



The dragon lives in the sky, ocean, marshes, and mountains; and the mountains are also its cranium. Its voice thunders and jingles like copper pans. It breathes fire and water; and sometimes the dragon is one, sometimes many.

—The Woman Warrior, Maxine Hong Kingston

Fairy tales are more than true: not because they tell us that dragons exist, but because they tell us that dragons can be beaten.

—G. K. Chesterton

by Chris Sims

ECOLOGY OF THE DRAGONBORN

illustrations by Brian Hagan and William O'Connor

HISTORY

Myths speak of the birth of the dragonborn, though they differ in the telling. Tales, awe-inspiring and terrifying, tell of the rise and fall of dragonborn empires, the greatest among them lost to a war that is still remembered. And modern dragonborn live according to their heritage, more than one aiming to carve an eternal story into the world's chronicles.

Several legends say that Io, the greatest dragon god, shaped the dragonborn as servants to dragons at the same time he created the first dragons. Elemental essence and astral spirit went into the making, as with all worldly creatures, but like their greater kin, dragonborn were given a balance favoring the elemental.

Other tales claim that Io died in the clashes between the gods and the primordials. The draconic gods Tiamat and Bahamut emerged from the halves of Io's sundered corpse. Dragonborn sprang, ready to serve dragons, from Io's spilled blood.

Timing of dragonborn genesis aside, Tiamat and Bahamut were instantly at odds. As soon as the war against the primordials ended in the gods' favor, these siblings began a struggle for dominance over dragonkind that has lasted into the present age. Many dragons and dragonborn took sides. Some turned to Tiamat's ways, others to Bahamut's, but a plurality walked a path between the two extremes.

Dragonborn families formed clans, extended groups unified by geographic proximity and similar temperaments. A large number of clans dedicated themselves to serving dragons. Many of these dragons belonged to bloodlines on one side or the other of the war between Bahamut and Tiamat. Others were autonomous wyrms who guided and nurtured their dragonborn followers. And still other dragonborn families, sometimes after the loss of a dragon patron, formed clan ties independent of dragons. These unified clans had military discipline in common, which was a trait needed in ongoing war or for mere defense in the elder world.

From within this clan structure, the dragonborn and their dragon lords formed centralized, cooperative states. They developed codified laws, as well as civic and religious institutions. War and diplomacy further unified realms. Dragonborn nations waxed and waned. All along, the conflict between the dragon gods did the same.

Historians, dragonborn and otherwise, differ on the subject of the outcome of the draconic conflict. A few claim that Bahamut's forces won in that early age. More say that moderate dragonborn came to the fore, forcing divine agendas into a secondary position related to worldly matters. The likeliest scenario is that the unaligned among the dragonborn showed a

preference for heroic and kindly values, as common folk often do. This esteem placed Bahamut's followers in an advantageous position, allowing them to persevere over their adversaries. At the same time, the needs of mortal creatures took precedence over the machinations of immortals.

Regardless of the truth of the matter, after numerous dragonborn kingdoms had passed into forgotten history, a unified array of dragonborn city-states formed the storied empire of Arkhosia. Dragon nobles integrated under a dragon emperor, mythically dubbed the Golden One. A dragonborn bureaucracy supported the nobles, protected by a military headed at first by the general Surina Moonscale. The Golden One and mighty Moonscale held Bahamut in highest regard among the gods, and this faith helped establish central principles for the empire.

Imperial priests also held strongly to the tenets of Erathis, Ioun, and Kord. The empire expanded its territory with a goal of bringing civilization, knowledge, and safety to untamed places and ignorant peoples. It gained land as much through word, trade, and decency as it did through battle. Within mere centuries, Arkhosia ruled large portions of the known realms.

Arkhosia seemed to be an unstoppable taming force that would eventually span the world, bringing progress and a measure of uprightness with it. Even Tiamat's worship was outlawed and forced into secrecy. But evil other than Tiamat's had risen to power in lands distant from Arkhosia's central regions. Eventually, the expanding borders of the fiendish kingdom of Bael Turath, ruled by tieflings and devils, collided with those of Arkhosia.

Ideology, culture, and ambition smashed together as well. No common ground could be found between the two empires. For one to succeed, the other had to fall. War was inescapable. It came swiftly and brutally, and it spanned hundreds of years.

Both sides suffered internal strife, mirroring the surface conflict. Tiamat's cult wormed away inside Arkhosia, weakening it. The desire of common folk to be free of infernal shackles poisoned Bael Turath's well of power. Bane's cult worked both sides, stoking the war hotter, while extremists loyal to Melora aimed to bring both empires down. Bitterness strengthened the utter incompatibility of ethos between the two nations.



Ever worse exchanges led the warring empires toward ruin. Bael Turath's forces heaped atrocities upon Arkhosia, corrupting some lands to the point that neither side could hope to reclaim them. Many of Arkhosia's stalwarts of Bahamut began to thirst for retribution more than justice, to look to vengeance more than protecting the defenseless. Bloody Arkhosian campaigns against Bael Turath led some idealistic Arkhosians to doubt, and the empire's foundational beliefs faltered, causing political turmoil. Overextension of resources made it difficult for ironhanded Bael Turath to keep order in its core provinces.

Neither relented, eventually costing both everything. The Golden One and many dragon lords perished, some fleeing with their lives but without honor after the death of the dragon emperor. Lesser lords of the Nine Hells strode across battlefields, only to fall to draconic claws or the assaults of Arkhosia's legions. That which didn't disintegrate in direct combat crumbled under the stress inflicted by the seemingly endless and vicious war. But end that war did, when neither empire had the resources or the will left to fight. When the dust settled and the smoke cleared, Bael Turath and Arkhosia were no more.

Fiends of Bael Turath that weren't hurled back into the Hells hid among the ruins, and Arkhosia's few remaining dragon lords abandoned the wreckage or squabbled over the remains. Tieflings and dragonborn alike were left with no choice but to largely abandon their lands in search of refuge elsewhere in the world.

Most present-day dragonborn are integrated into mixed societies and are living in lands they cannot claim as their own. A few clans, as well as many individuals, roam in search of worthy causes, or simple wealth and personal glory. All continue to venerate the dragonborn model set forth in centuries-gone Arkhosia, making their way according to a high personal standard.

KNOWLEDGE OF THE DRAGONBORN

Arcana

DC 25: Legend tells that dragonborn are a balance of astral and elemental essences, weighted more heavily toward the elemental like the great dragons are.

Dungeoneering

DC 20: The end came so fast for parts of Arkhosia, such as Serpentin Rift, that valuable draconic and dragonborn relics are buried there to this day. In other places, such as the fortress Razortear, fiendish and draconic remains mix as a testament to the fortunes of bygone wars. In any such place, one can expect creatures of the wilderness, dangerous old magic, and trapped or hidden fiends.

History

DC 15: Dragonborn once possessed a massive empire named Arkhosia. War against the tiefling realm of Bael Turath led to the ruin of both kingdoms. Now, the dragonborn consider no civilized place their native soil.

DC 20: Dragons ruled Arkhosia. The dragonborn served them. There was a sophisticated realm, and the clash with Bael Turath was a war of progressive

civilization against oppressive tyranny.

DC 25+: Fine details of the Arkhosia and its war against Bael Turath are master-level pieces of knowledge.

Nature

For nondragonborn, the general traits of the dragonborn are common knowledge. Details of their life cycle, inner physiology, and development, as well as the intricacies of their society are expert knowledge.

Religion

DC 15: Dragonborn have strong ties to the draconic gods, Bahamut and Tiamat. Bahamut's worshipers are more numerous and bold, but Tiamat's followers still thrive in the shadows.

DC 20: The dragonborn of Arkhosia also venerated Erathis, Ioun, and Kord—civilization, knowledge and prophecy, and battle.

DC 25+: Dragonborn creation myths and the ongoing conflict between Bahamut and Tiamat are master-level pieces of knowledge.

PHYSIOLOGY

Imposing, strong, and draconic, dragonborn cut an impressive figure among other humanoids. An average dragonborn is tall and strapping compared to the normal human, although the basic shape is the same. Also distinctive from human counterparts is a dragonborn's dragonlike head, scales, fangs, and claws.

Despite a passing resemblance to reptilian creatures, dragonborn are warm-blooded beings rather than cold-blooded reptiles. Their bodies are hot enough to seem feverish to human sensibilities. This keeps a dragonborn more comfortable in cold temperatures. A lack of body hair coupled with a large mouth that can be opened to release body heat means that a dragonborn is no more vulnerable to hot temperatures than a human.

The scales that cover a dragonborn are tougher than human skin. Although these scales make a dragonborn less susceptible to small, incidental wounds, they don't protect against damage dealt by weapons and similar purposeful attack. Dragonborn

also typically lack the inborn elemental resistances true dragons might possess.

Like true dragons, however, dragonborn hatch from eggs, usually laid singly or, more rarely, in a pair. Hatchlings are quickly capable of standing and walking, but their teeth take a few months to come in. During this time, the mother nurses her offspring. She slowly weans the child to soft and then normal food, which for dragonborn is usually more meat than other edibles.

By the end of the first year, a dragonborn hatchling has the mental and physical development of a 3-year-old human child. A dragonborn matures quickly throughout his or her youthful development. At about 12 years of age, the dragonborn is a lanky version of his or her adult self. Over the next 3 years, he or she fills out into an imposing adult form.

A likeness to dragons gives dragonborn physical might. Dragonborn also carry an almost supernatural bodily potential to tap into and develop draconic traits. Most develop a breath weapon, which is dangerous by the time a dragonborn reaches adulthood. Still, an individual dragonborn might manifest more draconic traits than another. One might do so at birth. Such a change could instead come as the dragonborn's soul quickens in the crucible of a spiritual path or as the body adapts in the wake of mighty deeds.

NEW DRAGONBORN FEATS

The feats in this section are divided into heroic tier and paragon tier sections.

HEROIC TIER FEATS

Any feat in this section is available to a dragonborn character of any level who meets the prerequisites.

ADAPTABLE BREATH [DRAGONBORN]

Prerequisites: Dragonborn, *dragon breath* racial power

Benefit: Choose a damage type your breath weapon doesn't already have from among acid, cold, fire, lightning, or poison. When you use your *dragon breath* racial power, you choose which damage type applies to the attack. Only one damage type applies for a given *dragon breath* attack.

Special: You can take this feat more than once. Each time you select this feat, choose another damage type for your dragon breath power that you don't already have for it.

HURL BREATH [DRAGONBORN]

Prerequisites: Dragonborn, *dragon breath* racial power

Benefit: When you use your *dragon breath* power, you can hurl it as an area attack instead of using it as a close blast. You create an orb of energy that explodes in a burst 2 with a range of 10 squares.

PARAGON TIER FEATS

Any feat in this section is available to a dragonborn character of 11th level or higher who meets the prerequisites.

ADMIXTURE BREATH [DRAGONBORN]

Prerequisites: Dragonborn, *dragon breath* racial power, Adaptable Breath

Benefit: When you use your *dragon breath* power, you can mix any two of the damage types to which you have access. Your *dragon breath* deals both types of damage. This doesn't increase the amount of damage you deal, but a creature must be able to resist or be immune to both damage types to reduce or ignore the damage. If a creature is vulnerable to either damage type, it is considered to be vulnerable to damage from your *dragon breath*.

For instance, if you chose the fire damage type at character creation and chose lightning when you took the Adaptable Breath feat, your dragon breath deals fire damage and lightning damage. A creature immune to fire but vulnerable to lightning is considered to be vulnerable to your *dragon breath*.

DRAGONBORN ZEAL [DRAGONBORN]

Prerequisites: Dragonborn, Dragonborn Frenzy, Great Fortitude, Toughness

Benefit: The *dragonborn zeal* racial utility power replaces one of your utility powers. The power it replaces must be 12th level or higher. If you do not yet have a power of 12th level or higher, you can replace the appropriate power when you gain it.

Also, when you use your second wind, you can choose to gain a +1 bonus to attack rolls until the end of your next turn in addition to the defense bonus typically granted for a second wind.

Dragonborn Zeal Epic Dragonborn Racial Utility

Your wounds sometimes make you relentless.

Daily ♦ Healing

Immediate Reaction Personal

Trigger: Your hit points drop to 0 or fewer

Effect: You regain hit points equal to your healing surge value plus your Charisma modifier. Add your Charisma modifier as a power bonus to your attack rolls and damage rolls against the enemy that reduced you to 0 hit points or fewer until the end of your next turn.

PSYCHOLOGY

Dragonborn psychology centers on a draconic nature tempered by strong cultural ideals. The inner draconic spark is expressed as intensity coupled with a well-developed sense of self. From this sprouts a resolve born of an honest desire to be the best one can be and to be worthy of one's heritage. Tradition

focuses the dragonborn ego with principles of personal excellence, accountability, honor, and wisdom.

Strongly emotional, dragonborn approach life with a natural enthusiasm. Passion comes easily, and dragonborn readily invest themselves in the tasks set before them. At its simplest and perhaps basest level, this fervor expresses itself in extremes of feeling—dragonborn don't hide anger or joy. Such emotion also surfaces as ferocity in battle, especially when dragonborn feel their resolve faltering. When failure comes into view as a possibility, dragonborn become more tenacious.

This is partly because a healthy self-image is common among dragonborn. Few dragonborn are timid or reserved, except as a matter of showing proper respect to others. Guided by personal morals, dragonborn look out for themselves, along with those creatures and items they value. They have no trouble asking for what they need or taking time to improve their abilities. And they expect others to do the same. How else can associates and friends rely on one another? In what other way can society be expected to function?

The paradox in the dragonborn belief in a strong group dynamic is that, like dragons, all dragonborn are fiercely independent. They learn to be so in their upbringing, focused as it is on individuality. So this conviction is an outgrowth of personal pride. Dragonborn see the strengths of a group they are part of as an expression of their own strengths. The group's failures and successes become those of the dragonborn members within it, reflecting on them and their choice to be a part of the group.

Coupled with such pride, dragonborn carry a high personal standard. When a challenge comes, dragonborn rise to it. They set their sights on success and keep going until no options remain to prevent failure. This trait isn't as simple as a disdain for flaws and lack of success. Dragonborn want to contribute and to be seen as valuable by those they value. They

consistently want to show that their confidence in themselves and the reliance others have on them isn't misplaced. Consideration of how they can become better at whatever they do, whether by further fortifying assets or shoring up weaknesses, is part of dragonborn thinking.

Responsibility is also a piece of the dragonborn mindset. This can be an expression of their attachment to others involved in a situation. It's also attributable to the cultural value placed on respect, for self and others, and good judgment. No dragonborn gives his or her word lightly. In fact, dragonborn often value honoring their promises and fulfilling their obligations more than their lives.

Good judgment is, therefore, required of dragonborn. They must assess the options before them and make the best choice. A failure to do so is just that—failure.

As an expression of all these personality aspects, any dragonborn aware of his or her abilities might realize he or she can't hope to succeed in certain circumstances. Dragonborn show wisdom by not giving their oaths to accomplish what they know they can't. They show virtue by admitting their sense of the state of affairs and offering to help as best they can. They show courage by trying to accomplish the impossible anyway, when the cost of inaction would otherwise be too great.



Such positive expressions of dragonborn nature are common especially among heroic dragonborn. But, as with all fallible creatures, negative expressions also abound. Passion can lead dragonborn to brutality, hasty decisions, and unrighteous vengeance. Greed and worse forms of selfishness can grow from a misguided ego. Blind ambition can follow a commitment to excellence, as can a willingness to evaluate others severely or to undertake foolhardy deeds.

Although such twisting of virtue can be a seed of wickedness, most of the time it never goes so far. An individual dragonborn might not see some of his or her failings, but such negative behavior never truly descends into evil. And a lot of dragonborn villains

display a subset of dragonborn scruples, especially courtesy and respect to enemies.

CULTURE

Dragonborn trace their modern cultural leanings to the hale days of Arkhosia, when the precepts of dignity and progress were paramount in the dragonborn mindset. In Arkhosia, strong clans arose and formed ties that yet endure among dragonborn bloodlines. Within that lost empire, dragonborn knew their greatest glory and became instilled with an everlasting sense of their place in the world. War with Bael

Turath and the loss of Arkhosia served to hone dragonborn into what they are today.

CLAN

Clans and family bloodlines are still preserved among the dragonborn, and both are important. The difference between the two is subtle. Family is defined by one's actual blood relatives as far back as records go. Clan is a federation of families, unified in the annals of time, often for forgotten ends.

All dragonborn revere their honored ancestors, family, and clan. They perform their work with an eye toward what their deeds say about their lineage. Such ties can define peace and enmity, as well as cooperation or antagonism, among individual dragonborn. Families and clans have reputations, good or ill, that can have little to do with the living scions of the bloodline.

The desire to live up to a laudable legacy or overcome a besmirched birthright can define a dragonborn's life. Some dragonborn instead embrace infamy or flee from the responsibility imposed by the past. Others make their way according to personal values, perhaps aiming at becoming the most capable and admired dragonborn among the elders of a clan, thereby becoming the clanmaster.

When doing so is possible, all dragonborn of a particular clan look to their clanmaster for guidance. Clan elders have ways to contact a distant clanmaster. The clanmaster also has loyal dragonborn agents to act in his or her stead, and to serve as messengers.

Keeping contact can be difficult, but dragonborn of the same clan more easily form cohesive coalitions and enclaves. Marriages are defined by age-old pacts among clans. Dragonborn parents with weighty responsibilities look to such relations for help fostering children. A whole ward in a large settlement might be filled with dragonborn from allied clans, and each clan could have its own hall like in the old days of Arkhosia.

DRAGONBORN NAMES

Dragonborn have personal names, given at birth, as described in the *Player's Handbook*. They can also have childhood names, family names, and clan names. All these come according to a dragonborn's heritage and place in dragonborn society.

A childhood name or nickname is common. Such a name is usually descriptive, and it serves as a term of endearment or encouragement for a young dragonborn. The name might recall an event or center on a habit. It could derive from an ancestor that acted similarly to a child, or a favored toy or item might be the inspiration. Such names are seldom appropriate for adults. For anyone to use such a name without proper authority, such as that of a parent or elder, or without permission is a sign of disrespect. A dragonborn's elders use a childhood name after that dragonborn becomes an adult only to indicate disapproval.

Childhood Names: Climber, Earbender, Leaper, Pious, Little Kriv, Shieldbiter, Zealous.

Family names are Draconic words, much like given names, carried by a specific bloodline. They often come from the deeds of an ancient scion of the family

line or an amalgamation of the names of notable ancient ancestors. A dragonborn seldom identifies itself by family name, unless specificity is required. Dragonborn keep their family names private except among close friends, and instead go by clan name.

Family Names: Alreja, Bhergav, Duggal, Garodya, Iyotar, Letrah, Mulhotra, Odeyar, Pradhu, Reddyar, Samanga, Tyagi, Ulharej, Vadula, Yadav, Zaveri.

Clan names are ancient titles that are frequently taken from the names of dragon lords of Arkhosia. Those that aren't dragon names are names of trade associations or martial cadres, much like modern guilds, arcane societies, or knightly orders. A dragonborn goes by his clan name, so his deeds are known to reflect on that clan. Members of a clan fiercely defend their clan name against misuse, and some dragonborn outlaws are stripped of the privilege of using the clan name.

Clan Names: Bloodbane, Drakerider, Flamebrow, Hammerwing, Loremark, Moonscale, Peaceblade, Redmark, Silverspear, Spellscale, Warbringer.

FAMILY

All this focus on clan comes from the fact that, while family bloodlines can be extensive, the dragonborn family unit is very small. The typical one contains only two dragonborn: a mated pair, or a parent and child.

Dragonborn wed to procreate. Although notable exceptions exist to this generality, wedlock ends as soon as the offspring from a union is 3 years old. If the parents have no reason to maintain proximity, one of them, usually of the same gender as the child,



raises and trains that youngster in the ways of people, family, and clan.

Honor demands that a parent teach a child well, and that adults care for the young. Through storytelling, tutoring, and demonstration, the parent instills virtues and skills in the child. Although this process serves to educate, it also gives the youngster's fiery spirit a focus. Without such direction, the fierce nature of a dragonborn comes to the fore, resulting in feral savagery.

When rightly trained in dragonborn ways, however, a juvenile learns that honor requires respect for elders and other worthies, focused and sincere effort, reliability and fulfillment of oaths, and integrity. At an early age, he or she understands that chosen actions can bring credit or disgrace to self, family and clan, and even all dragonborn. Even dragonborn crafters and laborers grow up with discipline, play inspired by lessons and tales of derring-do, and an admiration for brave and principled deeds. All learn a thing or two about fighting and soldierly ways. They learn to be bold so that they can challenge themselves and those who misuse authority.

Where dragonborn are a small portion of the local population, which is the norm, such tiny families are common. But where an integrated enclave exists, the process is different, and some dragonborn claim, resembles what life was like in Arkhosia. In such a community, dragonborn foster children communally. Adults watch out for and teach the young, and the young enjoy a broader exposure to an array of dragonborn role models. A single parent still maintains authority and responsibility for a youngster, but in these situations, the other parent is often close at hand and has some influence as well.

ADULTHOOD

Independence is nurtured in dragonborn youth at every turn. When, at 15 years old, dragonborn adolescents transition into adulthood, they are expected to

have integrated the teachings of their childhood into their conduct. They have a healthy respect for capable individuals of all races, even those they oppose. Their esteem for themselves and their forebears guides them in all they do. Responsibility for their actions transitions from them and their parents to each individual alone, even though a dragonborn's deeds reflects on upbringing and heritage.

Principled behavior and instilled daring mean dragonborn adults are different from their counterparts among other peoples. Dragonborn society produces fewer petty criminals, but more outright villains—dragonborn are more likely to be bandit lords than pickpockets. Conversely, dragonborn are numerous among adventurers. They also find places more regularly in the company of those who have unusual or specialized skills, artistic or venturesome.

Regardless of what they do, whether among other dragonborn or not, dragonborn are conscious of how they are responsible for what they do. A dragonborn weaponsmith aims to be the best, to push the boundaries of his craft, to sell weapons in a scrupulous manner, and to honor those who use his armaments by creating implements of worth. The dragonborn soldier, in turn, honors armorer, commander, and clan, by performing his or her duties well. He or she does so by taking initiative in training and on the battlefield, and by helping comrades. Failing to recognize such interconnectivity is a failing of character. This system of honor with awareness and answerability was the strength of the dragonborn when, in Arkhosia, they served dragons.

DRAGONS

Today's dragonborn serve dragons as an exception rather than a rule. Some clans still remember the last days of Arkhosia, when the selfishness and cowardice of some dragon lords became all too visible. Dragonborn from these bloodlines might despise dragons. Other clans still hold dragons in esteem, weighing a

dragon's worth by its actions. Most clans remain free from draconic influence. Those few dragonborn who serve dragons are often more barbaric than their kin who live among humans and other races.

MAGIC

Dragonborn have ancient traditions of magic, focusing on war, as well as divine, draconic, and elemental forces. As fierce as a dragonborn's heart, magic among the dragonborn is seldom bent to mundane tasks. It is a weapon of the mighty.

Despite a natural talent for the arts of the warlock, typical dragonborn prefer an arcane path that doesn't tie them to forces outside themselves. Wizards and sorcerers are notorious for their secretive and eccentric ways, which makes the professions attractive to dragonborn. Further, the powers of the wizard and sorcerer are dragonlike in their primordial fury. Many clans have wizardly ways passed down through numerous families among them since the time of Arkhosia. These things said, sometimes the warlock's road is an acceptable expression of individualism or the last resort of an outcast.

EVOLUTION OF THE DRAGONBORN

In the earliest days of the D&D game, some dragons could take human form. It was a fascinating idea—a great and terrifying beast in the skin of a mere mortal. Fortunately for many players, it was initially an ability that good dragons had. Later, that ability migrated to neutral and evil dragons, such as the oriental dragons of the first *Fiend Folio* or the deep dragon in Ed Greenwood's *Drow of the Underdark*. *The Council of Wyrms* setting made it possible to play dragons in the D&D game.

Draconic humanoids also showed up in various forms, as did humanoids that could become dragons. Todd Lockwood's krolli appeared very early, in *The Dragon* (#36, April 1980). Draconians came only a little later, appearing in the *Dragons of Autumn Twilight* novel and *Dragons of Despair* adventure. Dragonkin appeared in the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting, and the defilers of the DARK SUN setting could become dragons over time. *Monstrous Compendium Annual Volume Three* presented the weredragon, which became the song dragon in Third Edition's *Monsters of Faerûn*. Even the DRAGON DICE game had dice that represented dragon kin.

Third Edition pushed the draconic humanoid further, starting with a new look and feel for kobolds, as well as half-dragons. As the edition evolved, draconic creatures and spawn of Tiamat also appeared, along with the dragonblood subtype. One race that fell into that subtype was the dragonborn of Bahamut, humanoids who, to show devotion to Bahamut, willingly took on draconic traits in place of their original biology.

The dragonborn of the 4th Edition D&D game take many cues from the dragonborn of Bahamut, as well as other dragonblood creatures from 3rd Edition. Like their predecessors, the dragonborn bear a mystique and fierceness unique to dragons, and they can be strongly affiliated with draconic deities. In fact, in an earlier iteration of 4th Edition, the dragonborn were called the dragonblood.

In the final analysis, though, the dragonborn name was a better fit. It more aptly describes a race of draconic humanoids that share the legacy of the most important creature in the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game.

Dragonborn truly favor divine powers, especially those of the paladin. Investing oneself in the tenets of a faith gives direction and purpose, something many dragonborn crave. Although doing so ties a dragonborn to a deity or church, it carries little to none of the stigma attached to the eldritch ways of the warlock. And the paladin's obligation is to stand in the vanguard of a church's defenders, which is the perfect place for a being that has a martial spirit.

RELIGION

Faith is a personal matter for each dragonborn, and it is an issue in which the dragon deities take prominence. Bahamut is most important among the dragonborn people, but Tiamat's cult thrives well in the hearts of avaricious dragonborn. Erathis, Ioun, and Kord also remain important as symbols of advancement and a progressive, fighting spirit.

Bereft of their own temples, most dragonborn practice religion in churches within mixed communities. They participate in few rites, unless duty, such as that placed on a cleric or paladin, or respect, such as that for a devout friend, compels them to do so. Clan elders preside over dragonborn marriages and funeral rites, for instance; absent these, family and close friends participate. Although gods might be invoked at such ceremonies, to call such rites religious would be a mistake.

ART

Dragonborn are practical and meticulous about their crafts. Like dwarves, they create few items for purely artistic reasons, preferring the coupling of functionality and beauty. Strong individuality among dragonborn causes them to focus more on personal items, such as weapons, rather than those that can't be carried, such as architecture or statuary. One exception to this generality of usability and beauty exists in the case of jewelry.

Crafters among the dragonborn take care and time with their work. A finished work is an expression of the nature and capabilities of its maker. Although completed items are seldom as ornate as the work of dwarves, a dragonborn item almost always has a distinctive flare. Elemental, draconic, and scale motifs are most common, as are bold colors and precious metals.

The love of bold colors and precious metals extends to jewelry, gems, armaments, and even coins. Many dragonborn crafters are jewelers, gemcutters, smiths, or minters. Clearly an expression of the draconic tendency to hoard valuables, dragonborn adorn themselves with baubles of all sorts, and dragonborn warriors and adventurers seek out the finest gear. Most dragonborn show reserve and taste in this aspect of personal adornment, rather than garish overindulgence.

LEISURE

Improving abilities and competition take precedence in dragonborn leisure activities. When dragonborn aren't honing their skills, they're playing a game or engaging in an activity to prove their grit—mental, physical, or spiritual. Dragonborn don't restrict their activities to familiar skills. Part of developing oneself is expanding one's horizons.

Dragonborn do prefer competitive games. Although team events are fine, contests that have one clear winner are favored. Therefore, a dragonborn hones skill at strategic board games, philosophic riddle contests, improvised storytelling events, and one-on-one sports.

The ferocity of the draconic spirit couples with physical strength and militaristic culture, leading dragonborn to create and participate in sports more violent than many other peoples are used to. In fact, numerous dragonborn—even nonheroic sorts—form fighting or wrestling clubs, as well as regular contests of weapon skill. Intrepid dragonborn try their hands

at actual blood sports, such as gladiatorial matches, pit fighting, and dueling.

ENEMIES AND ALLIES

Dragonborn have few overarching racial enemies or allies. Their history might have provided them with a natural enmity for tieflings, but that doesn't pan out in reality. The same can't be said for devils. It is the nature of dragonborn to form strong ties with trusted friends, however, and a dragonborn's boon companions are often treated more like family or clanmates.

Despite the centuries-gone war between Arkhosia and Bael Turath, few modern dragonborn hate tieflings. Most see the disintegration of the two nations as a mutually shameful episode in history, brought on as much by the eroding of Arkhosia's creed as the depravity of Bael Turath's rulers. Many dragonborn also recognize that those tieflings now alive aren't responsible for the wrongdoing of their forebears. So dragonborn weigh tieflings like they do other people—on individual merit, respecting even the worthy adversary.

Exceptions to this generality exist. Some dragonborn clans, especially those who have descended into barbarism or those who still serve dragons, still bear old grudges. More widespread among dragonborn, however, is ill will toward the true masters of Bael Turath, the devils who led the once-human empire astray. Few dragonborn are willing to put trust in anything or anyone that even seems to be aligned with the Nine Hells.

Dragonborn do rely on allies and friends. In fact, dragonborn are frequently without nearby family or clan members, and comrades are essential in the darkening world. Dragonborn give their all to support those who trust them. When such associates show a similar sense of duty, dragonborn come to see them like relatives. They eventually form clanlike

bonds with them, sharing the stories of their lives and people. Nondragonborn do well to realize the honor they're being given when such bonding occurs.

ENCOUNTERS

Dragonborn employ intense and straightforward tactics, aiming at taking enemies out of an ongoing clash. Their military leaders facilitate efficient butchery. Arcanists pour on damage, their attacks resembling dragon breath weapons.

The dragonborn presented here are intended to supplement those presented in the *Monster Manual*.

DRAGONBORN COMMANDANT TACTICS

The dragonborn commandant leads from the front, wading into adversaries along with the troops. He or she sizes up the opposition, quickly using *designating smite* to direct followers' attacks. When the chosen target becomes bloodied, the commandant gives a *termination order*. The commandant then uses *designating smite* again on the next turn to focus damage on another enemy. In between giving tactical directions, the dragonborn attacks using *arcing slice*, breathing *dragon breath* when more than one enemy can be caught in the blast.

DRAGONBORN ELEMENTALIST TACTICS

This dragonborn hangs back and opens the battle with *acid rain* on clustered opponents. He or she then uses *lightning blast*, supplementing with *dragon breath* when an opportunity presents itself. *Icicle spray* is the elementalists' preferred attack against foes that seem likely to approach and make melee attacks, and the dragonborn often uses this power just after resorting to *winging wind*.

Dragonborn Commandant Level 7 Elite Soldier (Leader)		
Medium natural humanoid		XP 600
Initiative +5	Senses Perception +4	
HP 158; Bloodied 79; see also <i>dragonborn frenzy</i>		
AC 24; Fortitude 22, Reflex 18, Will 21		
Saving Throws +2		
Speed 5		
Action Points 1		
⚔ Fullblade (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
+13 vs. AC; 1d12 + 5 damage and marked until the end of the commandant's next turn.		
⚔ Arcing Slice (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
The dragonborn commandant makes two fullblade attacks, each against a different target within reach.		
⚔ Designating Smite (standard; recharge ☞ ☞) ♦ Weapon		
+14 vs. AC; 1d12 + 9 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the commandant's next turn and slowed (save ends). In addition, while the creature is slowed due to this attack, the dragonborn commandant and all his allies gain a +1 power bonus to attack rolls and a +4 power bonus to damage rolls against that target.		
⚔ Termination Order (immediate reaction, when an adjacent enemy becomes bloodied; encounter) ♦ Weapon		
The dragonborn commandant immediately recharges <i>designating smite</i> (if necessary), and uses that power against the triggering enemy.		
⚡ Dragon Breath (minor; encounter) ♦ Acid		
Close blast 3; +12 vs. Reflex (+13 while bloodied); 1d6 + 5 acid damage.		
Dragonborn Frenzy (only while bloodied)		
A dragonborn gains a +1 racial bonus to attack rolls and a +2 bonus to damage rolls.		
Alignment Any	Languages Common, Draconic	
Skills History +13, Intimidate +14		
Str 20 (+8)	Dex 11 (+3)	Wis 12 (+4)
Con 15 (+5)	Int 16 (+6)	Cha 18 (+7)
Equipment plate armor, fullblade		

Dragonborn Elementalist		Level 8 Artillery
Medium natural humanoid		XP 350
Initiative +4	Senses Perception +4	
HP 67; Bloodied 33; see also <i>dragonborn fury</i>		
AC 21; Fortitude 19, Reflex 21, Will 20		
Speed 6		
⚔ Quarterstaff (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
+12 vs. AC (+13 while bloodied); 1d8 + 2 damage.		
⚡ Lightning Blast (standard; at-will) ♦ Arcane, Lightning		
Area burst 1 within 10; +13 vs. Reflex (+14 while bloodied); 2d6 + 4 lightning damage.		
⚡ Dragon Breath (minor; encounter) ♦ Cold or Fire		
Close blast 5; +11 vs. Reflex (+12 while bloodied); 1d6 + 4 cold damage or fire damage; choose when using the power.		
⚡ Acid Rain (standard; encounter) ♦ Arcane, Acid		
Area burst 2 within 10; +13 vs. Fortitude (+14 while bloodied); 1d8 + 4 acid damage. The acid rain persists until the end of the elementalists' next turn, dealing 10 acid damage to any creature that starts or ends its turn in the area, though a creature can take this damage only once on a given turn.		
⚡ Icicle Spray (standard; encounter) ♦ Arcane, Cold		
Close blast 5; +13 vs. Reflex (+14 while bloodied); 2d6 + 6 cold damage. Blast becomes difficult terrain until the end of the elementalists' next turn.		
Dragonborn Fury (only while bloodied)		
A dragonborn gains a +1 racial bonus to attack rolls.		
Winging Wind (immediate interrupt, when the elementalists would be hit by a melee or ranged attack; encounter)		
Winds whip up, granting the elementalists a +2 bonus to the defense targeted by the attack. The elementalists can shift 2 squares, ignoring difficult terrain, and the attacker is pushed 2 squares.		
Alignment Any	Languages Common, Draconic	
Skills Arcana +13, History +15		
Str 15 (+6)	Dex 11 (+4)	Wis 10 (+4)
Con 13 (+5)	Int 19 (+8)	Cha 17 (+7)
Equipment robes, quarterstaff		

ENCOUNTER GROUP

The following is a sample central cadre in a dragonborn mercenary company. It represents the unit's commander and that commander's pet, the magical center of the unit, and the commander's trusted soldiers.

Level 7 Encounter (XP 1,550)

- ♦ 1 dragonborn commandant (level 7 elite soldier [leader])
- ♦ 2 dragonborn soldiers (level 5 soldier)
- ♦ 1 dragonborn elementalists (level 8 artillery)
- ♦ 1 rage drake (level 5 brute) ☉

About the Author

Chris Sims started out working for small d20 companies in 2003, then landed a freelance editor gig for Wizards RPG R&D. Wizards finally got annoyed enough by his constant applications to hire him as the *Duel Masters* editor in 2005. From there, Chris wheedled his way into RPG R&D as an editor, and finally became a story designer after masterminding a few choice assassinations. His credits include *Monster Manual V*, *Secrets of Sarlona*, *Rules Compendium*, and the *Eberon Survival Guide* (thanks, Logan!).