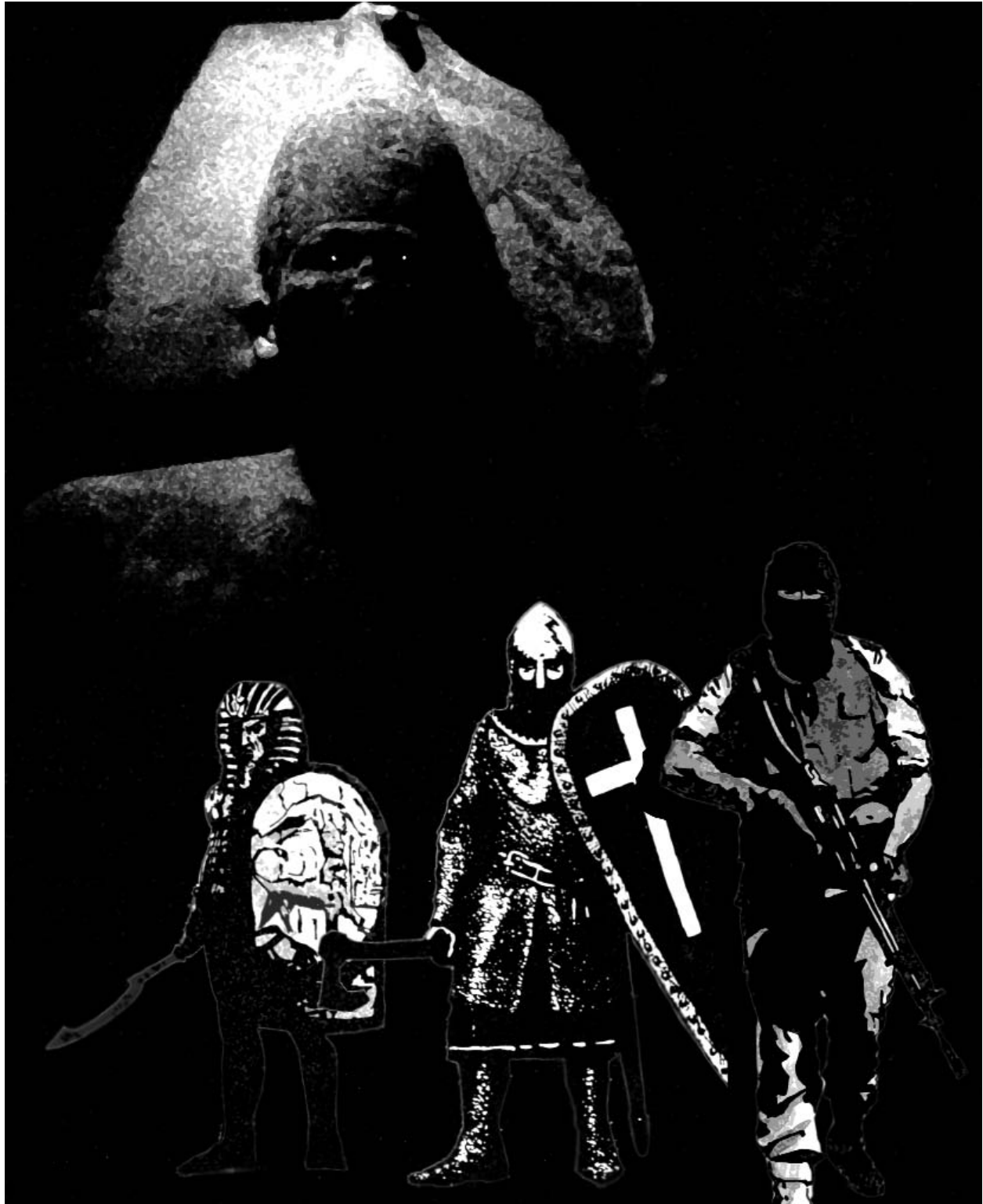




Monster-hunters fighting a holy war?

The Sword of Snesferu

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Introduction

According to ancient legend, more than 2,000 years before the birth of the Messiah, a truly foul pharaoh rose to power in the time of the Third Dynasty in Egypt. The name of this dark pharaoh was Nephren-Ka, but his worshippers called him The Black Pharaoh. Nephren-Ka revived the worship of dark gods such as Nyarlat, whom he renamed Nyarlathotep. He also found the Shining Trapezohedron and built a temple around it. A champion of Egypt named Sneferu (or Snefru, Snofru and to the Greeks: Soris) overthrew Nephren-Ka, and his name was utterly erased from Egyptian history. However, the dark religions he rediscovered were not forgotten again. Nephren-Ka and his followers fled to the underground catacombs of Kish, where Nephren-Ka sacrificed a hundred victims to Nyarlathotep. In exchange, Nephren-Ka was given the gift of prophecy, and he spends the rest of his days drawing the future of the Earth on the walls of his tomb.

This is where the legends stop, but they did not end.

Nephren-Ka's name was utterly erased from history, but another aspect of the legend was lost in the sands of time. The pharaoh Sneferu knew that his victory over the Black Pharaoh could be only a temporary one. Evil cannot be destroyed, only halted. To make sure that Nephren-Ka could never again rise to the power he once wielded, Sneferu created one of the first secret societies in history; a group of loyal followers, experienced in Egyptian magic and pure of mind. Nobody, except maybe the current leaders, know what its original name was, but today they call themselves Suyûf Sneferu, the Sword of Sneferu, and they still fight their ancient holy war against the foul followers of Nephren-Ka, the Brotherhood of the Black Pharaoh.

Over the millennia the order has fought an endless battle against the minions of Nyarlathotep. They have booked many victories, but also many defeats. It has become clear

to the masters of the order that they will never win this war as the order is fighting a desperate uphill battle on what is basically the home ground of one of the most powerful of all Outer Gods. A place the dark god has made his home untold millennia before Mankind settled there. Another important factor that has diminished the chance of ever winning this war is that after the arrival of newer, monotheistic religions the old religion has all but disappeared and together with it has gone the support of the gods.

They might never win this war, but the Sword of Sneferu will make sure they will try to stop Nyarlathotep from ever gaining power again in the Egypt, no matter how, no matter the cost.

Why the Sword of Sneferu?

The Sword of Sneferu (they call themselves the Swords for short) isn't your typical anti-Mythos group like *Delta Green* or PISCES. The Swords is not a rational, well-organized and funded "good" (government) group fighting cosmic evil to save mankind. The Swords represents a more gray area of Mythos-fighting. It is a terrorist-like, fanatical, irrational group who will fight innocent Westerners and Mythos threats alike.

The mindset of the Swords reflects the problems of the Middle East. The frustration and resentment of a proud heritage that has been squandered by the West, and at the same time the need of the region to somehow cooperate with the decadent Western World if they want to survive and grow (and in the case of *Call of Cthulhu* setting, vice versa).

This article plays with stereotypes which is part of the pulp magazine tradition (which some could call racist). In the original pulps and in later published *Call of Cthulhu* scenarios Arabs are pictured as shifty-eyed foreigners up to no good, making deals and selling their mothers if they can make a profit. This article portrays the Swords as untrustworthy because of their heritage, rather than as a stereotype, whilst at the same time making them part of the "good" side as they desperately sacrifice their lives and sanity fighting

On the Matter of Egyptian Names

Suyûf Sneferu mixes Arabic Sayf/Suyûf with "Egyptian" Sneferu (and that in an English, not Arabic, form). The problem is that the Egyptian name, Sneferu, was not readable until after the decipherment of hieroglyphs by Champollion in the 19th century. Before that Sneferu was known to the world by the Greek form of his name, Sôris (Greek = Σούρις), including in Arabic texts. The Arabic version would then be Sayf/Suyûf Sûris (note the use of a long U in place of Greek omega). Djadjaemankh (a "living" native speaker of Egyptian) passed the actual Egyptian name on to his followers. "Sneferu" represents a modern scholarly convention, not the actual pronunciation of ancient Egyptian. In Coptic (the latest stage of Egyptian, which used the Greek alphabet, including vowels) the name was probably something like Snofrou. "The Sword of Sneferu" in Coptic would then be something like ne Shôpshu ne-Snofrou (the first ne = plural "the"; Shôpshu = Sword). "Suyûf" for "sword" here is a "Coptization" of an existing Ancient Egyptian word; the Coptic word Shôpshu does not actually exist in reality. If the Keeper wants a real word, you could use ne Gopte en Snofrou (Gopte is actually borrowed from Semitic languages into Egyptian) and can mean "knife" as well (thus really "blade"). However, a better solution might be ne Sçfe ne-Snofrou. Sçfe is a Coptic word meaning "sword", one that comes from Ancient Egyptian. It is also related to the Arabic word Sayf, so it would be very easy to see ancient Egyptian sefat en Seneferu becoming Coptic ne Sçfe ne-Snofrou and then Arabic Suyûf Sanafû.