



Official Race Packet



The Sarr

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This document is provided to players of NERO West's live action roleplaying game. It offers background material for players who wish to play one of the Sarr, a race of feline humanoids. Players of other races are welcome to read this package, but the details on Sarr culture, legend, and mindset should be kept as out-of-game knowledge for non-Sarr.

Thanks to Chuck Skinner for providing much of the material herein.

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1. History of the Sarr

The Sarr of the Cynder Valley are played with costuming as described in the 8th edition rulebook. They have existed apart from their compatriots in other lands across the continent, and have developed their own unique cultural outlook. Those familiar with Sarr race packets from other chapters can consider them to be tales of life in a faraway land.

This is the story of the Sarr of the Cynder Valley.

1.1 *Timeline*

- 4300 BCE First written accounts of a Sarrian nation.
- 4025 BCE Sarrian Empire extends into the Cynder Valley
- 3996 BCE Death of King Ardis Bellwether
- 3950 BCE King Winston Aquinus' conquests establish the "The Sarrian Plateau"
- 3939 BCE Queen Dierdre cuts back Warrior Caste duties and apportion
- 3935 BCE Beginning of the Slave Revolt
- 3930 BCE Sir Winston Aquinas returns to find his race defeated. He departs the Cynder Valley and is never seen again.

1.2 Written History

History of the Sarr, by Karanah of OnyxFall

This short study will attempt to lay out a suggested history of the Sarr people, a written record to stand as truth amidst the myths legends and spurious hearsay which have sprouted up over the years. With the extreme dearth of written records, this scholar has relied primarily on oral histories passed along generational lines of historians among the Sarr. The frequency of concurrence among different accounts strongly suggests a common genesis, and a wellsource of actual history despite its origins.

The history of the Sarr begins five thousand years ago, according to the oldest indications we can find, and essentially ends approximately a hundred and fifty years later. Many of the old histories tell of a mighty race, bestial and yet disciplined, who conquered neighboring territories, enslaved the defeated armies and expanded their territory further every year.

They were efficient and brutal, and local populaces suffered one of three fates: they surrendered, they were conquered or they fled. By approximately 4025 BCE, the Sarr Empire was a vast and thriving land that extended into the regions of the Cynder Valley.

The social structure of the Sarr Empire was caste-based, comprised of four hierarchical castes. The primary caste was the Noble Caste. Placed as societal supervisors, the Nobles budgeted resources and made policy decisions, and were responsible for creating laws; they were administrators to the Empire. The Monarch was the head of the civilian government, and also of the military.

The secondary caste was the Warrior Caste, from which the military was drawn nearly in its entirety. The Warriors were responsible for upholding the laws (including policing the slave population) and expanding the Empire, on which the economy depended. Despite their social position, much of the power of the Empire lay in the Warrior Caste.

The tertiary caste was the Sage Caste. Schooled in magical lore as well as science and craft, their charge was to discover new learning and new Formals and Spells to improve the quality of life in the Empire and to maintain the histories of the Empire.

The final caste was the Laborer Caste. The Laborers were responsible for the overseeing of the slave population and their various work projects. This was the largest caste, in size, and the only one to which non-Sarr could belong. (Occasionally, freed slaves or especially favored prisoners of war would be made citizens of the Sarr Empire. Although preferable to being a slave, the position involved much derision and scorn from the Sarr and hatred and spite from the slaves traditionally.)

This society was very efficient and expanded continually; the people prospered and their love for the kingdom was remarkable. In 3996 BCE, King Ardis Bellwether passed away at the ripe age of sixty-three. He had no direct heirs, and traditionally in this case a war began amongst the Nobles. This was not the traumatic event that it seems to be in other societies-there were well established rules to such conflict, and the infusion of new blood strengthened the caste and prevented stagnation, propelling those of merit onto the throne.

At the end of this particular skirmish, two months later, a young knight named Sir Winston Aquinas held the throne. He had proven exceptional drive and ambition, having slain his own liege lord to do so. He and his wife were crowned in the capital as part of the Harvest Festival that year. His skills as a warrior were proven, as he expanded the kingdom's influence at a dramatic rate-by 3950 BCE the Sarrian Empire's influence had expanded several hundred miles in all directions.

This time is known as 'The Sarrian Plateau'; due to geographical and economic reasons, expansion had halted, no enemy of consequence existed on the borders, and the Sages had hit new highs in their studies of magical feats. King Winston-a capable warrior, but with no real skill or interest in politics or managing domestic affairs-gathered together an elite Imperial Elite Guard to patrol the borders and deal with ragged bands of barbarians. As was custom, he left his wife, Queen Deirdre, at the head of the Empire.

During Winston's massive expansion, the Empire had developed a considerable debt. The expansion, and the acquisition of new resources, had kept it manageable. However, as soon as the expansion was halted, the bills skyrocketed. Her first

tactic in solving this problem was to allow slaves to 'buy' their way into the Laborer Caste-for a sizable sum, usually paid by a sponsor, a slave could become a citizen of the Empire. Many citizens, Sarr and freeman alike, resented this change, feeling that it cheapened their own citizenship. However, the reaction was mild and sunny compared to the response to her next attempt to reduce the debt, in 3939.

She announced that the full budget of the Warrior Caste could not be sustained and, as manager of the Treasury, she declared that the Warriors' duties would be reduced in this time of peace, and their apportion reduced as well. The Warriors responded with a stern and angry rebuke and a show of force in the capital where the castle was held, essentially, in siege. She responded, as head of the military, by announcing that over half of the Army was disbanded until further notice, maintaining only a skeletal internal police force. The uprising was dispersed, but still disgruntled.

During the long hot summer of 3935, the Slave Revolt began. A miracle of communication and co-ordination, it's success can be directly attributed to two factors-its speed and decisiveness, and the distraction caused by the constant political machination between Noble and Warrior Castes. The token police force was overwhelmed, and blood filled the streets. The only hope for the Empire was King Winston and his Imperial Elite. Unfortunately, by the time Winston received news of the revolt, he looked at his view of the kingdom from the border and felt that discretion here was the better part of valor. He is quoted widely as having said to the messenger "It is a fool who dies losing a battle when he may flee it and win another." Winston rallied his Imperial Elite and led them out of the kingdom into the Wastes; this was the last reliable sighting of King Winston of record. However, a claim of mythical proportion has grown from his disappearance. Many of the Sarr feel that Winston will re-appear when his people are at their greatest need (although some feel that time has been here for centuries) and rescue them from captivity. It is through these stories that Winston's legacy has been transformed, from above-average military tactician with no administrative skills into a legendary figure and near-deity with magical powers.

And thus it is that in under two hundred years the Sarr, ironically, went from conquering and enslaving to conquered and enslaved. Scattered 'Free' Sarr maintain independence and fierce resistance, and there are occasional slave uprisings, but for the past few millennia the history of the Sarr has been the history of their owners.

2.0 Playing a Sarr

2.1 The Mind of the Sarr

The Sarr mindset cannot be described without taking into account the schism of the Revolt, and thus the Sarr are divided into two groups: Free Sarr and Domestic Sarr.

Free Sarr tend to be forward and outspoken; they have little skill in dissembling and less interest. They are curious, and they are quick to anger although they are also quick to forgive. They have a strong sense of independence, and form close-knit bonds of loyalty among a small group—a pride, a family, a circle of friends, or some similar arrangement. With flaring of temper, these small groups may be quickly discarded or re-arranged into new small groups on short notice. Nearly all of the Free Sarr are descended from King Winston and his Imperial Elite, and thus have strong martial inclinations.

The Domestic Sarr are more quiet and acquiescent, and eager to please. They derive great satisfaction from providing service and being useful to others, and are fierce in defense of recognized authority figures. They often have excellent social skills, and admire a stoic demeanor.

Both Free and Domestic Sarr hold 'nobility' in high regard, although each defines it in a different fashion. Free nobility comes from self-sufficiency and excellence in a craft or a chosen field. Domestic nobility is gained from sacrifice, and providing for others. Both groups tend to be somewhat condescending toward those they feel are less noble than they.

In combat, the Sarr seem to be psychologically locked into an ancient 'claws and teeth' mode and have a significant mental block about using blunt weapons (toothless warriors are old and feeble) or ranged weapons (it is impossible to throw one's claws).

2.2 The Body of the Sarr

A Sarr is considered a mature adult around the age of six, and a natural lifespan can proceed over fifty or sixty years. After adulthood, signs of aging are slight—a stiffening of joints, a grizzling of the fur, or similar hints—and a Sarr of fifty may greatly resemble one of fifteen. They maintain a high level of physical activity until very late in life, despite a propensity in middle age towards long naps.

Sarr have a keenly developed sense of smell and, by extension, taste. Many will not hire non-Sarr as cooks, claiming the need for the extra sensitivity of the Sarr nose. This sensitivity can also prompt strong reactions; the fable about Sarr reactions to fresh peppermint or catnip has its basis in truth.

They have a very high metabolism, and this may account for their resistance to most toxins, although most Sarr attribute it to simply physical superiority and many non-Sarr attribute it to sheer stubbornness and a bull-headed refusal to be poisoned.

Sarr do seem to have an unusual reaction to mint. They typically very much enjoy mint, as it acts as something of a stimulant: causing the Sarr to act playfully and in some cases even violently. Slave owners sometimes use it as a treat to reward their Sarr.

2.3 The Sarr and Other Races

There are certain 'standard' views of other races held by the Sarr, but one may expect to find many exceptions to the rule. Elves, in general, are viewed as delicate and retiring, and somewhat undependable. They admire the Dwarves' dedication to craft and their industry, as well as the discipline and pragmatism of the Biata. Barbarians are uncouth and undisciplined, but not as bad as the Half-Orcs and Half-Ogres. Scavengers are merely rabble, and generally not worth the effort of disdain. Gypsies are untrustworthy and prone to larceny, but the Free Sarr hold some respect for their dedication to their families. Humans still are held in lingering faint distrust, as the lion's share of the slave population at the time of the Revolt was Human.

3.0 The Sarr Today--an OOG advisory

One of the central issues in a Sarr PC is slavery. There are three ways, in Cynder Valley society, for somebody to be a slave. The first is through military conquest, the second is through criminal retribution, and the third is by heredity. Most Sarr are hereditary slaves--born into slavery because one or both parents were slaves.

Free Sarr, the more popular as PCs, are rare. They are required to carry citizenship papers as proof of their status. The percentage of free Sarr in Hightower is marginally higher than in Quadlum, but lower than in Mandrake's Landing. One of the most realistic threats to a Free Sarr's status is the illegal slaving trade, as Sarr

are frequently targets of illegal hunts. This trade is frowned upon by the local government, the Free Sarr community and the Syndicate.

Sarr slaves are often used as warriors or body guards, and tend to be strongly loyal if well-treated. As noted above, many take pride in providing excellent service in such positions. The Free Sarr look on these 'domesticated' Sarr with pity or sometimes disgust.

There is a third class of Sarr, even rarer than Free Sarr; neither legally free nor legally enslaved, these are feral Sarr who have no citizenship papers to document their status. They tend to live alone in the wilderness, wary of any intruders, even other Sarr.

It is important to remember that our enlightened twentieth-century views on slavery are still unknown to many in the Cynder Valley. Slavery is seen as an economic facet and a normal aspect of existence. An owner is responsible for his slaves much in the same way a feudal lord is responsible for his land and serfs. The popular opinion on the Sarr is that they are suited to a life of servitude; they know no other life, and freeing them would be a cruelty, like turning a pet dog out of the house and abandoning it.

As a PC, there are choices to be made when starting to create your Sarr character. Is she domestic, free, feral, or foreign-born? If you're considering a foreign-born Sarr, check with other chapters to see where she might have come from. Also, be aware that without papers, the citizenry may be reluctant to accept a Sarr's free status, and assume it's somebody's escaped slave. If you actually do wish to play an escaped slave, this should be discussed with the Plot Team. Runaways are rare, and have very few places they can feasibly go, but Mandrake's Landing may be one of them. There is apparently a story circulating among the domesticated Sarr about a slaver overseer who was killed when the townspeople rose up to liberate a family of maltreated Sarr.

3.1 Sarr from other lands – Some notes on Sarr behavior

In other lands, and as described in the race packets used by other NERO chapters, Sarr can sometimes be matriarchal and may even condone the use of Chaos magic. In the Cynder Valley there is no racial predilection for or against either matriarchy or Chaos magic use. Indeed, free and feral Sarr are few enough that the isolated individuals have little in the way of coherent societal preferences.

Additionally, other race packets insist that Sarr are color blind. While some in the Cynder Valley might be color blind, it is, again, not a racial trait. Cynder Valley Sarr have adopted the local taboos against cannibalism and the consumption of the flesh of civilized peoples.

We do concur with the lifecycle used by most other race packets: "Sarr females come into "heat" once or twice a year; this is the only time of year that they can conceive. Litters usually have two to six children that are physically mature in two years. They are typically not considered adults until their sixteenth birthday."

The Sarr kingdom of Myrr is something of a myth in the Cynder Valley, and most local Sarr refuse to believe it exists, believing it a dream filled with false hope and disappointment.