

NYAMBE

WALKING WITH THE ORISHA

BY CHRIS JONES

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Atlas Games' upcoming *Ancestral Vault* sourcebook explores the heart of African adventure with 96 pages of mundane D20 System equipment, special and superior items, and magical objects of all degrees of power. Though designed for use with the *Nyambe: African Adventures* setting, these items can find their way into any campaign as exotic treasures from faraway lands. The following outtakes are just a sample of the wealth of D20 System material found in *Ancestral Vault*.

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Prestige Class: The Stilt-Walker

For the Xon'mo, stilt-walkers are quite an anomaly. They are spellcasters who are inexplicably allowed to flaunt all that is held sacred by the descendents of Bashar. In some places, they are considered clowns and jesters, with their lilted backwards speech and comic antics; in others, they are feared and respected as powerful wizards, often considered the only ones brave enough to browbeat the orisha into giving up their precious power. Regardless of how others view

them, one thing is certain: the stilt-walkers are connected to the orisha in ways no other Xon'mo understands.

As the name suggests, a stilt-walker performs from atop a pair of stilts. Many stilt-walkers even go so far as to spend every waking hour on them. They tend to dress in bright colors, wear funny-looking masks, and sport impossibly unrealistic phallic accessories. They sing, they dance, they joke, they do everything that the great storytellers do except they go about it in as crass a manner as possible. While they sometimes address their crude humor to those caught watching, they usually just speak to the orisha directly. For the typical spellcaster, getting spells from the orisha is simply a matter of faith (if he is a n'anga cleric), theft (if he is a mchawi wizard), or bad blood (if he is a sei sorcerer). Stilt-walkers are no different, but they also resort to tomfoolery in order to get special favors and powers from the apparently banal and easily amused fire orisha so beloved by the Xon'mo.

Despite being looked down upon in Xon'mo society, stilt-walkers are generally left to their own devices. They are considered a necessary evil more than anything else. Insults and slurs are never directed at them in their presence; at worst, they are seen as half-wits who have been touched by the gods for inconceivable reasons.



Hit Die: d6

Requirements

To qualify to become a stilt-walker, a character must meet the following criteria:

Skills: 5 ranks in Perform, 8 ranks in Balance

Spellcasting: Ability to cast 3rd-level spells

Feats: Craft Wondrous Item

Special: Must be a member of the Xon'mo tribe

Class Skills

The stilt-walker's class skills (and the ability for each one) are Balance (Dex), Bluff (Cha), Concentration (Cha), Craft (any) (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Intuit Direction (Wis), Jump (Str), Knowledge (any) (Int), Listen (Wis), Perform (Cha), Profession (Wis), Scry (Int, exclusive skill), Sense Motive (Wis), Spellcraft (Int), Spot (Wis), and Tumble (Dex).

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the stilt-walker prestige class:

Spellcasting: A stilt-walker continues training in magic. Thus, when a new stilt-walker level is gained, the character gains new spells per day as if he had also gained a level in a spellcasting class he belonged to before he added the prestige class. He does not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained (improved chance of Controlling or Rebuking undead, metamagic or item creation feats, and so on). This essentially means that he adds the level of stilt-walker to the level of some other spellcasting class the character has, then determines spells per day, spells known, and caster level accordingly.

If a character had more than one spellcasting class before he became a stilt-walker, he must decide to which class he adds each level of stilt-walker for purposes of determining spells per day when he adds the new level.

Create Stilts: At 1st level, a stilt-walker learns how to make his stilts. The stilts are enchanted and specifically designed to give the wearer the same mobility he would otherwise have without them. Stilts are 6 feet in height, making Medium- or Small-sized stilt-walkers Large-sized, and Tiny- and Diminutive-sized stilt-walkers Medium-sized while wearing them. A stilt-walker suffers all size-related penalties and bonuses as a creature of the new size. A stilt-walker's enchanted stilts work only for him and he receives the benefits of this class only while wearing them.

It takes 1 full day to make a pair of enchanted stilts. Enchanted stilts have the following the qualities:

Cost to Create: 50 gp + 2 XP; *Hardness:* 10; *Hit Points:* 10; *Break DC:* 26; *Weight:* 20 lb. per pair.

Stilt Walking: At 1st level a stilt-walker learns how to move on stilts as if they were a natural extension of his body. More importantly, he learns the intricacies of spellcasting from such an untenable position. Normally, a spellcaster in stilts must make a Concentration check (DC 10 + spell level) to cast a spell; stilt-walkers, however, are not subject to this and may cast spells as if they were not wearing them. Otherwise, stilt-walkers must make Concentration skill checks like regular spellcasters in the various situations where such a check is required.

Long Stride: At 2nd level the stilt-walker can perform a magic chant that increases his run speed by +10 feet per round per class level possessed. At 5th level, this affects anyone within 20 feet for as long as they stay in range. The Long Stride effect lasts for as long as the stilt-walker maintains the chant. While chanting, he can take no other actions.

Improved Performance: At 3rd level, if a stilt-walker successfully gives an enjoyable performance (DC 15), then the next spell he casts is enhanced as per the Extend Spell feat. Doing this has the added benefit of not requiring him to sacrifice a higher-level spell slot in order to receive the benefit of the effect.

If the stilt-walker fails, but gives a routine performance (a roll result of 10 to 14), then the next spell he casts is +2 effective caster levels higher than the spell's actual level.

The minimum time for this performance is 4 rounds.

Permanent Stilts: At 4th level, the stilt-walker's stilts become a part of him forever, transforming over

a number of days equal to 6 minus his Wisdom modifier (minimum of 1) into flesh and blood extensions of his original legs. His torso, head, and arms also reform proportionately, making him Medium-sized if he was originally Tiny- or Diminutive-sized, or Large-sized if he was originally Medium- or Small-sized; larger creatures increase to the next size step. This gives the stilt-walker all of the standard benefits and penalties for such a change in size. Henceforth, the stilt-walker is a member of the Giant type.

Greater Performance: At 5th level, if a stilt-walker successfully gives an extraordinary performance (DC 30), then the next spell he casts is enhanced as per the Maximize Spell feat. Doing this has the added benefit of not requiring him to sacrifice a higher-level spell slot in order to receive the benefit of the effect.

If the stilt-walker fails, but gives a memorable performance (a roll result of 25 to 29), then the next spell he casts is enhanced as per the Empower Spell feat and does not require him to use up a higher-level spell slot.

If the stilt-walker fails, but gives a great performance (a roll result of 20 to 24), then the next spell he casts is enhanced as per theEnlarge Spell feat and does not require him to use up a higher-level spell slot.

On a critical success, the stilt-walker can freely select the effect he desires from either Greater Performance or Improved Performance.

The minimum time for this performance is 4 rounds. For a roll result lower than 20, consult Improved Performance to determine the effect.

Wondrous Item: Kitunzi's Frightful Mask

This tin contains face paint similar to the kind worn by participants in tribal ceremonies, except this variant is enchanted. Wearing this pigment gives a character a terrifying visage. Creatures and other characters encountering him for the first time have a Hostile attitude regardless of how they would have reacted otherwise. A character wearing the frightful mask gains a +4 circumstance bonus to his Intimidate and Perform skill checks for a number of hours equal to his Charisma modifier. However, he receives a -4 circumstance penalty to all other Charisma-related skill checks.

If this is applied at the same time as *Kitunzi's beatific mask*, the wearer receives 1 point of permanent Charisma damage. One canister provides enough paint for a single use. Its effects lasts for 6 hours

Caster Level: 7th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *emotion*; *Market Price:* 320 gp; *Weight:* —

The Stilt-Walker

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+0	+2	+2	+2	Create Stilts, Stilt Walking
2	+1	+2	+2	+2	Long Stride
3	+2	+3	+3	+3	Improved Performance
4	+3	+3	+3	+3	Permanent Stilts
5	+3	+4	+4	+4	Greater Performance

Wondrous Item: Kitunzi's Beatific Mask

This is identical to *Kitunzi's frightful mask*, except rather than fill those who meet the character wearing the face paint with loathing and hate, it fills them with serenity and love. Their attitudes on encountering him the first time become Friendly regardless of how they would have reacted otherwise. A character wearing the beatific mask gains a +4 circumstance bonus to Diplomacy and Perform skill checks, though he receives a -4 circumstance penalty to all other Charisma-related skill checks.

If this is applied at the same time as *Kitunzi's frightful mask*, the wearer receives 1 point of permanent Charisma damage. One canister provides enough paint for a single use. Its effects lasts for 6 hours

Caster Level: 7th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *emotion*; *Market Price:* 320 gp; *Weight:* —

Wondrous Item: Stilt Charms

Many entertainers and Xon'mo stilt-walkers who perform while standing atop stilts decorate them with charms, such as totems representing the orisha they serve, bells for musical accompaniment, or gaily colored bangles and bobtails to make the stilts more visually interesting. Enchanted *stilt charms* let stilt-walking spellcasters increase the size of their mystical arsenals. Each stilt leg may carry one enchanted charm, with no two charms being alike.

Stilt charm abilities stack. They may only be used with true stilts or worn by stilt-walkers who have undergone the Permanent Stilts metamorphosis. A *stilt charm* counts as its own magic item slot and does not take up a normal foot or leg slot. Only two stilt charms can ever be worn, regardless of the number of stilts.

Caster Level: 10th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item; *Weight:* —

Stilt Charms

Charm	Effect	Market Price
Tin Bell	Disregard previous failures on Perform checks	1,000 gp
Silver Bell	+2 enhancement bonus to Perform checks	2,000 gp
Gold Bell	+2 enhancement bonus to Bardic Knowledge checks	2,000 gp
Eagle Fetish	+2 enhancement bonus to Spot and Search checks	4,000 gp
Panther Fetish	+2 enhancement bonus to Climb and Jump checks	4,000 gp
Baboon Fetish	+2 enhancement bonus to Balance and Tumble checks	4,000 gp
Cat's Eye Spindle	<i>Feather fall</i> once per day as cast by a 10th-level Wizard	8,000 gp
Serpent Fetish	Tremorsense 60 ft.	8,000 gp
Agate Spindle	Absorb 24 hp damage/day from one element type	12,000 gp
Hyena Fetish	Darkvision 120 ft.	20,000 gp
Diamond Spindle	Ability to fly (20 ft.) with poor maneuverability	30,000 gp
Kosan Fetish	Frightful Presence (per the special ability)	40,000 gp

Wondrous Item: Jird Hat

In the borderlands between Bashar'ka and Nibomay, Xon'mo men often wear a peculiar kind of skullcap made of felt and jird skins. A jird is a desert-dwelling mouse with large hind legs and short forelegs. It lives in shallow burrows and is known for eating only with its left "hand." The Xon'mo in this region follow a similar custom, which they believe originated with the ancestral fire orisha Rehani when she burned off the right hand of a man who offended her. As show of respect toward her, those Xon'mo who worship Rehani eat, gesture, and greet others only with their left hand. Jird feed primarily on mwambe leaves and matoke seeds, neither of which is consumed in the millet-heavy Xon'mo diet. As such, the rodents are not thought of as pests. They are, in fact, considered very lucky as they display the same left-handed grace as the humans with whom they share the land. Jird living in a Xon'mo household are almost treated like members of the family, people from across the border in Nibomay often joke. When a jird dies, its skin is carefully harvested and then cured. When enough skins are taken, the collector then commissions a special hat to be made from them.

A typical jird hat confers upon its wearer a +2 luck bonus to all skill checks and saving throws.

Caster Level: 10th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, 20 high-quality jird skins; *Market Price:* 8,000 gp; *Weight:* —

Wondrous Item: Breath of Rehani

Entertainers originally created this chemical concoction to allow them to safely spit long, mesmerizing streamers of fire. When Xon'mo alchemists got hold of it, they modified it in such a way that it became a devastating weapon.

One round after a character consumes the potion, fire explodes from his mouth in a line out to a maximum distance of 480 feet. The fire stream deals 12d6 points of fire damage to the primary target. After it strikes, flames leap to as many as 12 secondary targets. The secondary fire streams each strike one target and deal 6d6 points of damage. The character chooses secondary targets as he likes, but they must all be within 30 feet of the primary target, and no target can be struck more than once. He does not need attack all the secondary targets.

All targets can attempt Reflex saving throws (DC 20) for half damage. Any inanimate objects caught in a flame stream's path must make saving throws to resist catching on fire, as per the standard D20 System rules.

Caster Level: 12th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *fireball*, *chain lightning*; *Market Price:* 5,472 gp; *Weight:* 1 lb.



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