

"My motivation for creating Nyambe was simple. Africa was a major part of the Earth that has little or no representation in fantasy literature, let alone RPGs. When it does appear, it usually follows the pulp fiction model: steaming jungles, bloodthirsty cannibals, and dark gods long forgotten by the civilized races. Of course, historical Africa was nothing like that, so my goal for Nyambe was to create a fantasy version of Africa based on the actual history and mythology of Africa, rather than previous fantasy depictions. So, I went about taking snippets of history or myth, and twisting them, adding fantasy elements or changing specifics to make them fit into an OGL world. I'll use my favorite myth from the book, the Hungering Lion, as an example:

"The real Hungering Lion, also known as Sundiata Keita, was born of royal blood in the city-state of Mandinka in the 13th century. At that time, Sumanguru Kante, a Susu warrior, had declared himself emperor of Ghana and slaughtered the entire royal family of Mandinka, except for Sundiata and his mother. Sundiata was so physically weak he was unable to walk, so Sumanguru did not consider Sundiata a threat. Both he and his mother were banished to the nearby kingdom of Mema. There, according to legend, a blacksmith fashioned iron leg-braces for Sundiata, and Sundiata not only learned to walk, but trained as a warrior, horseman, and even learned the arts of sorcery. He then returned to his homeland, led a rebellion against Sumanguru, who according to legend was also a sorcerer, and fought him in a great magical battle on the plains of Kirina in 1325. Sundiata roared like a lion, and scattered Sumanguru's troops, then fired a magical white cockspur arrow at Sumanguru, draining him of all magic. Without his magic, Sumanguru was easily defeated.

"I took this and transformed Sundiata into Kwo. I replaced Sumanguru with the lich Zulo, and the empire of Ghana became the Zombi empire. I decided the story would be more interesting if the Lion's mother was also slain, so in my version of the story, only Kwo survives. The kingdom of Mema is replaced by a fantastical agogwe band, and rather than getting iron leg-braces, he learns to ride a wondrous creature called an engargiya. He still returns to do battle with the evil king, but rather than draining Zulo of magic with a white cockspur arrow, I decided to add an African-Islamic influence by alluding to a battle depiction from the Koran, which roughly translates to: 'Have you not seen how Allah dealt with the army of the elephant? Did he not foil their strategem, and send against them flocks of birds, which pelted them with stones of petrified clay, and made them like plants cropped by cattle?'

"You will find similiar historical-fantastical mixes throughout the book: the story of Bashar and the dragon is based on the story of the Ethiopian king Angabo, the tale of the Queen of Bashar'ka and the Caliph of Boroko is based on the tale of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, the monstrous incubus beetle is based on the birth-story of the Zulu king Shaka, the Amazons of Nibomay are based on the ahosi of Dahomey and the female warriors of ancient Lybia, and so on ... "

- Chris Dolunt