

## Portable Memory Core 5

: Set for External Reception (Audio only):  
: Cleared for maximum storage:  
: Universal Translator Engaged:

-----Awaiting Report:

Science Officer, Reporting for the Commander:

As the last surviving Alliance Officer, I leave this record in the hope that a Humanspace ship may find the colony world of Tékumel in the future. It has been sixty years since the stars went out. We never did find out what hit us. My guess is some kind of weapon, using a modified warp bubble, although it would be much larger than anything we've developed.

The human colonists have pulled together well, perhaps better than our non-human allies. The Ssü and the Hlüss are a growing threat: this was their world once, and perhaps it will be theirs again. They are certainly intent on reclaiming it. Nevertheless, I am hopeful. Although the standards of education are declining, the human spirit survives. We have power from the reactors of the grounded ships, although the lack of large natural metal deposits on Tékumel is going to be a problem in the future. We also lack any draft animals. No one seems to have thought to bring horses or meat animals to our new home...

-----Awaiting Report:

Do you hear me, Memkor? My grandfather showed me the ritual for your awakening, as his grandsire had shown him. As tradition decrees, I make the report. The harvest was good this year and we have traded three Hmá for a Chlén-beast to pull our new cart... Err, oh yes, and some traders came in the spring...

-----Awaiting Report:

A Sorcerer of the Bednálljan Empire fears not the spirit of the casket. Let it contest with me and we shall see who is the greater.

La! This spirit is a craven thing!

-----Awaiting Report:

...see, that little light comes on. I told you it wasn't dangerous, Hashrán. Must be some device of the Ancients by its markings. It was brought back by my great-grandfather from one of his campaigns in the West. The only one like it in the Empire. Not sorcery exactly, but knowledge certainly, if we could only understand its method.

The problem is, it doesn't seem to actually do anything...

Stop fiddling with that, Hashrán; it could be dangerous! Hashrán!

*(Sound of major explosion, followed by volcanic hissing, then silence)*

----- ...

This campaign is set in the world of M.A.R Barker's *Empire of the Petal Throne*. Humans and other species colonized the planet Tékumel millennia ago. Since then, it has lost contact with the wider universe. The present level of technology is around that of the pre-gunpowder European Middle Ages, with a few exceptions. Here are some important points to bear in mind as you read this:

- The *social background* of Tékumel is not medieval, but is closer to that of certain ancient non-Western societies, like Egypt or India or China. The social system is a complex hierarchy of extended family groups called *clans*. Etiquette and honor are very important.
- There are no horses or riding animals on Tékumel, since the original colonists did not bring any. There is a draft animal, called the Chlén, which is similar to a six-legged triceratops.
- There are no stars in the nighttime sky.
- There are several intelligent species on Tékumel, of which humanity is one of the most feared. The intelligent species are divided into two blocs, those allied to humanity and those opposed to it. For the most part, these blocs antedate the Time of Darkness when Tékumel lost contact with the wider universe.
- The planet lacks large metal deposits, so iron and steel are extremely valuable.
- The ecosystem is a mix of imported, artificial, native and mutated life forms. Some of it is very unpleasant.
- Humanity has been on Tékumel a long time (30,000+ years).

## **The Planet of Tékumel**

### ***Ancient History***

The world of Tékumel is slightly warmer and larger than Earth. At the equator, the temperature gets up to 60°C. This was a major factor in the development of the human societies on the planet. When human explorers first arrived, it was covered with a riotous growth of poisonous vegetation. Extensive terraforming changed the planet. The blood-purple jungles were driven back, and the madly hostile native species -- the Ssü and Hlüss -- restricted to remote reservations, watched by remote defenses. There, the Old Species brooded, survived, adapted, and bided their time. Soon, various alien allies and rivals of Humankind came to Tékumel.

Thirty thousand years ago, Tékumel's star system fell into a dimensional hole -- a pocket universe. The nights were black, for there were no more stars. Cities died; rivers left their beds. Tékumel's resources had always been few; the civilization there is dependent upon imports. Iron was particularly scarce. As the wheels of technology ground to a stop, humanity adapted to non-technical life. In their ancient fastnesses, the Ssü and Hlüss exulted. Patches of the Old Life reappeared.

The Time of Darkness, after Tékumel's fall into its pocket dimension, brought uncontrolled competition between all forms of life. Some Terran species have triumphed (such as the ant and the humans) and some were replaced by their alien competitors. The fittest survived; their descendants rule.

### **Some Common Animals**

**Chlén:** A six-legged horned reptile used as a beast of burden. Its fibrous skin is used to make armor and weapons.

**Hmá:** Llama-like herd animal.

**Hmélu:** Small Hmá.

**Cats and Dogs** were imported to Tékumel and survived the Time of Darkness with Man.

There are intelligent non-humans, descendants of those other colonists who were trapped on Tékumel. These are not as widespread as humanity, but do thrive in some areas. In many places, inter-species co-operation is commonplace. There are also the descendants of Mankind's great enemies from the interstellar wars. These are the inimical species, and there is no communication between the two blocs.

## *Tékumel Today*

Today, central Tékumel is dominated by the Five Empires:

**Livyánu:** ruled by magic and secret cults, the Livyáni have no direct border with Tsolyánu, though ocean trade is common.

**Mu'ugalavyá:** a little over a decade ago, the Mu'ugalavyáni fought the Tsolyáni in a vicious little border war. The Tsolyáni Empire won easily and conquered most of the border forest areas.

**Salarvyá:** the black-bearded Salarvyáni are a treacherous people. A few decades ago, they fought Tsolyánu in a major war and were thrashed. Now, they have little stomach for further defeats, but are always watching for signs of weakness.

**Yán Kór:** ruled by the obsessed Baron Áld, who fanatically seeks the destruction of all things Tsolyánu. The Tsolyáni are scurrying to complete preparations to meet the threatened invasion, and each day shiploads of provisions, men, and military goods travel north.

**Tsolyánu:** This empire, largest of the Five Empires, is the site of our campaign. The Seal Emperor, 61st of the dynasty, lives in the great fortress of Avanthár just north of the capital, Béy Sü. There he dwells inviolate, served by the Omnipotent Azure Legion, a corps of deaf and dumb agents which provides him with information gathered from throughout the Empire. He sits upon the Petal Throne, a seat in the form of a flower, carved from a single block of translucent jade.

The Empire's most impressive feature is its network of Sákbe roads, each a Great Wall of China in itself. These raised stone highways stand 8-10m high and 20-25m across. They are studded with guard towers, and fortified at the

Empire's borders. The Sákbe roads contain three stepped pathways: the highest and narrowest for Imperial officials and messengers; the second for troops; the lowest and widest for traders and ordinary folk. No riding beasts exist, so all travel is done on foot, or on one of the creaky, slow-moving carts pulled by domesticated Chlén-beasts. Trade is conducted by caravans of bearers.

The Tsolyáni are devoted to formal rule and ritual (as demonstrated by the stepped Sákbe roads). The government is an authoritarian bureaucracy of ancient cruelty. Most Tsolyáni belong to a clan, whose rules govern social and

economic life. Each city's clan chiefs gather to select representatives to the councils in the Palace of the Realm. Some clans are powerful, others feeble and plebeian. Most clans boast several lineages, which vary in status. Tsolyánu has over 1500 recognized clans.

## *Politics*

The present Seal Emperor, Hirkáne Tlakotáni, is almost seventy. This presages a power struggle. When the Emperor dies, his children compete in tests for the throne. The winner is crowned; the rest, ceremonially sacrificed.

The Emperor's heirs have been raised by various clans, noble families, military outposts, and priestly colleges. The presently declared candidates for the throne are:

**Prince Eselné:** the individual whom your own clan backs. He is an adherent of the famed General Kéttukal, and supported by many military officers. He is bluff, forthright, decisive, and physically very strong. Some believe he lacks diplomatic ability and cleverness. The temple of Karakán supports him.

**Prince Dhich'uné:** fanatically devoted to Sárku, Lord of Worms, and is currently a 9<sup>th</sup> level Adept in that sect. He is also supported by the temple of Hrü'ü and the more fanatic adherents of Ksárul. Most folk consider him anathema — a devious and dangerous fanatic. He has no military ability, but is trying to raise legions loyal to his dark faith (including, it is rumored, one composed entirely of undead).

**Prince Rereshqála:** protege of the lofty Clan of Sea Blue, pillar of the Royalist Party. An urbane and cultured man much given to opulent entertainments and the arts. Rumor has it that he may renounce the Gold and retire to his villa near Jakálla.

**Prince Mridóbu:** protege of the Chamberlain of Avanthár and the exalted court circles at Avanthár. He has lived all his life at the center of the state and is familiar with every aspect of government. Smooth, polished, yet cold and unprepossessing, his profession of the faith of Ksárul is lip-service only.

**Prince Surundáno:** protege of the temple of Thúmis. He was revealed in order to swing the support of the temples of Hnálla, Avánthe, and Belkhánu away from Eselné and towards a less militaristic candidate. He was

trained as a scholar-priest before being informed of his princely status, and he is still somewhat shy and retiring, though struggling to cope.

**Prince Mirusíya:** protege of the powerful Vríddi clan. He was revealed by the temple of Vimúhla and the Vríddi clan to counter an attempt by Eselné to ally the two war temples (Karakán and Vimúhla) into a single strong military party under his leadership. Mirusíya is an experienced soldier, has lived the day-to-day life of the Empire, and is familiar with its problems. A major problem he faces is the ancient rivalry between the Vimúhla-worshipping western clans the eastern Vríddi aristocracy.

**Princess Ma'ín (nicknamed “the Exquisite”):** originally the protege of the temple of Avánthe, but now devoted to Dlamélish after a sudden and unexplained conversion. She is spoiled, whimsical, and given to voluptuous entertainments which strain her Imperial stipend to its limits. She has the support only of the temples of Dlamélish and Hriháyal, plus a few members of Avánthe and Dlamélish who prefer a woman to any man. It is widely believed that Ma'ín plans to renounce the Gold and marry one of her half- brothers. While this would not make her Empress, it would give her supporters advantage with the backers of the future Emperor. She is currently vacillating between Prince Eselné, whom she has known since boyhood, and the newly revealed Prince Mirusíya.

## Character Conceptions

Tékumel is a colorful world and you should not feel restricted to the generic “guy with a sword” which is so common in RPG’s. There are lots of odd backgrounds and extreme attitudes in Tsolyánu. The following bits and pieces are in no way exhaustive or exclusive. They are intended to give you a feel for what is possible. For example,

**The Bodyguard.** You are probably ex-military and make your living protecting others. In a dangerous world, it is not a job for the faint of heart, but there is no shortage of work for those who have the skills and the attitude. A good bodyguard has to be alert, reliable and brave and there is a lot to know if you are to keep your client safe. You will tend to work for the temples and clans who are most friendly to your own.

**The Trader:** Your business is business, you have been doing deals since you were six. Maybe you specialize, in salt, in wine, in poisons, virtually everything is legal and there are profits to be made if you have the judgement and the nerve.

**Hriháyal Worshipper:** Lady Hriháyal is the goddess of gamblers and other risk takers. The goddess requires that you should experience life at the maximum, you can sleep when you are dead. Every new taste, every possible experience is out there for you to try with her blessing. You take the rough with the smooth, keep a cool head and play the game of life.

**Sárku Worshipper:** Everyone dies, but you plan to survive the experience. Through the ceremonies of your faith, you look to resurrection. Not in some spiritual sense, but as physical persistence in this world. If you gain sufficient power in the Temple, you can get them to provide you with the rituals of un-death before you breathe your last. Then you will be forever.

**Street Cop:** You are part of the city police, you patrol the streets keeping the Emperor’s peace and crushing those who would threaten it. You hit the streets in armor and with backup, and you will need it. Some people *are* above the law, some just *think* they are. Knowing the difference is vital to keeping your skin intact. No shortage of personal retinues or private armies, people with contacts to straighten little “accidents,” like murder. Your badge protects you, but not enough.

**The Priest of Qón:** *“aids those who are attacked by the powers of the Dark. He is depicted as a six-legged beast... with a canine head and an open mouth filled with fangs. In his forepaws he bears two carved maces ... “.* You wear the dog mask of Qón and serve he who guards the gates of Hell against those who would come forth.

**The Open Hand.** You are an exponent of one of the unarmed combat systems and a priest of either Thúmis or

Keténgku. You have been trained in the monasteries of the Chákas to be able to kill with your bare hands, hardening your body and strengthening your spirit for the tests of skill and faith. However, in places where no obvious weapons are allowed, you become the weapon to protect your masters and serve their ends. For places where conventional weapons are impossible, the Open Hand is the only weapon you need.

### **Sample Characters**

The following are some simplified descriptions of possible player characters to demonstrate some of the choices open to players.

#### **The Generalist - Morusai hi Korodu**

Some characters are good all around. Morusai is better than average fast, agile, intelligent etc. He has a number of combat skills at sufficient competence to enable him to fight a moderately skilled opponent (such as an ordinary soldier or policeman). He has a certain athleticism over short distances (he can climb, run, swim etc). Morusai is also well educated, he went to Temple school and was sufficiently literate to get a job, at a junior rank, in the Imperial Bureaucracy (which is how he earns a good living). He is also a Lay Priest of the Temple of Karakán (which gives him some access to their unique resources). Morusai therefore has a certain position in society, not a high one, but enough to promise promotion to something better. Morusai can handle himself in a fight or at a formal social event. He can use his fists or his wits. He is not brilliant in any one area, but he has no real weaknesses.

**Does this approach work?** Yes. You get a character that can do something in any situation. The generalist is never without some options. Over a campaign, you can develop higher skills in favorite areas.

**What's the drawback to this type?** Sometimes being above average is not quite good enough.

#### **The Balancing act - Orun hi Kharsan**

This sort of character has one great area of strength counter-balanced by one major area of weakness. With Orun his huge brain is his major advantage, his complete feebleness is his main disadvantage. Orun is both fast thinking and observant. His brains have allowed him to reach a high position in the Temple of Thúmis, he is extremely well educated and highly trained in many difficult arts. However, Orun is so weak that he is capable of losing arm-wrestling competitions against children! Orun does have combat skills but they were carefully chosen for someone who cannot rely on raw power. He knows that he is no match for a prepared, competent warrior and so he avoids straight (or fair) fights. Orun is a brilliant detective and consulting astrologer, with a keen grasp of the social niceties.

**Does this approach work?** Yes. You get a clear-cut character that is very good at some things and bad at others. However, you are not totally specialized in one area and so can have a bunch of other abilities as well. As long as you avoid your particular Achilles heel, you are at least average.

**What's the drawback to this type?** If you get caught on your Achilles heel ...

**Other types of balancing act.** Strong but dumb, small but fast (high Dex, low St)

#### **The Specialist - Rhan hi Korodu**

Rhan is a specialist: he kills people. He is a provincial champion for an Army Legion and has fought in the Arena. Rhan is strong, fast and highly skilled with a sword. He is almost entirely focussed into combat, he has relatively few, low-level, skills which are not combat related. The concentration of ability makes him very good indeed at fighting, and there are not many people in the city that could beat him in a fair fight. Rhan has done very well at his specialty, but it is a dangerous life and he has been injured several times. Outside of the Arena, Rhan has a more limited competence.

**Does this approach work?** Yes. Specialists are extremely good at what they do, that can be a lot of fun. Specialist fighters have a straightforward role with clear objectives.

**What's the drawback to this type?** You have a narrow competence and may have to wait for your chance to shine. You can have only one effective response to a situation, which can be frustrating and dangerous. There are times when your specialty is exactly the wrong response.

**Other types of specialist.** The negotiator, the human computer, the sneak.

### **Things *not* to do.**

It is possible to think up a character that will be almost impossible to play, someone who would be either so incapable or so unwilling to adventure as to be unplayable. It is pointless to create a character who would not get involved in anything adventurous (a blind, pacifist cretin with no legs is probably not a good idea). Characters who suffer from a combination of total agoraphobia and a psychotic hatred of other humans are not going to get out much, or enjoy themselves when they do. Playing a significantly disabled character (psychologically or physically) could be interesting, but please give some thought to the implications. A one-armed man who wants to do something is more dramatic than a whole body who doesn't care.

You can have anything that will fit the atmosphere and background, if you are willing to pay for it, but silly or uncontrolled abilities are not right for this setting. Interesting weirdness is good. However, what I do not want are absolutes. So, you can have a good internal time sense, but you cannot be as accurate as a digital watch (no one is that accurate). Gross fight winners should also be avoided. Wanting to start play with a fully functional energy weapon may be understandable, but it is not very plausible or very usable. The first time you vaporize someone, every power bloc in the Empire will be on your trail to relieve you of the device (and probably your life), unless you are very clever. Having a valuable ability may keep you alive, but having an obviously valuable device may get you killed. I have no inherent objection to a character based largely around hardware but remember that there is a social context to consider. Be clever and you will benefit from it. Get greedy and die.

### **Starting with weirdness, spooky powers and advanced technology.**

Some weirdness is acceptable, but real key to these things is a good justification, it should be an interesting part of the characters background, not just as way to get an edge.

Tékumel has seen both widespread mutation and genetic engineering. Good examples of this are the N'lüss (who are very large humans). Possession of some unusual equipment is also an option, probably by inheritance or bequest. These could be actual devices of the Ancients or, more likely, more recent devices that are at a higher tech level than normal for modern Tsolyánu. For example,

*(1) Hrug is a N'lüss, the fierce warrior race from the mountains of the north. In the mold of a classic barbarian warrior, Hrug is more physically powerful and imposing than a normal human, he is difficult to mistake him for anything but a N'lüss and he is deadly in combat. He works as a professional bodyguard.*

**Game mechanics:** *N'lüss get bonuses for great size and strength, but they are savages, usually without clan or education, a great limitation on the character's freedom of action in Tsolyánu.*

*(2) Yavhir hiDiomaz is a priest of Wurú, the god of poisons. He carries a large, ornate dagger that has an internal poison reservoir in the hilt. The toxin is a concentrated liquid derived from the Food of the Ssü, which is both expensive and deadly. It turns the smallest cut into a potentially lethal injury. Refilling the reservoir is a delicate and dangerous task. One slip and Yavhir would die as quickly as his intended target. However, with his serpent blade, Yavhir can be discretely but powerfully armed.*

**Game mechanics:** *Only priests of Wurú in good standing have access to this sort of specialized weaponry. The Serpent Blade could be stolen or broken and it requires significant skill to use and maintain. These various limitations on access and use mean it's not a very expensive advantage, but the character still has to make the appropriate rolls to avoid accidental poisoning etc. A fumble in combat could mean they have just cut themselves with the poisoned blade.*

*(3) Kuni are genetically engineered falcons, a breed originally created by the ancients, they have enhanced intelligence and communication skills. Dhala hiMorutess has a kuni bird called Chai. Dhala was given his egg by her aunt (a noted naturalist). By a combination of dedication, skill and luck, Dhala was able to hatch the egg and raise the chick. The adult Chai is partly trained but willful, he will scout and report to Dhala, and his keen gaze can spot a drawn sword at a quarter mile. Chai has bonded with Dhala and she can communicate with him well, using vocalizations and hand gestures.*

**Game mechanics:** *Chai has not been professionally trained, which means that he is somewhat unreliable and prone to making his feelings known. This unreliability, combined with the practical limits of its intelligence and endurance make it interesting without being overpowering.*

**Background for devices and doodads.** If you are thinking of some weird stuff, trying answering the following questions:

*Where did you get this? To what extent do you control it? When have you used it before? Why hasn't somebody taken it off you? Why don't you just sell it and retire on the proceeds? Is someone likely to want to put you in a zoo/dissect you/burn you at a stake because of it?*

### **Can I play a sorcerer?**

Yes, of course, but keep the following things in mind. The Tsolyáni are not stupid enough to let people with controllable supernatural ability just wander around. There are sorcerers on Tékumel, but there is also a good screening program that usually detects them in childhood or late teens. Potential sorcerers are then recruited by one of the more powerful organizations, the Temples or the Army. Be a sorcerer, get drafted. Everyone with real power is affiliated with a Temple, and they will intervene considerably in your life.

There *are* sorcerers who work freelance and there are those who reach some accommodation with the Temple. To avoid regular interest from your Temple you cannot be particularly adept. Real talents are simply too useful to be allowed to bumble around getting into trouble. They are indoctrinated and intensively trained to fulfil a number of important functions. So young sorcerers are too busy studying to have an outside life. They are kept secluded by the Temples until they have become competent and “reliable”. Good ones are well paid and looked after, bad ones will not survive training. Therefore, in practice a very good sorcerer has very little freedom of action and that means that they make poor player characters. Nevertheless, playing a minor sorcerer can be rewarding and worth the effort to play.

### **Things to decide**

**Friends and contacts:** External links to other organizations, your Temple, your secret society (*whaddya mean you're not in a secret society, what kind of EPT player are you?*). For example,

*Rhan hiKorodu stays in contact with some old friends from his Legion days, just a few of his old comrades, one is on the Police force. Another is a Sákbé guard. None of his friends is hugely vital to the operation of the city, but they could be useful contacts.*

*Morusai is a Lay Priest of the Temple of Karakán, the war god. When investigating a strange series of murders he uses his position at the Temple to find an expert on archery (such persons being not uncommon at the Temple). He is able to identify the types of arrow used to kill the murder victims. Morusai discovers that the arrows are a design made for one Legion in the Imperial army.*

*Ankodai is a member of the Ndálu Society, a secret society within the Temple of Ksáru. This means that he owes them significant loyalty and is sometimes called upon to do some of their dirty work. However, the Ndálu society will also assist Ankodai in a variety of ways, giving him access to information and people he would not otherwise be able to reach. The Ndálu Society can supply weaponry and muscle if the matter is in their interest. Ankodai may even be able to climb the greasy pole to higher rank within the Society, gaining great power as he does so. Ankodai is now part of the organization, he cannot leave, but he now has the fraternal support of one of the most dangerous secret societies on Tékumel.*

**Self-defense:** It is usually more pleasant not to have to rely on others totally for your defence. This is a civilized land, but a violent one (think 16<sup>th</sup> century Japan). Dueling is common. There are many different combat styles and systems, they all work because they all have to. So swordsmanship is efficient and intended to kill (check out a Kurosawa movie if you want visuals), but can also be flashy or spiritual. The Tsolyáni are not very squeamish, so even things like wrestling tend to be practical and rather more pragmatic than they are on modern Terra. It is entirely possible to have a viable non-combatant PC, but be prepared for the consequences.

### **How old are you?**

You can play any age you want. Adulthood is reached at age 16, and this is quite a young population. To get a

modern equivalent multiply ages by about 1.33. Therefore, a 25yr old Tsolyáni is like a 33yr old modern person. Ages above 20 should be unusual for this campaign and should be negotiated with me.

**How can a 17yr year old be a viable character?** Well there are some useful aspects to being 17. It is good for an action-orientated character because risky/stupid behavior comes naturally to a 17yr old, you are fast, agile, resist disease and heal rapidly. You are old enough to be able to do stuff (social equivalent to a modern 20 yr. old). You also learn fast, so you can reserve some part of your character (points if you use them) to develop in play, reflecting the fact that a 17yr old can change a lot in a year.

### **What character creation aids can I have?**

**Natal Horoscope:** This is the chart done for your character at birth. This does not require you to believe in astrology, as everyone around you does they will tend to push you towards its predictions whether they reflect your true interests or not. Many players find this sort of basis useful.

**Childhood Memories:** Things you remember from growing up, events etc.

### **Where am I?**

You start the game in the Empire of Tsolyánu. The Empire has been in existence for 2359 years, ruled, with a few hiccups, by the Imperial Family, the Tlakotáni. Tsolyánu is old and stable. This is a civilized but violent society.

Coinage: a gold coin called the káitar. Credit is commonly used, and a rigorous code of commercial honor enforced. The Tsolyáni are a proud people, with an ancient civilization.

### **Appearance**

There are no Caucasians, no Nordic types. Albinos and Blue eyed people are reviled as freaks. The Tsolyáni are the main ethnic group in the Empire of Tsolyánu. Complexions range from coppery brown to golden tan. Noses are aquiline or straight; hair is fine, straight, and glossy black.

### **Religion and Mythology**

You take the faith of your family, most people are not fanatical. There is a pantheon of 10 main gods, each of whom has a supporter or “cohort”, giving 20 gods in total. Any of the following deities are acceptable in Tsolyánu, as they are all part of the same pantheon. There is political conflict between some of the Temples that can get quite nasty. Direct religious conflict is banned by the Concordat, an ancient peace agreement that disallows a “hot war” between worshippers of the pantheon.

#### **Gods of Stability**

Hnálla: Lord of light  
Avánthe: Mother goddess  
Karakán: God of war  
Thúmis: God of knowledge  
Belkhánu: God of afterlife

#### **Gods of Change**

Hrü'ü : Lord of darkness  
Dlamélish: Goddess of hedonism  
Vimúhla : God of fire  
Ksáruł : God of secrets  
Sárku : God of death.

The great majority of the population is illiterate, superstitious and very conservative.

### **In their own words**

#### **Two Clan Elders answer some questions**

##### **(1) Talisand hiKorodu**

**Who are you?** Who's asking? I am Talisand hiKorodu of the Clan of the Hall of Stone, an Elder of my clan and a retired Herreksa in the 12<sup>th</sup> medium infantry. I lead the Korodu lineage in Chene Ho and have killed 43 opponents in single combat and in the defence of my honor. Know me by my deeds.

**What is important?** Honor is important, without honor we are as beasts in the dirt. Threaten my honor and I will kill you. The welfare of the clan is important, be it in reputation, gold or in our numbers. Our clanhouse and the



clan women must be kept properly. The safety of the Empire matters, our borders must be guarded and our enemies crushed.

**Who are our enemies?** Locally, there is bad blood between us and the Clan of the Great Stone. I have killed many of their warriors in duels, my nephew killed their champion only recently. It was a fair fight. Of course, we are at war with Yán Kór, who are barbarians mainly but use sorcery to attack our borders. Our enemies have been there for a long time, but then, so have we.

**Whom do you worship?** I am a worshipper of Lord Karakán, the god of war, the eternal hero. When I die, I will be sent to his halls to be tested. If I pass the test, I shall join his Legion for eternity.

**What is the difference between men and women?** Who do I look like? Your mother?

## (2) Illessa hiUtu-tengmai

**Who are you?** I am Illessa hiUtu-tengmai, an elder trader of the clan. I seek to wisely guide my cousins through the troubles of this world and to increase our material wealth.

**What is important?** Security, wealth and friends are important, as are allies inside and outside of the clan. These come through good relations and common business interests. With such resources, we can protect the individual members of the clan and the clan itself. In this way, everyone prospers.

**Who are our enemies?** We have competitors amongst the other clans, some of their practices are unfortunate and can threaten us. In these difficult times, alliances can shift so easily.

**Whom do you worship?** I worship Lord Belkhánu, the god of the lands of the excellent dead. He rules in the land of the spirits, and protects souls as they seek their eternal rest. We pray for his protection whenever we undertake a journey, for he is the guardian of travelers.

**What is the difference between men and women?** There are two types of women, the Clan woman and the *Aridáni*. The Clan woman is the foundation of clan life and is greatly revered. She cooks and cares. Clan women do not engage in trade, they are not liable any debts they incur. Their safety is the responsibility of the clan. The *Aridáni* is more like a man, they can do what they want but they have to take the consequences. Turning *Aridáni* is not something to be indulged in casually, and many girls get a shock when they realize that the outside world no longer gives them the consideration due to a Clan girl. I have been *Aridáni* since I was seventeen.