when the task has been accomplished. If you are not willing to devote extended periods of time to the play of a single game, then you have read far enough: forget this game.

The rewards of playing *SOURCE OF THE NILE* are many, for it is both challenging and fun. It can be played solo, or as many as six players can have a go at exploring the interior. At the beginning of the campaign, each participant must decide if his or her explorer is to be just that or a combination explorer -evangelist, -geologist, -medical doctor, and or zoologist. There are advantages and disadvantages to each role, and the player must weigh them carefully against his or her game strategy when selecting the explorer's calling. Once that is taken care of, each player collects donations in money and free tickets to African port cities. As soon as a player is satisfied that he or she has sufficient funds, the departure for Africa may be made, there to buy food, weapons, trinkets and trade goods, and canoes or camels or horses. Likewise, bearers, Askaris, and guides can be hired on for the proposed expedition. Then, after a brief trek through the territory shown on the map (board), the explorer plunges into the Heart of Darkest Africa — possibly never to be seen or heard of again.

Each turn after leaving the port city, each explorer must determine if some natural disaster has overtaken his or her expedition, and some of the disasters are absolutely horrendous! Surviving that, he or she must then determine if the party is lost, what sort of terrain they discover, if any tribe lives there (the natives are often very hostile and in sufficient force to totally wipe out a large expedition), and then hunt for game in order to extend the precious rations of food. Each explorer is anxious not only to cover as much terrain as possible (this brings extra donations when he or she manage to return to Europe and publish their discoveries (undoubtedly in newspapers, learned journals, and by lecture tours) but to have the honor of discovering the longest river system, the longest waterfall, the highest mountain, and the largest lake, for these bring extra points scored by explorers towards victory.

Because it is quite probable that the first group of dauntless adventurers will not survive to see the final *terra incognita* spaces on the map go from blank white to color, the score of discoveries made by each explorer, the notable features (mountains over 15,000 feet, waterfalls over 400 feet, etc.) should be recorded. Pioneering explorers will probably not do as well as later ones, for they must venture into hexes with hostile tribes, while successive explorers will have the advantage of being able to contact friendly tribes to hire bearers and Askaris and trade for other items, while avoiding the hostile tribes, which information they can determine from the published material of their earlier colleagues. Strategies will shift as players bring in explorers with different callings, and new directions are tried.

Discovery Games, the publisher of *SOURCE OF THE NILE*, is a new company, and like most other new firms they cannot afford fancy packaging. The box is adequate, and don't be thrown off by the plain cover. Inside there is plenty of excitement and many hours of entertainment, too! The mapboard is done on a plasticised substance, with only a narrow border of known terrain shown. The game comes with colored crayons so that terrain can be marked on as it is discovered — and subsequently erased when explorers die without publishing their discoveries or a new game is begun. In addition, the game contains several hundred counters in six different colors, donation/ disaster cards, and six charts for organization

of each player's party, so that the number of rations, gifts, bearers, etc. can be easily determined and adjusted.

Be certain to read and KNOW the rules before you attempt to play. The rules are not well organized, nor are they very complete. In fact, in many ways they remind me of those originally written for *D&D*®. *SOURCE OF THE NILE* is a very fine game in its infancy. It needs further development, more illustrations and graphics, and better packaging. It is my sincere hope that the publisher will do well enough with it to eventually give it the treatment it deserves. Meanwhile, it is certainly worth buying in its current form, for it is a good game, and any future editions can make it a great game. I am offering a few suggestions here in order to pass on those developments we felt added to the game without significantly changing its internal systems. Only the authors can do anything official, so take the following for what it is worth.

STARTING THE GAME: Each participant should decide upon the role which his or her explorer-figure is to fill, and then each should do his or her best to act in the appropriate manner throughout the life of the explorer.

DISASTERS: When a disaster calls for the death of a given figure (Askari, guide, or bearer), rather than inflicting it upon the explorer (who already has sufficient hazards imperiling his or her existence) dice amongst all persons in the party to see who is killed instead.

EXPLORER: Explorers are able to fashion crude weapons for themselves and kill a Hacking beast on a roll of 6, just as if they had a musket.

BOTANIST: Explorers avert sickness and fatalities which are related to plants.

EXPLORING: MOVEMENT: While canoes cannot enter jungle swamp hexes, they *can* be carried by the usual number of bearers at the usual movement rate through such hexes. (Without this interpretation of the rules, it is possible to have a number of hexes which cannot be reached by any means whatsoever, for canoes are required to move through swamp hexes [rulebook, p. 7] but a literal interpretation of the rules makes it impossible to move canoes through jungle swamp hexes. We are then faced with the possibility of a jungle swamp ringing a swamp which encircles some other sort of terrain, and no expedition can every get beyond the barriers!)

NATIVES: EXPLORER POLICY TOWARDS NATIVES: If the explorer opts for policy 2., an immediate withdrawal from the hex, the natives will *not* have opportunity to attack, and the party is back in the hex from whence they were coming.

NATIVES: NATIVE REACTION TO EXPLORER POLICY: Freeing prisoners or negotiating successfully with natives raises the chance of successful negotiation by the appropriate explorer's party, but *lowers* the attitude of the natives, not raises it. The higher the number of the attitude of the natives, the more belligerent they are, for there is less of a chance that the explorer's policy number and the distance to the nearest city (slaving effect for those who haven't yet played the game) will total a figure equaling or greater than the attitude level of the natives. Likewise, defeating attacked explorer parties will *raise* the attitude level of a tribe, thus making them harder to negotiate with.

Maximum Number of Native Warriors in a Tribe: There is no stated maximum (or minimum) given in the rules, and nothing is said regarding fluctuation in the number of warriors from a tribe when it is encountered on successive entries into their home hex. I suggest a minimum and maximum number of warriors in a tribe based on proximity to port cities and game mechanics.

Hexes to the Nearest Port

City	Number of Tribal Warriors	
	Minimum	Maximum
2	15	30
3	24	60
4	36*	90*
5	60	150
6 or more	84	none**

*For any desert tribe, these are upper limits

** Total warriors from five rolls of the dice.

Warriors lost in battle are gone. When all of a tribe's warriors are dead, the tribe is extinct. Any number of warriors, up to the maximum, may be encountered, and the dice must be rolled to determine the number of warriors so encountered. However, battle casualties must be subtracted if

the number of warriors total determined by encounter has reached a number somewhere between the minimum and maximum figures shown. A record sheet for each tribe (shown hereafter) should be kept so this information is readily available to the players.

If the explorer is an explorer only, without any other calling, he or she will kill *two* natives on the first round (unsurprised) of combat, and in successive rounds he or she will likewise kill two nations.

NATIVES: CONSEQUENCES OF DEFEAT: If an explorer only (as opposed to the explorer-evangelizer, explorer-geologist, etc.) is taken prisoner by natives, he or she will not deduct 3 from the required dice roll each turn to determine escape of death, but a roll of 6 is treated as equal to a 2 (explorer held prisoner).

PRISONERS: It is not necessary to take prisoners to find a native village. If the explorer rolls equal to or less than his or her *policy* with two dice, then the village is located. *All* of the natives will hide, or else *all* of the warriors will come out to do battle. (At this time, and at this time only, should the player-explorer determine the total warriors in the tribe — assuming this has not been heretofore determined.) Deserted villages can be looted normally. *If rations are found* assume that there are either 2 per warrior (die 1-3) or 3 per warrior (die 4-6). This will save much time and trouble. The same village may be looted repeatedly as long as the warriors are not all killed. Two lootings within any three successive turns will cause the village to be moved to an adjacent hex, and each hex will have to be explored to locate the tribe once again. *Camels* are found **ONLY** if the desert is contiguous with that shown on the northern part of the mapboard; they are never found in other desert hexes.

NATIVES: TRADING: As just noted, camels (and horses as well) are available from tribes dwelling in desert hexes contiguous with the great northern desert region of Africa.

The number of Askaris or bearers which can be hired from a single tribe is dependent upon the size of the tribe. The following formula is suggested:

ASKARIS — 1 for every 2 warriors

BEARERS — 1 for every warrior

NATIVES: POISONING EXPLORER: A doctor is able to save himself or herself on a roll of 6 when poisoned (cf. p. 6). After being poisoned and recovering, a doctor also gets a + 1 on the die to save himself or herself if so unfortunate as to be poisoned (and die otherwise) a second or successive time.

NATIVES: ATTITUDE LEVELS: As previously stated, the adjustments are reversed. Lower levels if the native tribe becomes more friendly, raise them if they become more hostile and warlike.

EXPLORER SPECIALTIES: Optionally, an *explorer-botanist* may be added to the list. He or she operates exactly as does a zoologist. Disasters pertaining to plants are averted by explorer-botanists. They can survive without water on a desert hex on a roll of 4-6. (They find plants which yield water.)

With the sole exception of evangelizers, any explorer **NEED NOT** stay in a hex to practice his or her specialty or specialites at the risk of the safety of the expedition, i.e. an explorer doctor need not try to treat the ills of a hostile tribe, an explorer-zoologist need not stay on a hex where hunting cannot possibly feed his expedition *provided rations are running low* and will not be sufficient to insure safe travel to the nearest ration source, etc.

EXPLORER SPECIALITES: MEDICINE: There seems to be a contradiction in the rules here. On a die roll of 3, the explorer-doctor is to lose 1 attitude point; that is, the attitude of the tribe goes up 1, and the natives become more hostile towards all explorers. In the last paragraph of the section (p. 16) is the following sentence: "They do not lose points when attitude levels drop on rolls of 3 (on the treatment table, above), but score 1 or 2 points on rolls of 5 or 6, respectively." I have interpreted this to mean that the expedition led by the explorer-doctor is not considered in a more hostile manner by the tribe, but all other expeditions contacting the tribe will be.

HUNTING AND ADJUSTMENT OF RATIONS: An explorer-explorer is able to fashion crude weapons and is thus never unarmed even if without a musket. He or she hunts with such weapons at -1 on the die roll. There is a chance that extra rations gained by an explorer-explorer *can* be preserved; on a roll of 1 or 2 the individual is able to preserve 1 or 2 rations, respectively.

STARVATION, SICKNESS, AND DESERTION (ALSO THIRST!): Neither a botanist nor a zoologist will starve automatically, even if they have no musket, for they can "hunt" for edible plants, roots, tubers, grubs, termites, etc. They use the normal hunting table and so are capable of

providing double or treble rations in this manner.

As previously stated, an explorer-botanist will not die of thirst on a desert hex without a water source if they roll a 4-6, as this indicates that a plant has been found which will yield water.

The following *Native Tribe Facts Sheet* has proved to be a highly useful playing aid for *SOURCE OF THE NILE*. I hope the foregoing, along with it, will improve your enjoyment of the game. Similarly, I hope that neither Ross Maker nor Dave Wesely will take exception to what I have suggested, and they are quite welcome to make use of any of the material on a *gratis* basis. If anything said here is drastically wrong, either or both authors are hereby invited to set matters aright. Thanks to both of you for a most enjoyable game.

NATIVE TRIBE FACTS SHEET

ROLL FOR THE TRIBE NAME: 1-3 = 2 part; 4-5 = 3 part 6 = 4 part

Tribal Name Table of Syllables:

die 1-2	die 3-4	die 5-6	die 1-2	die 3-4	die 5-6
1. ang(i)	ki(k)	(t)usi	4. eb fa	ro ru	wa
2. ha(n)	lo lu	ub ug	5. gi go	(s) ai	ya yo
3. bo bu	ma mu	uku	6. ka ki	tang(i)	zi/ zu

() drop the letter if the name becomes cumbersome
use either at your discretion or dice for which is present

TRIBE NO. _____ TRIBE NAME _____

NUMBER OF WARRIORS _____

(subsequent casualties) _____

ATTITUDE _____ NEGOTIATED _____

Victorious _____ Explorers Killed _____

Defeated _____ Prisoners Freed _____

Village discovered _____ Looted _____

Evangelized _____ Medically Treated _____

ORIGINAL DISCOVERER _____

Subsequent Contact By _____

OTHER INFORMATION CONCERNING TRIBE _____

Witches from page 12

hears, and she takes 3-24 points of damage if it is killed. It takes a month to retrain a new one if it is killed.

Disguise: As an Assassin.

Manufacture Acid: For each experience level, the Witch can manufacture 1 die of acid per month. Types of acids — what they can and cannot dissolve are left to the DM. One suggestion is to have the acids be essence of Gray Ooze, Green Slime, etc.

Voice: The Witch may shout out a command, no longer than 7 words (and no counting beforehand). Those failing to save vs. Magic will obey for the next melee round. A command to kill themselves will cause, victims to strike themselves with their weapons, at the usual hit probabilityir armour class, doing half damage. The Voice cannot be used more often than once in 3 turns on the same listeners.

Transfer Hit Points: A Witch may permanently transfer her own hit points to anyone else. If done within 1 turn of death, it will revive the victim giving them that many hit points. A curse can be lifted for the permanent transfer of 5 hit points with no rise in the hit points of the one saved. Prime attributes of another may be raised at a cost of 5 hit points up to 12, 7 hit points to raise it from 12 to 13, 8 to raise from 13 to 14, 10 to raise from 14 to 15 and 15 to 16, 20 to raise from 16 to 17, 25 from 17 to 18. As can be imagined, players will be wary about giving this favor to others, and NPCs wil almost never do so. Transfer of hit points by a Witch does not lower her level, she just stays at that level with less hit points.

Enchant Item: A Witch may permanently transfer hit points into an object for the purpose of enchanting it, at a cost of 1 hit point per 1000 gold pieces it would have cost. This is the only way they can manufacture magic items other than Potions.