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Power Locked in Crystal Fire

by Steven S. Long

The Mystic Properties of Gems and Stones

Mankind has long been fascinated by gemstones – their pure color, the way light glints off of them, the crystal fires that seem to dance in their depths. So it's only natural that arcane and mystic powers would be attributed to many different types of gems. And it's just as natural for gamers to use this ancient lore to enhance and improve their games.

The magical powers or qualities associated with a particular type of gemstone usually depend upon several things. The first is color. Colors have long held magical or lucky connotations, and those relations carry over to gemstones of that color. For example, green jade is associated with money and prosperity in some instances, and red stones with blood. Some common color associations for gems are:

<u>Color</u>	<u>Properties</u>
Black	Stability and Resilience. Power. Protection. Invisibility.
Blue	Water and the Ocean. Sleep. Peacefulness. Healing. Purification.
Green	Life. Fertility. Healing. Money, Prosperity, and Luck.
Orange	As Red, but of lesser effect. Personal Power. Luck.
Pink	Calmness. Love. Peace. Happiness.
Purple	Mystic and psychic power in general. Higher forces. Healing. Peace. Obedience.
Red	Blood. Birth and Death. Healing. Fire. Protection.
White	Sleep. Psychic powers. Luck. Protection after dark. The Moon.
Yellow	Communication. Travel.

The second factor is the stone's properties. For example, diamond, the hardest natural substance known to man, is mystically associated with strength and invulnerability. Third is the element or deity that the stone has historically been associated with. A gem associated with Poseidon, for example, might grant powers over the ocean.

In roleplaying games, mystic gems are useful primarily for two things. The first is as a material component for a spell. A spell that cures or prevents insanity might require some ground topaz, or a small intact topaz. Needless to say, this can get quite expensive, since gems are valuable, and only the wealthiest characters will be able to afford to cast spells with material components like diamonds and rubies. However, this may serve as a way for the GM to keep such spells from being used so frequently that they unbalance the campaign. Second, gems are often magical items themselves, or a part of magical items – amulets, talismans, crowns, sceptres, and swords often feature gems as decorations, and these gems can impart magic to the items themselves. A bloodstone set in a sword's pommel or hilt might make the sword a powerful magical weapon, for example.

GMs may rule that the quality of a mystic gem affects the strength or power of a magical spell or object that the gem is used with. Thus, a stone of poor quality might reduce a spell's effect by half if it is used as a component for that spell. Player character mages would therefore have to be sure that they were obtaining gems of sufficient quality for their spells. An entire quest could be constructed around obtaining a particularly high-quality jewel (or even a specific gem, like one from an idol in an abandoned temple) for use in a magic ritual.

Some examples of gems and their mystic properties are listed below. Since gems are typically worn, the user of a mystic gem is often referred to as a "wearer," but this should not be taken to mean that wearing the stone is required.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

I wrote this article several years ago for *Troll*, a gaming magazine that folded so quickly they never had time to publish it. It was written "generically," without rules for any rules system, so it doesn't contain any *HERO System*-specific information. But hopefully we'll have the chance to cover this subject in greater detail, including *HERO* rules and write-ups, in the future.

— Steven S. Long

Anime Martial Arts

by Michael Surbrook

THREE ANIME MARTIAL ARTISTS IN SEARCH OF A CAMPAIGN

For truly high-powered action, nothing beats anime. By the same token, many anime characters, and especially anime martial artists, are often capable of superhuman feats. Anime characters can be found in any setting and time period, and any genre as well.

This article presents three Anime Martial Artists, as defined on pages 9-10 of *Ninja Hero*. They are all built on a 200-point base, ignore the limits of Normal Characteristic Maxima, and pay for all the weapons and armor they use.

The characters are, in order of point totals: Amayultare (300 points), a dark elf archer designed to be used in high-powered Epic and High-Fantasy settings; Amber Long (350 points), who is meant to be a part of the author's own Shugysha Daigaku ("Student Warrior University") campaign setting, but who can easily be used in a *Champions* or *Fantasy Hero* setting; and Shina Arakawa (375 points), an extremely high-powered *ronin*, who is best suited for over-the-top *chambara* and *wuxia* games.

Amayultare

Background/History: The world of the elves is divided into two halves. On one side are the high elves, who are fair of skin and hair, and live their long lives in the sun. On the other side are the dark elves, who as their name suggests are dusky of skin, and live deep within dank forests and desolate wilderness, and conduct most of their affairs under the cover of nightfall. And just as the high elves are content to live as one with themselves and their world, the dark elves are consumed with avarice, desiring power magical and secular. Thus, while the high elves exist in harmony with their surroundings, the dark elves plot and scheme constantly, seeking to do unto others before it is done unto themselves.

At times, different factions of dark elves will vie with each other for power, battling for supremacy. To the victor will go the spoils, while the losers will find either death, or if they are lucky, banishment.

Amayultare is one such dark elf. When her House fell into ruin following a bloody coup, she fled her homeland, heading east into the lands of men. She took with her only what she could carry in her hands and on her back, vowing that she would rather live among the dour and brutish race of man than submit to her House's conquerors.

Of course, Amayultare's status among humans was only slightly better than the

treatment she would receive from her high elf cousins. She soon found the most acceptance among the less savory elements of human society, where she quickly made a name for herself as a bow-for-hire. Soon assassinations became the norm, and much to Amayultare's delight, she found the human world to be not that much different from the world of the dark elves after all.

Personality/Motivation: A former member of the nobility (or so she likes to let others believe), Amayultare is now no more than an outcast who must do whatever she can to get by. However, she still retains some her old pride and sense of dignity, and will go without rather than accept charity or largess. Interestingly enough, she has no problem with stealing in order to get what she wants, quantifying such an act as proof of her skills (and the fact most things – such as fine food and drink – are wasted on humans anyway).

Her life among the plots and conspiracies of the dark elven Houses has made Amayultare virtually unable to put her trust into anyone but herself. She tends to look for hidden motives behind any act, especially selfless ones. She also expects people to lie as a matter of course, and never accepts any offer at face value. On the other hand, she herself tends to be true to her word, mainly due to her elvish pride rather than any desire to make up for past misdeeds.

As a bow-for-hire, Amayultare has learned the value of remaining true to her employer. She will attempt to complete any contract she accepts, and will return her payment in full if she fails to do so. In addition, she will stay loyal to her employer until the contract is fulfilled, and will never divulge such information as who she is working for, who her target is, or how much she has been paid.

Quote: "One hundred pieces of silver will buy you one arrow – and an end to all of your troubles."

Powers/Tactics: Like all elves, Amayultare is highly agile, with an impeccable sense of balance. She can step so lightly as to not make any sound, and is capable of running along narrow tree limbs without falling. Due to her dark elf heritage, she can see quite well in the dark, and has eyesight and hearing far sharper than the human norm. But her most impressive power is with the elvish longbow.

Back home, Amayultare was the best archer in her House. But as even the least of elven archers can put most humans to shame, this