

# SEAL OF THE IMPERIUM

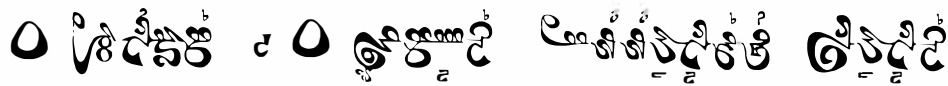
Vol. 1, Issue 1



*The fanzine of M.A.R. Barker's World of Tékumel*



# Seal of the Imperium Volume I, Issue 1



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**Cover:**  
An Aridáni warrior defends her Clan's slave caravan from Milumanayáni bandits who have shed their desert cloaks to blend in as porters along the Sákbe road near Khirgár.  
**By Trevlin Utz.**



For reference, works which are part of the official Tékumel canon are indicated by the seal above. Other works may well be consistent with official canon, or they may represent individualized variations. We've included the seal for your information; use what you see fit.

*Seal of the Imperium* (ISSN: 1526-4513) is an international gaming journal devoted to fantasy role playing and other forms of gaming in M.A.R. Barker's world of Tékumel. It is a semi-annual publication welcoming submissions dealing with any aspect of Tékumel gaming, including scenario ideas, rule suggestions, gaming product reviews, gamemastering aids, bibliographic resources, essays on aspects of Tékumel life, and whatever else our readership would like to see in print. We especially welcome submissions of artwork concerning life and adventuring on Tékumel. Subscriptions will not be possible until after the second issue sees print.

Submissions are welcome in any form (preferably legible), but we prefer if you can send a file in Word for Windows. If you have doubts about the readability of your file, send it in ASCII or text-only format, and include a hard copy with your submission. Contributors must send their submissions to Carl Brodt, Tita's House of Games, 1608 Bancroft Way, Berkeley, CA 94703-1606, United States of America. Please write or email Carl if you have any difficulties. Carl can be reached on-line at CarlBrodt@AOL.com.

This journal was created on a Power Macintosh using FrameMaker. Text is Adobe Garamond; headers are Eras Ultra, with Eras Book for contrast. Tsolyáni writing uses the Reverse Tsolyáni Normal font created by M.A.R. Barker, flipped using Adobe Photoshop.

# Tékumel 101: Introduction to Tékumel

**Theron Goudeau**

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Tékumel is a science-fantasy game setting in the far future, peopled by human and alien cultures which are significantly different from those of traditional sword-and-sorcery, Tolkienesque settings. Some elements are similar to those of Earthly cultures, however, and Tékumel can be explained to the newcomer in these terms.

Tékumel's present day is about 100,000 years after Christ. The Western world destroyed itself in a nuclear war around 2013; and the societies of India, South America, and the Middle East rebuilt and expanded into space, where humankind met many alien races—most of which were technologically advanced and peaceful. Humans at that time possessed very advanced technology, including faster-than-light ships, artificial gravity, beam weapons, and engines which drew power from extradimensional space.

Around 60,000 A.D. humans subjugated the native inhabitants of Tékumel, extensively terraformed the planet, and turned it into a pleasure world. Some unknown agency eventually propelled the entire star system into a pocket dimension and isolated Tékumel from the rest of Humanspace. The stars “went out”—they were no longer visible in the night sky. The technological culture fell apart, and the raw materials necessary to repair the factories and machines (particularly metals) were rarely available. Psychic powers worked more easily in the new pocket dimension, however, and “magic” and “demonology” (contact with the inhabitants of other planes) became common and ritualized. One powerful race of extradimensional beings came to be worshipped as “gods;” and the temples of these gods became powerful, and united to forbid open religious warfare.

There exist upon the face of the great primary continent of the northeastern hemisphere of Tékumel the Five Empires, all monarchical and/or theocratic oligarchies in which precedent and tradition hold sway. Smaller states, just as tradition-bound, balance themselves between their larger neighbors. There are enclaves of nonhuman races, some ruled by the inimical races native to Tékumel, which still hate humanity and its allies with a

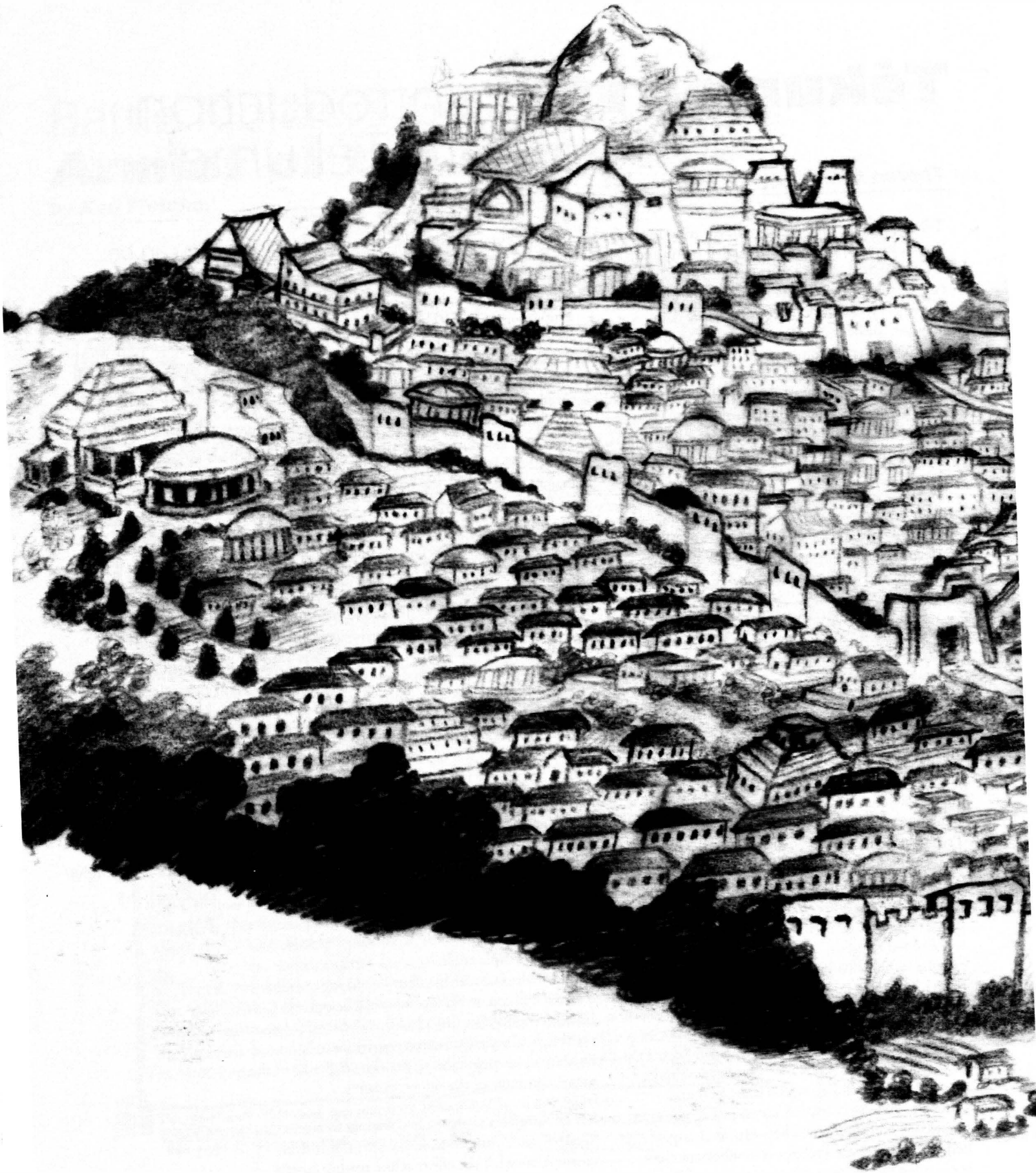
passion, but are outnumbered by the more fertile invaders.

The Five Empires, including the “protagonist” Empire of the Petal Throne, Tsolyánu, have technology about on the level of the European Renaissance—aqueducts, good roads, simple mechanics, wheeled carts, siege engines, crude surgery and slightly more advanced pharmacology, crossbows, water clocks, etc. They lack true riding beasts, gunpowder, steam or electric power, and the germ theory of disease. Like the governments of ancient China, the governments of the Five Empires are hidebound and bureaucratic, with many written laws and draconian courts. Their militaries are mighty, well-organized legions like those of the Romans; and they share the Romans’ love of massive engineering projects—roads, walls, arenas, temples, and civic buildings. Also like the Romans, the peoples of the Five Empires are very concerned with social class and citizenship, keep slaves, and love gladiatorial games. The gods of the Five Empires are like those of the Hindus, with a heavy dose of the bloodthirsty Aztec or Mayan deities. Great pyramidal temples dominate the cities, and slaves and prisoners of war are sacrificed atop some of them. Much like the medieval Japanese, the residents of the Five Empires are obsessed with personal and clan honor. The societies on Tékumel are intricate and very old—the youngest date back some 2,500 years, with histories, traditions, and myths stretching back some 25,000 years.

Professor M.A.R. Barker, the author of the game, is a retired Professor of South Asian Languages. He has developed scripts and languages—languages one can speak, with grammar handbooks and lexicons, like Tolkien's Elvish or Roddenberry's Klingon. He has also developed histories, modes of dress, etiquette, architectural styles, weapons and armor, religions, legal codes, demographics, sciences, etc. for all of the major and most of the minor cultures.

So, Tékumel is a sophisticated setting, foreign to the Western mind, but understandable in historical terms. It is worth the effort of the mature fantasy gamer to gain familiarity with this world, as it offers rich detail to color campaigns set therein. Enjoy!

It can be difficult for newcomers to Tékumel to find material that orients them to the world, and for Tékumel referees to find good introductory articles for their players. In this continuing series, we present essays by a variety of authors intended to introduce new players to Tékumel.

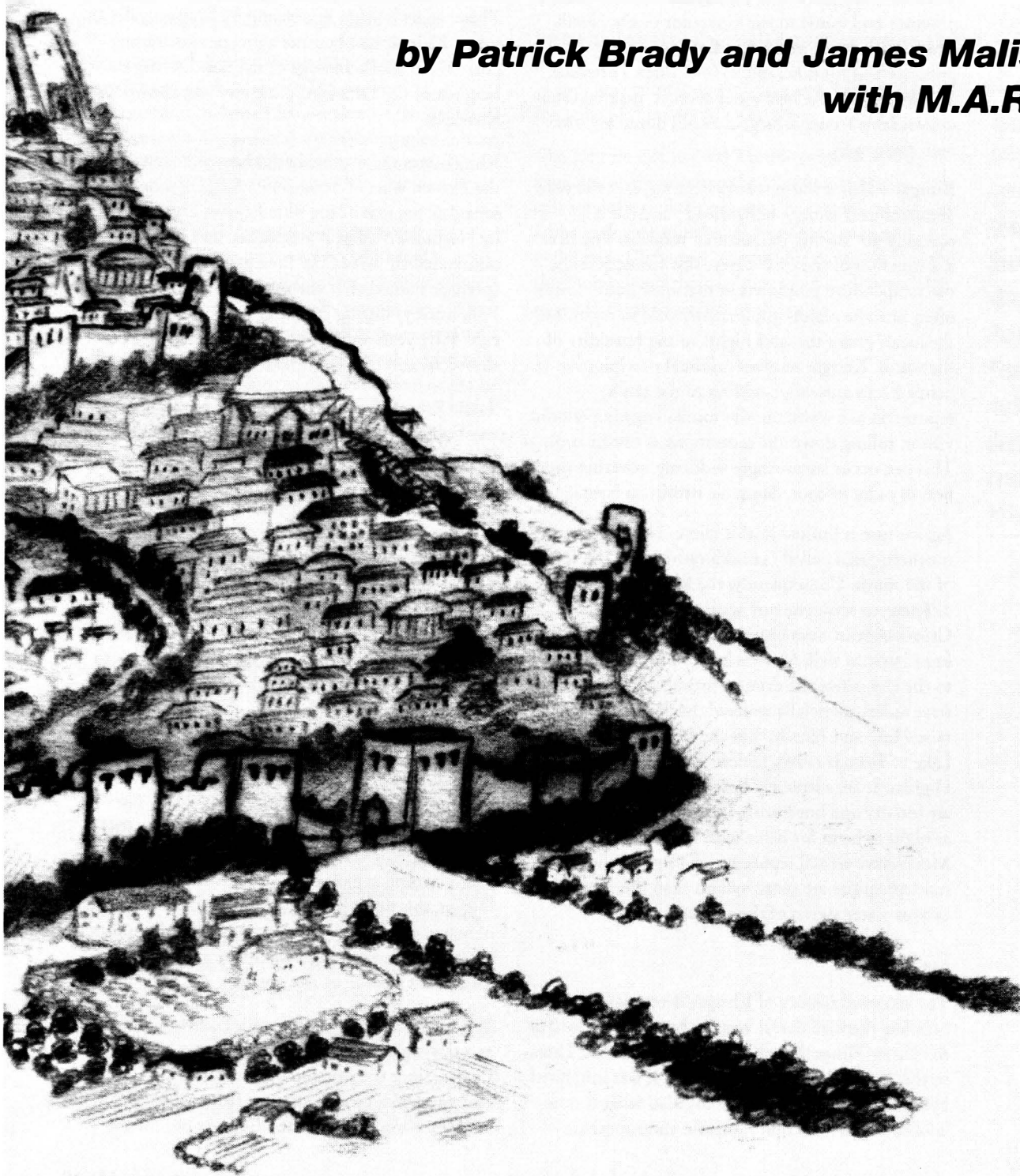




# **KHIRGÁR**

## **Defender of the North**

*by Patrick Brady and James Maliszewski,  
with M.A.R. Barker*







Visit the Northernmost bastion of the Tsolyáni Empire

## The bright sunlight on the clean cobblestones of Khirgár's wide avenues is a contrast to the labyrinthine (and some might say fetid) cities of southern Tsolyánu.

**K**hirgár, "the Defender of the North," is the northernmost city in all Tsolyánu and in one of the most heavily militarized regions in all of Tékumel. Khirgár is also the capital of the Daikán province and home to the Governor of the North. There are a dozen major fortifications in the province and innumerable smaller ones. Fortresses are often set on the best water sources, making them unavoidable strategic targets. A full dozen legions man their walls.

Khirgár endures warm weather throughout the year. Temperatures average between 12° and 32° C, reaching 40° during the summer months. The heat is a function of the clear desert sky. Consequently, the temperature plummets at nightfall. Southerners often find the region unpleasantly cold at night, but the locals prefer the cool nights to the humidity of the south. Khirgár receives minimal precipitation (a paltry 22cm annually), adding to the city's reputation as a warm but dry locale. Fog is a periodic visitor, rolling down the mountains as the air cools. This can occur surprisingly suddenly, covering the hot, dry city in cool, damp air within an hour.

Agriculture is limited in this clime. Locals grow a northern grain called Gáinikh rather than the Dná of the south. Consequently, the local bread tastes different to someone not accustomed to its flavor. Groves of fruit trees (especially Dlél and Másh) are found here as well. Másh is less common and limited to the city; since the dryness forbids growing large trees unless artificially watered. In the north, herders raise Hmá and Hmélu, but the land around the Lake of Tears is nearly lifeless. Parts of the Northern Highlands are extremely hostile. The High Moors are too dry and hot during the summer, and too cold at night to be fit for habitation by man or beast. The Moors have an evil reputation. Khirgári believe their resident spirits are more malign than the simply callous water spirits of the region.

### History

The recorded history of Khirgár is very ancient. Scholars theorize that it was the base of a warlord of the Latter Times though no one has proven it. Later, in the Age of the Dragon Warriors, it was inhabited by the Khír tribe, which had invaded what is now Tsolyánu and settled in nomadic encampments

around the shores of the shallow Inland Sea of the North. During the Bednálljan Age, various warlords, minor kingdoms, clan coalitions, "princes" from Mrelú, and the like turbulently ruled this region. These rulers left few traces, and by Engsvanyáli times, Khirgár had become a prosperous trading port on the southern edge of the Sea. During the long era of the Priestkings, the city was known as Kharigár.

Khirgár was the seat of the Archon of Yellow during the Flower Wars of 3464-3490 A.P. The city also served as the seat of the Blue Faience Dynasty, ruled by Norómbe Sékha. It was sacked and nearly obliterated by one of the Princes of Ndá Thénu (perhaps named after the massive Thénu Thendráya Peak nearby) during the latter years of Engsvanyáli rule. Fifty years were to pass before the city recovered and trade returned.

Toward the end of the Engsvanyáli period, Khirgár was home to a general named Kokún Vriyón of the Golden Sunburst clan, who worshipped Karakán. Lord Kokún was the "Hero of the Age" called forth by the gods to protect Éngsvan hla Gánga from the machinations of the Goddess of the Pale Bone. Betrayed by the woman he loved, Lord Kokún was slain by demons of the Planes Beyond. His death resulted in a partial victory for the goddess. Earthquakes and seismic disturbances resulted that sank the Isle of Gánga, allowing the Inland Sea to drain away. The Desert of Sighs was the result.

One of the most significant events in Khirgári history was the so-called "Great War" of 2019-2020 A.S. Mu'ugalavvá attacked the Imperium, believing it to be weakened from its recent civil war. The Chákas and other western regions fell to the Red Hats. Emperor Gyésmu "the Iron Fist" marshaled his forces and retook most of his lost domains. During this time, Khirgár served as the headquarters of many legions and was the site of several important battles. The war strengthened Khirgár's place as Tsolyánu's bastion of the north.

Within the last few years, Prince Eselné used Khirgár as a staging area for his incursions into Yán Kór and Pijéna. Since the worship of Karakán is important to Khirgár, he had much support from the locals. In fact, the Khirgári supported Eselné's bid for the



Petal Throne although they quietly intimated to Prince Mírusíya that, if he won the Kòlumejálím, they would not be too disappointed. Because of the weakness of the sect of Sárku in Khirgár, there were few repercussions while Dhich'uné occupied the Petal Throne. Although the Khirgári mourn the death of Eselné, they have accepted Mírusíya as their new God-Emperor.

## Description

Modern Khirgár has a population of approximately 200,000 during normal times. The population density decreases as one travels toward the suburbs and outlying villages. To the north, this occurs rather quickly since the dusty green fields of the city-dwelling farmers are soon replaced by the grey-brown of the great desert. Generally, there is a lower population density in the clanhouse areas, while the Khéscherál District in the outer ward, with its large area of slum tenements, has a high, if unmeasured, population. Although there are a dozen legions in this province, only about 5000 men actually garrison Khirgár.

The city sits atop the small conical Peak of the Warrior, made of reddish granite covered by later additions of sandstone. Khirgár consists of three concentric rings: these are named, from outward to innermost, "The Wall of Metlunél II," "the Mighty Escarpment of Harúbash Téleth," and the most ancient of all, "the Citadel of the High Gods Eternal." Each of these enclosed areas forms a ward of the city and is protected by a stone curtain wall. The river Njévra flows out from a natural fissure in the rock from within the Temple of Avánthe. The inner city rises sharply on the slopes of the mountain. The steep, hilly streets are lined with crowded, decaying, still-glorious architecture: clanhouses, shops, temples, etc. This is the most prestigious area of the city, and those who dwell in one of the old clanhouses here are treated with much respect. The city is fairly broad and extensive to the south and west, with suburbs and warehouse districts outside the ancient walls.

The Wall of Metlunél II is made of red sandstone and black basalt. Its gates, which bear the sigil of Emperor Metlunél II "the Builder," lead into a wide area of residences, markets, slums, and the foreigners' quarter. The foreigners' quarter is segregated by nationality. Milumanayáni tribesmen and Yán Kóryani merchants predominate, but there are also Mu'ugalavyáni, Pijénani, and Ghatóni present as well. Non-humans are less common; but there are small colonies of Pé Chói, Páchi Léi, and Swamp Folk. Even a few Shén and Ahoggyá have

settled in Khirgár, usually for temporary, commercial reasons.

The Mighty Escarpment of Harúbash Téleth, named for an unknown personage, is old and decaying, with crenellations broken and falling away, and great streaks of Chákhsa, a grey-green mold peculiar to the desert. This wall is made from Engsvanyáli grey granite brought from the mountains to the east. The clanhouses and palaces of the aristocracy are jammed within this second ward, many rising five or six stories in an effort to reach the open sky.

The innermost wall, "the Citadel of the High Gods Eternal," is sometimes also called "the High Bastion of the Lords of the North." It dates from Engsvanyáli times. It is made of marble and black diorite. Within this, the third ward consists of a high perimeter of battlements surrounding the major temples (Karakán, Chegárra, Vimúhla, Chiténg, Hnálla, and Ksáru), the Engsvanyáli-era palaces of the old noble clans, and the massive citadel of the Governor of the North. The less influential faiths of Khirgár built their shrines further down the slope of the mountain.

The bright sunlight on the clean cobblestones of Khirgár's wide avenues is a contrast to the labyrinthine (and some might say fetid) cities of southern Tsolyánu. Its altitude brings mountain air, which is normally dry, with a steady breeze from the east. Warriors and soldiers, mostly from Karakán-Chegárra legions, swagger and show off their dueling and fighting skills in the Hirilákte arena, which lies inside the outermost gate on the eastern side of the city.

Because of the hard granite that lies beneath the city, the dead are buried in caves in the mountains nearby rather than in the ground. This means that Khirgár's "City of the Dead" is located farther away from the city proper than is common. Locals say that a labyrinth lies buried within its granite bowels of the city. Local guides claim that this was constructed by one of the Engsvanyáli Priestkings, who had heard of mysterious treasures hidden there. What he found—if anything—is not known. The story of this supposed trove is inscribed on a polished marble slab in the rotunda of the Governor's palace. Others have searched and never found more than fragments of pottery and stoneware from the age of the Dragon Warriors.

Trade from Milumanayá, Yán Kór, and the Chákas passes through Khirgár, making it one of the most important commercial centers of the northwest. Three well-preserved Sákbe roads lead to Khirgár. The dry heat of the region has ensured that the roads

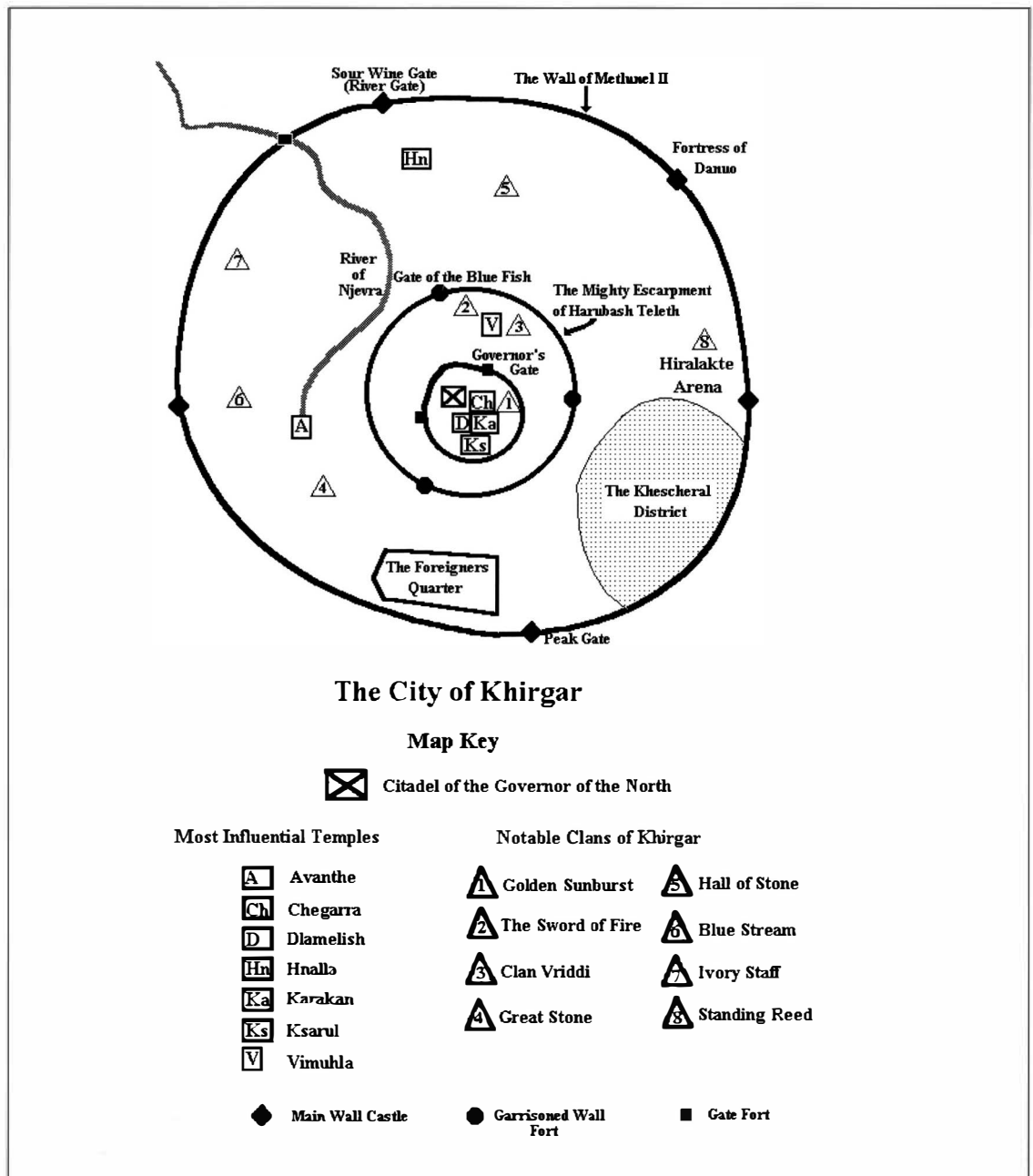
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**The city sits atop the small conical Peak of the Warrior... Khirgár consists of three concentric rings**

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**Khirgár serves as the northern bulwark of Tsolyánu's defense... The presence of so many legions adds further support to the traditionally strong faiths of Vimúhla, Karakán, and their Cohorts.**



have not suffered as much as their counterparts in other areas. Two of these roads come from the south, from Si'is and from Komoré. The other road leads north to the city of Akársha in Pijéna. An unusual result of this is that the Sákbe roads circle Khirgár, a rarity in the Imperium. There are, of course, secondary roads in the area as well. These often have small, stone-built shrines to local spirits or favored Aspects of the gods. Any major river likewise has a "spirit house" somewhere along its length to prevent the local river spirits from "wandering." Similarly, there are small cairns of stones on desert peaks where the Milumanayáni shamans build fires and burn bits of fragrant wood as offerings to the Winds of the Desert.

Khirgár serves as the northern bulwark of Tsolyánu's defense. A large number of legions, including several notable ones, make Khirgár their base of operations. The presence of so many legions adds further support to the traditionally strong faiths of Vimúhla, Karakán, and their Cohorts. Perhaps the most famous legion present in Khirgár is the First Legion of Ever-Present Glory, commanded by Lord Kéttukal hiMraktiné, an intimate of Prince Eselné.

### Clans

Almost all of the major clans of the Imperium are represented in Khirgár. Their clanhouses bustle with local members, transients, guests, business enterprises, and clergy. A few of the most prominent and interesting clans are described here:

### ***Black Hood***

This clan is newly established in Khirgár, the result of a population movement into the Khirgári area by Hrü'ü worshippers from Mrelú. Its agricultural lands stretch away to the south and east. The current clanmaster is Bolúr hiVírídu, an energetic fiftyish merchant with prematurely grey hair and a perpetual scowl. His sole interests seem to be his eight children (by three wives), his commerce, and his rituals within Hrü'ü's new temple.

### ***Blue Stream***

These rural agriculturists are devoted to Avánthe. The clan owns large tracts of land in the western regions of the province. Blue Stream owns a significant portion of its fruit groves as well. The clanmaster is Dolón hiTlángtel, a bearded, balding gentleman with pretensions to ancient Engsvanyáli nobility. He enjoys classical music, gambling, and occasional pleasures with young clan-sisters.

### ***Golden Dawn***

This is an old medium-ranked clan descended from Engsvanyálu with extensive business and agricultural contacts. The clanmaster is Artukka hiVráisu, about 50 years old, whose ancestors were probably desert tribesmen from Milumanayá but who claims to be descended from the Sojourners in Grey, a scholarly sect of Thúmis worshippers. This small society used to have some presence and power in the northwest but now exists as a tolerated sub-sect in the Thúmis-Keténgku temples in Khirgár, Páya Gupá, Si'ís, etc. Artukka is a pleasant, middle-aged man with a bald head and a crooked smile (from some old injury, he says). He is a bit of a fraud and a rascal— not to be trusted with money!

### ***Golden Sunburst***

This Engsvanyáli-descended clan is devoted to Karakán and Chegárra. Much of Khirgár's military and political establishment derives from this clan. General Kéttukal hiMraktiné is a prominent member of this clan. The present clanmaster is Mirgán hiDulomésa, about 60 years of age. He is urbane, helpful, and somewhat learned, with interests in history, crops and agriculture, and the improvement of Khirgár's rather undistinguished wines. He has two wives, twelve concubines, and twenty-four known children, all of whom he loves greatly. He enjoys making matches for unmarried persons who visit his clanhouse.

### ***Great Stone***

Originally a northern matrilineal clan, these Ksáru and Hrü'ü worshippers have extensive mercantile interests in Khirgár and the surrounding province.

### ***Seal of the Imperium***

The clanmistress is Jíleth hiTéyonel, a thickset, matronly woman in her forties. Her first (and only?) love is business. She has never married and devotes herself exclusively to her clan's commercial enterprises. Rumor has it that a previous governor of Khirgár once jilted her.

### ***Ivory Staff***

A clan of peasants and laborers devoted to agricultural work and the Lords of Stability. The clan members possess practical control over most of the fruit growing industry in the province. They are also weavers, dyers, and cloth merchants. Their production of Firyá cloth is a mainstay of their prosperity. The clanmaster is Chakán hiVarusé. He is a newcomer, and little is known of his antecedents. He tends to be sarcastic and cynical-sounding, with a penchant for sharp verbal barbs directed at those of lower station.

### ***Sword of Fire***

This is another prominent Vimúhla-worshipping clan. This clan has been in the region since the days of the Dragon Warriors. Consequently, they remain aloof from the day-to-day politics of Khirgár, concentrating instead on their vast mercantile enterprises. Kagór hiVriddi is the clanmaster. He is an ex-soldier and is perhaps 55 years of age. He still maintains the ponderously solemn "Imperial Army" demeanor that he learned long ago in the Legion of the Lord of Red Devastation.

### ***Standing Reed***

A clan descended from N'lüss who settled in the Empire with its huge clanhouse near the Hirilákte Arena. The clanmaster is Mjéshu Dza'an, a sharp and clever (some say devious) merchant and entrepreneur. He no longer speaks the N'lüssa language, but he has married a girl from Be'ilísha and has had his five children taught the tongue. Most N'lüss consider her dialect degraded, however, and he now wishes to send his older son directly to Malcháiran to study.

### ***Vriddi***

While their primary stronghold is Fasíltum, these Vimúhla worshippers have a presence in Khirgár. As elsewhere in the Imperium, the Vriddi are not much trusted because of their separatist tendencies. A few of the clan's younger members have been arrested lately on the charge of "disturbing the peace." They are also considered overly arrogant and resistant to compromise. This hostility is returned with interest by Lísha hiChárkha, the clanmistress in Khirgár. She is about 30 years of age, rather pretty, and

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unmarried. A soldier from one of the Karakán legions is said to be her present paramour.

### Temples

The temples of Vimúhla, Karakán, Chiténg, and Chegárra are prominent in Khirgár, as are those of Hnálla and Avánthe. There is not much in the way of worship of Thúmis or Sárku although Ksárul's faith is also strong here. Belkhánu's priesthood tends to the needs of the dead and presides over funerals.

*Avánthe* is worshipped in Khirgár primarily under her Aspect as "Kátha the Warrior Maid." This Aspect appears as a young Aridáni woman in full armor. She loves Lord Karakán and serves as the handmaiden to Lord Chegárra. Indeed, the greatest shrine to this Aspect in the Empire is found here. Khirgári likewise revere Avánthe under the male Aspect "Njévra the Cold." Njévra is the patron of snow and ice, and gives his name to the river that flows through the city. Njévra is unknown elsewhere in Tsolyánu and scholars believe this Aspect to be of Yán Kóryani origin.

Khirgári worship *Belkhánu* under the Aspect of "Mrisó, the Knower of the Planes." There is a significant shrine to this Aspect on Khirgár's central hill. There is also a small but well regarded "house of study" staffed by the Golden Lord's savants. It is said that the library is reasonably good, though not when compared with larger establishments, such as Thráya or Jakálla, of course.

Khirgár is the site of one of the primary shrines to *Karakán*. The Litany of Noble Deeds, celebrated on 25 Didóm, is one of the great feasts of this faith. Khirgári celebrate the Litany with great pageantry, remembering ancient heroes and consecrating legions to the service of Lord Karakán. Presentations and awards to especially valorous warriors are also made on this day. There is also a small shrine in Khirgár to an Aspect of Karakán that is unrecognized by the central temple hierarchy. Known as "the Radiant Sword," this Aspect seems to be unique to Khirgár.

*Lord Hrü'ü* has a shrine in Khirgár to his Aspect "Kánkubel the Muck-Eater." Kánkubel is an Inner Aspect of Hrü'ü that is not well known elsewhere. Indeed, this Aspect was only recognized in Khirgár some five or six centuries ago. Lord Kánkubel's magnificent shrine in Khirgár lies in the underworld below the temple of Hrü'ü. While far from a prominent temple, the faithful of Hrü'ü have done much to further their own ends in Khirgár, expanding and enhancing the temple, acquiring a relatively new clanhouse, developing commercial interests, and pushing clansmen into posts where

they will be politically useful. For instance, they recently used their contacts in the city's Palace of the Realm to obtain property and trade licenses for the Black Hood clan. The incursion of this new clan into the city was a boon for Lord Hrü'ü's temple financially, as well as the cause of much social consternation, thereby furthering the temple's ends yet again. Bolúr hiVírídu, mentioned above, is one of the most active supporters of this effort.

Khirgár is an important regional center of *Vimúhla's* faith. He has a large temple in the second ward of the city. An important Aspect worshipped in Khirgár is "Jmár, the Lord of Flame." The High Ritual Priestess of this Aspect is Adéna hiTánkolel, an elderly "seeress," whose gaunt limbs are covered with self-inflicted burn-scars. She is much revered even by other sects in the city.

*Dlamélish* has a rather pretty little temple near the top of Khirgár's central hill. The gardens of the temple provide a pleasant place of recreation at the center of the city. People go there on hot afternoons (of which there are many in Khirgár) to watch the priestesses practicing their dancing and acrobatic performances. The High Ritual Priestess is Ma'él hiVaisonér, a young and voluptuous woman about 25 years of age. Her specialties include dancing as well as other arts. She is said to be a favored mistress of the Governor of the city as well as a sometime companion of Prince Eselné himself.

Many of the temples, especially that of Ksárul, have excellent archives, whose holdings date back reliably to the Time of No Kings. Some even possess records from the latter days of Engsvanyálu. Most of the important texts were destroyed, of course, when the city was sacked in late Engsvanyáli times (cf. above). Rumors suggest that the clans and temples still possess scraps and fragments, however.

### Noteworthy Features and Customs

While Khirgár is a loyal city of the Second Imperium, it is like many regions of the northlands in that it has a great deal in common with neighboring non-Tsolyáni cultures. For instance, the Khirgári tend to be more "democratic" than their southern cousins in that they often follow a practice, strange for Tékumel, of allowing votes to be taken on certain important matters. This practice originated with the desert tribesmen of Milumanayá and is reinforced by the military camaraderie that is deeply ingrained in the city.

Likewise, the Khirgári are of a mildly matriarchal bent, in keeping with the traditions of the north, as typified by the Yán Koryáni. Women wield great power and command respect in many of the clans of

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**“Kánkubel the Muck-Eater” is an Inner Aspect of Hrü'ü that is not well known elsewhere...**

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the province. They usually arrange marriages and dictate policy to their menfolk. Indeed, the birth of a daughter, rather than of a son, is cause for great celebration. The system is not as powerful as in Yán Kór and Saá Allaquí, however; males still maintain commercial and political power, but must frequently give way to the wishes (other Tsolyáni might say, "commands") of their womenfolk. Matriarchy is not complete, however, and males continue to exercise most political and commercial power.

The local wine of Khirgár is brownish in hue, dry, and a little sour for most Tsolyáni tastes. Efforts by the Golden Sunburst clan and others to improve wine production have so far produced only undistinguished results. The Khirgári claim that their soil is too barren and lacking in the nutrients needed for a good vintage. The Golden Sunburst clan has nevertheless brought in experts from the southern Empire and refuses to give up.

At the center of the city is the Citadel of the Governor of the North. The citadel is a huge pyramid that may predate the city's foundation. Indeed, its provenance is the subject of one of Khirgár's permanent academic debates between historians of the various temples. The citadel is the traditional seat of power for the rulers of the area. The more modern Imperial Palaces and the Governor's Palace surround it.

The gate between the second and third wards of the city is covered with distinctive glazed tiles that some suggest points to an Engsvanyáli origin. Referred to as the "Gates of the Blue Fish," this crumbling marble mosaic depicts a creature with scales, a tail, and bulging eyes. Local guides claim that the creature is an ancient deity of the area, long forgotten, although there is no evidence to support this claim.

Khirgár offers a number of hostels for travelers. The most expensive and well accoutered is the Mansion of Divine Dignity. This is perhaps the only place in the Empire where one may obtain the fried sand-

clams so beloved of the Milumanayáni and other northern peoples.

Aspiring warriors can increase their skill with short and long one-handed weapons and polearms at the Hall of Heroes school. The master of the school is one Dlárku hiKálovel, who served as the personal tutor to Prince Eselné and a subordinate of General Kéttukal hiMraktiné. Training at the school costs between 700-1000 Káitars per month.

### **Underworld**

Beneath Khirgár is a series of tunnels from the Latter Times (they do not seem to go back as far as the Time of Darkness). Dragon Warrior sources attest to the existence of these tunnels. Above and around these are the tunnels dug by the Engsvanyáli in search of treasure. Whatever chambers were found proved to be empty or choked with debris. It is possible that further excavation and exploration may lead to something of greater interest, of course.

Khirgár has not had a formal Dítlána since the reign of the Seal Empress Janulé "She of the Blue Goddess" (1123-1155 A.S.). Janulé favored Avánthe and the other Tlomitlányal. Hence, when the priesthood of Karakán asked for a favor, she ordered Dítlána for Khirgár and several other cities.

There is a tubeway station beneath the old city of Khirgár, but it is not well known outside the inner circles of the temple of Lord Ksárul. It is difficult to reach and dangerous in the extreme, due to the collapse of walls and ceilings within the cold and musty catacombs.

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**Matriarchy is not as powerful as in Yán Kór and Saá Allaquí; males still maintain commercial and political power, but must frequently give way to the "commands" of their womenfolk.**

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### **Adventure Seeds**

❖ About 300 Tsán northeast of Khirgár in the Desert of Sighs (hex 4710 on the Gamescience Sword and Glory maps) is a city of the Ancients. It is almost entirely ruined, and what is left is buried deep beneath the sand. Enterprising explorers can still dig down to it here and there, and there are areas beneath it where the sand has not choked off the tunnels. There are very few magical devices because it was heavily looted and picked over during the Latter Times. A few items do survive -- as do sometimes-uncooperative Milumanayáni tribesmen, animals, and others.

❖ There are deserted fiefs north of Khirgár in the Milumanayáni desert. Most of them were abandoned during the secession of Milumanayá in 1976 A.S. They are arid, barren, and inhabited only by refugees and deserters from the armies of Yán Kór and Tsolyánu. These fiefs are thus rough, and the population of little red *Alásh* snakes and *Epéng* insects is an excellent reason not to go there.



# The Churstállli

*by David Peters*

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The Churstállli are a life form native to Tekumel and are perhaps the only native race to still inhabit some of their ancestral land to this day. The Churstállli currently live in two regions in Mu'ugalavya—the Great Desert of Galai and Churstállli. These life forms are distant relatives to the Hluss, bear some similarities to the Hluss in appearance, and at one time had a high order intelligence like the Hluss.

In fact, the Churstállli originally controlled the south western area of where Mu'ugalavya is today; and fought the Hluss for control of the territory for the vital resources like waterholes, plants and animals essential for their livelihood. The Churstállli had one-handed swords, spears and polearms similar to what the Hluss used but cruder in design.

When Humankind and its allies decided to inhabit Tekumel, things really changed for the worse for the Churstállli. The human's terraforming process changed Tekumel's atmosphere from an atmosphere poisonous to humans to an earthlike one, and the change greatly affected the Churstállli. The removal of the certain trace elements in Tekumel's air by the atmospheric converters and the introduction of other atmospheric elements from Earth started a

gradual but drastic degeneration of the intelligence and reasoning capabilities of the Churstállli.

When the Churstállli responded aggressively and angrily to terraforming, humans' troops fought back with a powerful nerve gas that caused the death of thousands of Churstállli. The survivors were placed in reservations mostly run by the humans where Churstállli were treated as if they were no more than Earth cattle. The new human owners of their world, however, felt satisfied that they had subdued one of the more important native life forms hampering colonization.

When the Time of Darkness arrived on Tekumel, the Churstállli's guards abandoned their posts, and the devices which held the Churstállli prisoner on the reservations failed. The Churstállli left the confines of their reservation, and began to return to their ancestral lands and to attack any of their former captors who lived in the area along their pathway to the ancestral lands.

Soon, the Churstállli began to show definite patterns of adapting to the desert life of their now transformed homelands. (Previously, the terrain was flat grasslands.) Not only did these inimical beings



**The Churstállí also breed an interesting variation of their species—an atavism of the original Churstállí. The atavistic versions of the Churstállí physically appear like their degenerate cousins, and use the same the same mode of communication as their lesser cousins with them. The atavisms communicate with each other using a more complex version of the basic Churstállí language. They will lead packs of 1-to-5 semi-intelligents in hunting forays against animals and humans. At times, one or two atavisms will lead packs of 10-to-20 semi-intelligents on the move by using a special body language that combines crackling, hissing, and movement of their claws and limbs.**

**The atavisms protect their ancestral homeland very fiercely and dream of a time to come when they can be the true masters of that region restored to its original condition.**



# Game Statistics: Churstállli

## SWORDS & GLORY / GARDÁSIYAL

Normal Churstállli	Atavistic Churstállli
<i>Habitat</i> : ..... 6	<i>Habitat</i> : ..... 6
<i>No. Appearing</i> :	<i>No. Appearing</i> :
Minor Group (40%) ..... 1-5	Small Group (70%): ..... 1-2 (35% chance of being accompanied by 1-10 normal Churstállli)
Large Group: (60%) ..... 2-20	Medium Group (30%): ..... 2-3 (65% chance of being accompanied by 2-20 normal Churstállli)
<i>Intelligence</i> : ..... Semi-Intelligent	<i>Intelligence</i> : ..... Intelligent
<i>Armor</i> : ..... 6	<i>Armor</i> : ..... 6
<i>Body Damage</i> : ..... 80/140+1d10	<i>Body Damage</i> : ..... 120+1d20
<i>Damage Done</i> : ..... 2-20/3-30	<i>Damage Done</i> : ..... 2-20/3-30
<i>Special Ability</i> : ..(A) Poison attack	<i>Special Ability</i> : ..(A) Poison Attack
<i>Speed</i> : ..... Average	<i>Speed</i> : ..... Average
<i>Size</i> : ..... Very Large/Huge	<i>Size</i> : ..... Large
<i>H/B/S</i> : ..... 240-380	<i>H/B/S</i> : ..... 350

master the elements of desert living, their bodies started to secrete a sticky substance to which sand and bits of rock would cling, thus ultimately creating a shell covering their body. This shell provided camouflage and protection in the desert.

When the Three States of the Triangle established a claim to the desert of Churstállli to build a series of small settlements in that region, the Churstállli began to attack settlements of the humans who living on their territory. Although the Churstállli weapons were crude, they made up for it with their innate abilities, tenacity and knowledge of the area. The fighting lasted for about 6 years with severe losses to both sides.

After that fight, the Churstállli retreated deep into the desert to "lick their wounds" and settled down to an isolated existence away from the other races on Tekumel. During the millennia that passed, the intelligence and reasoning powers of the Churstállli declined to that of semi-intelligent animals. Additionally, they developed a nocturnal existence in the desert environment, and buried themselves in the sand for protection. People who have traveled the Deserts of Galai and Churstállli have told tales of uninformed or careless travelers who stop a camp between two boulders only to discover that they are really a pair of Churstállli which rise up and attack them after dark.

The modern Churstállli appear to communicate by cracking and hissing sounds, combined with the movement of their front claws. Although their vocabulary is small, they can communicate basic messages — danger, food, help, etc. No other being on Tekumel has mastered their speech, if it can be called that.

Normal semi-intelligent Churstállli are 70% males and 30% egg-laying females, but the ratios for the atavisms are 80:20 males to egg-laying females. This atavism, which occurs about 1 per 2,000 Churstállli born on Tekumel, is on average as intelligent as a normal human. The atavistic versions live in small groups, and a few of them have established an enclave in the Churu Peak where they are trying to make the original breed flourish on Tekumel again. The atavistic male performs mating rituals to lure females for breeding; these rituals specifically target atavistic females in order to give birth to more atavisms. Stories of these rituals are the basis for the legends regarding the "Dwellers of The Peak" with their treasure of a bygone time. Atavistic males will breed with semi-intelligent females, but the chances of creating atavisms are as low as 20%, and the chances of an atavistic male mating with an atavistic female to breed an atavism are about 35%.

## EMPIRE OF THE PETAL THRONE

Normal Churstállli	Atavistic Churstállli
<i>No. Appearing</i> : ..... 1-5	<i>No. Appearing</i> : ..... 1-2 (35% chance of being accompanied by 1-10 normal Churstállli )
<i>AC</i> : ..... 5	<i>AC</i> : ..... 5
<i>HD</i> : ..... 3D	<i>HD</i> : ..... 2D
<i>Movement</i> : ..... 9"	<i>Movement</i> : ..... 9"
<i>Treasure</i> : ..... nil	<i>Treasure</i> : ..... nil
<i>Lair</i> : ..... 30% 2-20	<i>Lair</i> : ..... 30% 2-5
<i>Treasure in Lair</i> : ..... A: 15%	<i>Treasure in Lair</i> : ..... B: 25%
<i>Special Attack</i> : ...Paralyzing Attack (poison saving throw needed to avoid being paralyzed for D10 rounds)	<i>Special Attack</i> : .. Paralyzing Attack (poison saving throw needed to avoid being paralyzed for D10 rounds)

# On N'lüss

by Steve Pisani

## The Land

For convenience, N'lüss can be divided into highland and lowland areas.

The mountainous areas of Tsúpil Tlásha, Pátra Lisház and Mount Khúm contain some evergreen forests and many extinct, dormant and a few active volcanoes. There are also some mountain lakes in the craters of previous explosions. The valleys in these areas support grasslands, which feed the N'lüss' herds of *hmélu* and *hmá*. During winter, these areas can become quite cold and inhospitable (by the standards of this part of Tékumel). The highland N'lüss drive their herds down to lower pastures during that season. Winter usually lasts five months, from Lésdrim to Didóm. This means about 50 centimeters of rain, and cold, gray weather for lower slopes not blocked from the North and East. There is actual snow among the peaks.

The lowlands include all the clear terrain hexes (on the Gamescience *Swords and Glory* maps) and the eastern shores of Lake Ka'a. These lands contain small woods, bogs, hills etc. as well as plains. The areas near the Putuhénu and Tzuhénu Rivers (the latter forms the border with Ghatón) and the valley from hex 6131 to Malchairan are relatively fertile, and may produce as much as two crops of Ga'in wheat per year. Add to this orchards and other crops, and some of the edges of N'lüss territory are quite fruitful. The lands in the middle of the country and not in hexes containing the rivers or valley just mentioned, however, are poor and arid. Some are barely fit for pasture if the rains do not come.

One other feature calls for mention: Mengpadal Falls. Here the Putuhénu River drops over 200 meters from the slopes of Mount Khum. This spectacular landmark overlooks the border with Mu'ugalavyá and the Sákbé Road from Ssa'átis to N'lüssa. According to legend, the last of the great N'lüss conquerors of eons past, known as the Dragon Warriors, fled here with their "steeds" and disappeared near a large area of hot springs. Although uncounted searches have cost many lives



Going beyond the existing background material, this article delves deeply into the culture of Tékumel's enigmatic giant barbarians

and found nothing over the ages, devoted followers of Vimúhla still make pilgrimages here to sacrifice in their honor. An area of 5 Tsán (a bit over 4 miles) around the falls is considered sacred and neutral ground by the N'lüss and the Mu'ugalavyáni, many of whom worship Vimúhla.

## Sons of the Dragon Warriors

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**The term Dragon Warriors is assumed to refer to either "air cars" (armed and armored flying vehicles from before the Times of Darkness) or to literal flying dragons.**

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The N'lüss are big, tall, hairy, pale (by Tékumel standards), brown haired humans. For whatever reason, these people tended to breed with one another enough to remain distinct through the Times of Darkness. During that time, there are disturbing myths that explain how they became so big and strong.

One involves the use of ancient technology to engineer their people into genetically superior physical specimens. This myth speaks of a price paid by the N'lüss, however. As they became strong, they also grew arrogant, greedy, and finally paranoid.

The simpler explanation involves natural selection for their hostile part of Tékumel, and some inbreeding in isolated populations—two factors which could have brought out recessive genes.

Both may be correct, but perhaps Vimúhla just wanted the N'lüss that way...

### Enter the Lord of Flame

When a nameless Llyáni wizard peered through the planes and found the beings called gods, he introduced the N'lüss to the one called Vimúhla. They saw in him their warlike thirst for blood and chose to follow him thereafter. Most still do so. The question is, did they choose him or vice versa ?

Either way, the N'lüss became a theocracy soon after gaining their patron deity. In 200 years they conquered almost all of map #2 and about half of map #1. They were stopped only by high mountains, the Ssu, the up-and-coming Salarvyani, the Shen and the desert. Their conquests were apparently made with technological and/or animal help. The term Dragon Warriors is assumed to refer to either "air cars" (armed and armored flying vehicles from before the Times of Darkness) or to literal flying dragons. There are no pictures or documents to prove these things. There are also no known documents written by them or by their subjects that explain their bestial name.

If the N'lüss fought then as they fight today (presumably with more organization), they would

fight with a mass of spearmen, flanked and preceded by wedges of greatswordsmen, and screened by archers with powerful longbows. The size, strength, skill, and bravery of their warriors is great—even by Tékumel standards now, and presumably then. Combine these with unity and fanaticism and this kind of army could go a long way by itself—even without the flying contraptions and/or critters.

### Burn Out

The N'lüss spent the next 500 years fighting one another and rebellions by their former subjects. Their legendary chivalry, which tempered their ferocity, rotted among the fruits of easy wealth. Betrayal, greed, bloodlust, jealousy and paranoia supplanted the High Priests of Vimúhla. The last warlords abandoned their ancestors' first conquests at about the same time the Salarvyáni, not the shattered Dragon Lords, drove the Ssu back underground. One wonders why the Ssú, Hlüss and Hlútrgu were not enemies enough for them. Other than that of the Engsvanyáli Priestkings, no Empire had a better opportunity to rid this part of Tékumel from one or more of these enemies of man.

With their empire gone and their homeland not really worth conquering by others, the N'lüss turned to chew on themselves once more. They had a long respite as a province of the Engsvanyáli Empire, but the fall of Éngsvan hlá Gánga returned them to themselves. The present era shows them much as they may have been before Vimúhla found them. The hordes of foreign captives that were sacrificed to the Lord of Flame have mostly been replaced with the victims of their own endless internecine wars.

## The N'lüss of Modern Times

### Bands

The N'lüss divide themselves into bands somewhat similar to Tsolyáni clans, but generally in one contiguous area and functioning more like "tribes" in the manner of ancient Gaul. There are presently 33 major Bands. There are alliances among them, but all are based on the temporary hegemony of a given group or the fear of it by others.

Those clans in Highland areas live by herding, hunting, gathering, subsistence farming, mining, exporting their excess males and Aridáni as mercenaries, and stealing from those better off. Those in the Lowlands, and not in the few towns, live by whatever they can grow and what they can take from their neighbors. Those clans lucky



enough to have high walls around them in towns smelt ore, make excellent weapons and armor, and are generally well regarded as smiths and even as artists with metal and precious stones. The greater numbers of these clans allow them to send off even more young men and Aridáni to fight the wars of others. Like the other clans, these steal as well.

### **Sárqs and Their People**

Each clan is led by a chieftain called a *Sárq*. Sárqs are chosen from among the adult males of the Band upon the death of their predecessor. This is done by the consensus of the Band's Shamans and warriors, including any Aridáni women. The Sárq's rule is law for his lifetime. His power extends to every facet of life—if he deems fit. He decides if a clan will migrate, go to war, or swear an oath of friendship

with its neighbor. He could also decide every marriage, dispute over land, or the suitability of a given bundle of sticks as fuel for a sacrifice to Vimúhla. The smaller matters are usually left to two groups that act as servants and executors of the Sárq's will: his bodyguard (his chosen warriors from all the clan) and the Shamans (a combination of keepers of memory, spirit healers and arbitrators).

A Sárq's bodyguard includes the best warriors of the clan and may number from a few dozen to several hundred, depending on the size of the Band. In addition to guarding him, they enforce the Sárq's will anywhere he is not, and act as his eyes and ears. They receive the best armor and weapons available, and their families have use of the best lands and dwellings. To discourage them from leaving the clan to become mercenaries abroad, they receive a larger



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**More than strong guards, Shamans, and clever foreigners, a Sárq's greatest asset is the proverbial loyalty of his clanfolk. N'lüss rarely go back on their word.**

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share of any loot taken from enemies during warfare. About one tenth of these warriors and all other N'lüss combatants are Aridani women.

Unlike the Sárq's bodyguard, the Shamans are chosen and trained by their successive predecessors in a line extending back tens of thousands of years. The Shamans are the repository of clan history; any knowledge about their lands, plants and animals; myths; rituals; and all agreements made by their clansmen. They preside over and bear witness to all formal agreements such as marriages, funerals, manhood and womanhood rituals. They also arbitrate all disputes regarding said agreements and oaths, and may only be over-ruled by the Sárq himself. Although some are literate, all of this is accomplished with incredibly elaborate memorization. At most, one N'lüss in 100 of each clan may learn part of this discipline.

Another group that aids the Sárq in many clans is the "Little Demons." These are non-N'lüss and (rarely) non-human "advisors" that provide special knowledge or abilities. This may include such people as translators, spies, warriors who fight with foreign weapons, drillmasters, renegade officials with knowledge of foreign ways, sorcerers (despite the

poor environment for magic), and anyone who can convince the Sárq they may be useful or entertaining. This group can prove most valuable of all to the Sárq but is never trusted as clanfolk are since the Mu'ugalavyáni, Ghatóni and others sometimes infiltrate spies among them.

More than strong guards, Shamans and clever foreigners, a Sárq's greatest asset is the proverbial loyalty of his clanfolk. N'lüss rarely go back on their word. Betrayal of their own Sárq is even more unusual. Even if a Sárq goes completely mad (as has happened), every one of his own guards and all that clan's Shamans must agree to his replacement. If even one still trusts the lunatic, the entire clan will follow him into the fire if called upon to do so. This sense of loyalty and trust extends the length and breadth of ones own Band, but no farther.

Feeding, clothing and housing those above are the peasants, herdsmen and tradesmen of the N'lüss. Although they may make poor player characters, their presence will be felt if an adventure involves a boundary fight or a war. Unlike most other peoples on Tékumel, the entire able-bodied populace of men and all such Aridáni women fight. They usually do so with spear and shield, but many learn to shoot a

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**A person is worth what the Sárq says he or she is worth. Be useful and gain status. Hinder him and learn to dig.**

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### **CULTURAL SUMMARY: THE N'LÜSS**

**Life expectancy:** About 35 years, including infant mortality.

**Avg. Height:** About 2 to 2.3 m.

**Spoken Language:** N'lüssa, spoken in many regional dialects.

**Written Language:** Mu'ugalavyáni script used to write sounds that the Mu'ugalavyáni do not make voluntarily. This works poorly and very few are literate.

**Ancient Written Language:** Ancient N'lüssa, the "Tongue of the Dragon Warriors." A blocky script resembling Llyáni and known almost exclusively by foreign scholars.

**Negative Stereotypes:** Vengeful; quick-tempered; stupid; crude; barbarous; drunken; fatalistic; rude.

**Positive Stereotypes:** Athletic; Skilful Warriors; Cunning Hunters; Brave; Loyal; Honest; Generous.

**Religion:** About 60% follow Vimúhla/Chiténg [Less than 10 % are fanatical about it]. The rest are almost all followers of Avanthé or Dilinála. The less than 1% of the people who are Shamans nominally choose the ways of those two

gods and cohorts; or Thúmis, Ksárul, Belkhánu and their cohorts. There are few exceptions.

**Recreation:** Mad Ball; hunting; drinking; gambling; brawling; singing (depressing songs). They are frequently reckless and poor sports while gambling.

**Friendly Greeting:** Each clasps the right forearm of the other. Used by all and considered rude by most "civilized peoples."

**Furniture:** N'lüss use beds, tables and chairs. Warriors eat together at large tables, served by women and children. The Sárq is distinguished by a white cloth and better utensils. He sits on a high wooden seat inlaid with gold and upholstered in Vringála leather.

**Eating Habits:** The left hand is used only to tear bread or "help" the right when eating. N'lüss use a small "chopper" knife to cut food. It is sheathed on the outside of their dagger sheath. Vimúhla (and the few Karakan) worshipers eat fish only when given no choice.

**Weapons of Choice:** Greatswords; Spears; Shields; Longbows; Daggers; The Severed Heads of their Enemies.

longbow befitting their stature and strength. In an all-out war, they comprise over 90% of most clans' forces. In general, they are somewhat less lethal and maneuverable than the Sárq's bodyguard, but about as brave and stubborn in combat. They obviously cannot serve for long before returning to the farm or herds, but they are of far more use than most militia or irregulars.

### **Shaman Chanted Evening**

About one in every one or two hundred N'lüss becomes a Shaman. They are selected as children of about 7 years old by their predecessors, who see in them the intuition, intelligence and memory otherwise not often required in being a warrior. The selection is an honor for the father of such a child, as Shamans are respected, feared and constantly consulted by the Band. Such children may be boys or girls, and roughly equal numbers of them endure the 14 years of rigorous training required. Once they do, Shamans' persons are sacrosanct: no N'lüss may harm one in any way, on prolonged pain of death. Any Shaman that harms any member of the Band, without leave of the Sárq, likewise commits slow, fatal malpractice. Although there may be considerable overlap, N'lüss Shamans are primarily sorcerers, rememberers, arbitrators or healers.

Upon becoming a full-fledged Shaman, that person chooses which of Pavár's deities to follow. Most choose Vimúhla, Thúmis, Avanthé, Ksárul, Belkhánu, or their Cohorts. This is usually for form and reflects the studies of the one who chose. Very few Shamans are fanatical worshipers. If one warrior in ten suffers from an indigestion of Vimúhla, fewer than 1 in 1000 Shamans are concerned with something beyond their function. Although the "spirits" mentioned below are certainly the projections of animists rather than Pariah Gods, N'lüss Shamans pay formal respect to Pavár's theology to avert such confusion.

### **Spirited Debate**

N'lüss Shamans draw on other-planar power in their magically poor-to- barren (in the mountains) lands by persuading or controlling "spirits" to aid them. These spirits may be thought of as embodying the essence of every "living thing"—including such things as rivers and mountains. The Shaman ritually or psychically contacts a creature, tells or asks it to fetch sufficient energy for the desired effect, and casts the equivalent of a spell. In general, this process is both less reliable, more dangerous to the caster, and less powerful than the magic taught in the Five Empires and their satellites. The advantages of this method are that it can be performed in





## Survival Tips for N'lüss Society

Those who anger a N'lüss by disrespect (in his or her opinion) may face a large fist, a challenge or worse. To avoid such ire, never:

- Question anyone's honesty, bravery or loyalty
- Say disparaging things about the Sárq
- Be alone with anyone's wife (assume that any woman over the age of 14 and whose face is not painted as a Shaman is someone's wife)
- Question the parentage of anyone's child—even in jest

## Roleplaying Suggestions

When designing adventures set in N'lüss, think of your player characters in terms of warriors and non-warriors. The warriors will have plenty to do in the games described above, hunting expeditions, fighting any unwelcome foreigners, etc. The Non-warriors have more to do than you might think.

Any skill that involves literacy, knowledge, or trades not practiced in N'lüss [i.e. most of them] must be provided by Little Demons. If a Sárq wants help with any task requiring such skills, he has to go to non-warrior foreign characters. For instance, the various abilities may be useful for dealing with crimes such as murder, kidnapping and espionage. The Sárq, one of his bodyguard or his wives, or a guest with a Band may be a victim or a murderer for many reasons. The same could be spies [even a Sárq could have run afoul of the wrong organization while soldiering abroad]. A young bride or clan wife could be kidnapped by raiders from an unknown Band—or someone in her own Band. The versatility of the non-warriors in a party could be essential to solving mysteries like these. Any knowledge of relevant scholarly pursuits will be particularly useful since they are disdained by the N'lüss.

magically poor, but not quite barren, areas and the presence of metal is not harmful to the caster.

Those N'lüss Shamans who are sorcerers are called "Void Hunters." The effects of their actions approximate the effects of most Universal spells. Generic spells appropriate to the pro forma religious affiliation of the Shaman may also be cast via ritual. Neither Psychic nor Ritual spells actually conform to the exact method described in Swords and Glory for their casting. In the case of N'lüss Shamanic magic, the terms are simply used to describe the time and effort required for Ritual spell effects versus the fast but clumsy (and more dangerous) ways of psychic spells. Since the Pedhétl is irrelevant for the caster (and any assistants in a more complicated ritual), "the enemy" [the Pedhétl] will not strike at the Shaman—but spirits may. So too may the amount of energy from another plane be more or less than the Shaman bargained for or could direct.

As for battle magic, N'lüss Shamans can cast no offensive battle spells at all. All they can do is ritually attempt to harass or cancel out the efforts of an enemy magical contingent. This involves as many Shaman as can be gathered behind the army calling upon a very powerful spirit or group of them. Barring disaster, it could spare a N'lüss force the brunt of enemy magic for a round or two, perhaps long enough for an all-out charge of N'lüss warriors to do some damage [as it did against the M'ugalavyáni invasion of 1,411 A.S.] The ultimate defense against foreign battle magic is simply to retreat into the magically barren mountains of the North, where no spells can be cast at all.

### The Shaman Is Your Friend

Shamans responsible for the memorization and interpretation of history, oaths and law are known as "Keepers of the Word." They are the records, judge

and jury for their Sárq. If this sounds like an invitation to corruption or spite—it is. It is amazing that so many resist the temptation to remember selectively for a price. The ability with which epics, contracts and all manner of lore are remembered is uncanny. Keepers of the Word refuse to reveal their methods for learning this to outsiders. Even if they did, it would likely require devoted study from childhood. What they reveal to members of their Band when they succumb to human temptation and subtly abuse their office is harder to say.

### Wort Removers

Those Shamans who keep the knowledge of plants, animals, and the land in general for purposes of healing are called "Servants of the Cauldron." They maintain extensive knowledge of the plants and animals of the area—including sentients and their minds. They act as healers, makers of potions and useful allies to Void Hunters. They aid the latter by brewing "special ceremonial beer" to help them perceive within the void and finding that which is requested by certain spirits. Cauldron Shamans also treat the perpetual cultural grief, depression, despair, rage and hopelessness far more effectively than the N'lüss drug of choice: alcohol. The Sárq leads a Band and warriors defend it, but these Shamans keep it from mass suicide.

### Beyond the Band

Within their own Band, the stereotypical N'lüss honesty and loyalty holds—usually. Outside of it, politics resemble a Kindergarten where the children are fed steroids and given knives. The 33 major Bands at present divide the land into as many pieces. Warfare, in various degrees, flares constantly and alliances of expedience or fear [Don't tell them that!] form and break constantly.

## Foreign Influence

The largest foreign influence comes via Mu'ugalavyá. The 1,400+km Southern border brings livestock, some other goods and a few slaves/sacrifices from the constant raiding. This is an industry for the Bands that live along it. Along the remains of the Sákbe Roads marked on the map, trade goods, some money, and Mu'ugalavyáni defectors flow North. Most of the largest N'lüss export, mercenaries, do not serve the Mu'ugalavyáni, but several Bands receive aid via the Company of the Mourners in Sable [known as "The Company"] in various ways—albeit covertly.

As long as Mu'ugalavyá has existed, its leaders have sought to keep the N'lüss divided, poor, and under as much of their influence as possible. They have almost always succeeded. The only cultural obstacle to their completely co-opting N'lüss is the stifling rigidity of their own theobureaucratic government. N'lüss do not take well to constant ordering about.

Ghatón shares some customs and culture with N'lüss, and some trade as well. This is as far as the bizarre misogynistic practices of the Ghatóni will allow. Even the patriarchal N'lüss revile them.

Tsolyánu, Yán Kór and various other nations, organizations and temples employ over 10,000 N'lüss mercenaries between them at any given time. The money with which they return is most of what N'lüss has of it. Some ideas, such as Aridáni status for women, came from some of these places [and necessity] as well. Indeed, almost all N'lüss Aridáni serve abroad as mercenaries. Both of the empires mentioned maintain agents in N'lüss to recruit, observe the Mu'ugalavyáni, and increase their own influence.

All others aside, the omnipresence of foreign influence is the Mu'ugalavyáni secret police: "The Company of the Mourners in Sable." They have spies in nearly every Band, many of whom are Little Demons—foreigners serving a Sárq. Even N'lüss who have been made into "Manchurian Candidates" unwittingly serve them. They aid the weaker side whenever possible in any war between Bands and interfere with mercenary recruitment by other powers. They assassinate, steal, provoke wars, retaliate for raids, start plagues, search for and pillage ancient ruins and generally have too much fun being anti-social while not having to live in Mu'ugalavyá.

## N'lüss Warfare

When a N'lüss Band goes to war, they do so with great ferocity, pausing only to rape and marry the

enemy women, and to adopt their children after slaughtering the warriors. Needless to say, if they did this to themselves all the time, there would be no more N'lüss. Thus, even the bloodthirsty learn to sip. The N'lüss have developed a semi-ritualized set of ways to settle the battles of the Bands.

### Ritualized Combat — Mad Ball

The first method is to take all the testosterone-waiting-to-happen in the more enthusiastic warriors and divert it into some friendly athletic competition. Being N'lüss, of course, this means a good, hearty contact sport. The game is called N'lüss Mad Ball. The object is simply to move an orange and green striped, [N'lüss] adult head-sized ball covered in human skin and stuffed to about the weight of a soccer ball through a goal about 5m wide and 3m tall. The ball may only enter from one direction (observed by one Shaman from each side acting as referees.) Each player is given a hardwood stick about 2 m. long and plays striped to the waist in their kilt, the pattern of which helps identify sides. Any number can play, so long as both teams have the same number of players. When two Bands play, the "field" is anywhere within one Tsán of their common border.

Although the game may continue for days, it keeps the body count reasonably low. That is, if there is no dispute over the outcome. If such a dispute arises or a Band becomes angrier at another than a good game of Mad Ball will satisfy, they may resort to a Raid or a Border Fight.

### Raids on other N'lüss Bands

Small parties of warriors (usually young) sneak into the territory of a neighboring Band and try to steal some *hmá*, goods, or women. They then return home with what they stole and, by ironclad tradition, get to keep it with no direct retaliation.

If the target of a Raid discovers the raiders within their territory, the Raid becomes something called "Big Game Hunting." The Sárq or the local leader of his bodyguard sends as many warriors as he deems fit in pursuit. If they catch the thieves, they may do anything they like to any survivors. This usually means sacrifices for Vimúhla. Again, if they make it even one step past their border stones, the raiders "get away Scot free."

### Border Fights

If a Sárq deems a dispute serious but not at the price of war to annihilation, he may gather as many warriors as he can, march to the border of the offending Band and send a Shaman with his

### The "Rules" of N'lüss Mad Ball

1. The game ends when one side moves the ball through their opponent's goal, from the proper direction, as judged by both Shamans present, and wins.
2. The ball must be visible to the other team at all times.
3. No player may use armor or weapons, magic or any item other than a stick.

challenge to the other Band. If they are wise, the other Band reciprocates and faces the challengers. The challenging Sárq then sends forward a champion to fight a single combat to the death, as does the other Sárq. The Band whose champion wins wins the dispute.

This forces the losing Sárq to accept defeat in the dispute or send another champion. The Sárq whose champion won the first combat may use him to fight again or replace him with another. The single combats between the drawn up hosts of the two Bands continue until one Sárq admits defeat. If, instead of admitting defeat, one Sárq gets bored, frustrated, angry or (perish the thought) scared, he may escalate things.

This usually means sending forth the longbowmen and other missile warriors. The arrows and other missiles do not kill many, but almost always gall the enemy into the same response. If one side is much more numerous than the other, the smaller side tends to retreat at this point. If not, the greatswordsmen charge, and a real battle begins.

Before the fighting, each side places standards at intervals of about 50m in a line directly behind their forces. These are to mark the limit of how far a warrior may step back without admitting defeat and being forced on his honor to cease fighting in return for safety. Of course, the closer a Sárq orders his standards placed behind his warriors, the more confidence he shows that they will not be driven back from the enemy. Once all the warriors on one side are killed or driven back beyond their line of standards, their Band loses the dispute.

### **Total War**

When the previous expedients fail or hatred walks the land, the N'lüss fight with extreme ferocity. A war ends when the enemy Sárq or Sárqs are dead with all their warriors. Clan wives and children are forcibly adopted into the victorious Bands. Many kill themselves rather than submit to this. There are no prisoners, only sacrifices. A war may take years or even generations to finish.

The only deliverance spoken of, other than a truce to fight foreign invaders, is the death of one or more of the Sárqs who declared the war to exist in the first place. A new Sárq may honorably offer to settle the war ritually (and for lower stakes) to spare his Band (or their enemies) annihilation.

Oddly enough, when the N'lüss serve as mercenaries in foreign armies, they seem better able to control their rage. Most of their fury falls on the phalanx in front of them in battle. Aside from being raucous

and reveling in looting and destruction a bit more than most of Vimúhla's kindred, they are good soldiers.

The tactics and weapons of the N'lüss were discussed earlier in this article. Suffice it to say, most fight with greatsword or spear-and-shield, and wear body-armor and helmets when they can. The Sárq's bodyguard usually fights in wedges of greatswordsmen, and the mass of warriors form a shield-wall or rush forward like Hoplites to crash through the enemy like a wave. Longbowmen and any other missile armed warriors harass and screen the enemy until they have shot everything—then they charge.

## **Socializing with N'lüss**

The N'lüss do not trust anyone who does not drink. They drink *henka* wheat beer and *A'ash* grain whiskey. They drink N'gala red and Dlel purple wines when they can get them. They think other drugs are for wimps or the sick. As the proverb goes: "As the yeast relieved itself, so we are relieved." They need to be. When drinking with the N'lüss, happiness, singing (mostly depressing or crude songs at high volume), crude humor, and pounding or dancing on the table are all mandatory. Those not having a good time will be made to drink more and entertain the group by singing.

Otherwise, N'lüss are typically honest, generous hosts. All players keep the rank and social status they had in their own lands. Of course, since this is N'lüss, this is only relevant for purposes of ransom. A person is worth what the Sárq of the Band says he or she is worth. Be useful and gain status. Hinder him and learn to dig.

## **Conclusion**

Consider playing a scenario or two in N'lüss. Players new to Tékumel will understand the place faster. Players familiar with Tékumel may never have played in a game set there before. Think of it as a lower cost alternative setting for contact archaeology, intrigue and adventure. Better yet, stop thinking and just play a game with your friends, in the name of Vimúhla !



## N'LÜSS BAND INFORMATION CHART

Band	Hex(es)	Warriors	Wealth	Notes
Assurak	5723; 5724; 5623; 5523	11,000	22	Strongest Band. Trade w/ Mu'ugalavyáni
Malarta'	5827	6,000	13	Rival to N'lüssa. Some trade off-board.
Krosratu	5431	4,500	12	Trade/Smuggling
Edlorzda	5623	2,000	7	
Mirizha	5531	2,500	1	Vimúhla Fanatics
Gahtof	5,532; 5632	4,000	6	Ghatóni Trade
Skae'	5631 and adjacent highlands	1,500	1	Poorer and more desperate than most.
Seppoj	5530	1,000	2	
Lipustor	5729; 5629 and adjacent highlands	2,000	4	
Mnerr	5528; 5529	4,000	4	Many ex -Tsolyáni mercenaries. Superior soldiers.
Ayshalto'	5931; 5932 and adjacent highland hexes	1,500	2	
Nyore'	6131;6132; 6133 and 6033	500	1	
Zhiyhasi	5929; 5930 6030; 6131; 6130; 5828	3,000	8	Trade w/ people off North board edge.
Narik	5928;5927	2,500	3	
Mizraka	6027;6028; 6029; 6130	1,000	1	
Akzhasi	5825 and adjacent highlands	2,500	2	
Ekyal	5822; 5922; 5923	1,000	1	
Rivnorwa	6022; 6023; 6024; 6124; 6125	500	2	
Ekhumo	5622	500	1	Vimúhla fanatics
Dyalaf	5524	2,500	1	Raids Mu'ugalavyáni
Sylorzda	5624	3,000	2	
Dyfur	5725	2,500	2	
Regyur	5726	2,000	2	
Myunch	5727	2,500	1	
G'nsar	5728	1,500	1	
Fefyarzda	5525	3,000	1	Raids Mu'ugalavyáni.
N'twur	5427; 5425; 5426	3,500	2	Raids Mu'ugalavyáni.
Estvenles	5527; 5427	4,000	2	Raids Mu'ugalavyáni.
Byozdys	5428; 5429; 5430	3,000	1	Raids Mu'ugalavyáni.
S'ulnir	5625	2,000	1	
N'wehr	5626	2,000	1	
Lastyosda	5627	1,500	1	
Pangae'	The far Northwest	500	1	Spared from most wars.

**Band-** The name of the present Sárq.

**Hex-** Hex numbers on map #1 of Swords and Glory; all or part of which are controlled by that Band.

**Warriors-** A rough estimate of the total number of armed and lethal adults that Band could muster, for about a month or two, in an emergency. A Sárq's bodyguard of full-time warriors number

only 5% to 10% of this figure.

**Wealth-** A subjective measure of the surplus food/trade goods available to that Band. One means bare subsistence and higher numbers reflect larger amounts for barter. Money is relatively little used in N'lüss. These are mostly extra sources of income. Raiding Mu'ugalavyá is a cottage industry for Southern border Bands. In fact, it involves many of them ... .

# Tékumel 301: Intermediate Studies

Professor M.A.R. Barker (with T.A. Joseph Saul for the Seal)



Most of what we've learned about Tékumel — those of us outside Prof. Barker's campaign, anyway — merely scratches the surface of the world. In this continuing series of interviews, Prof. Barker takes us on to the next level, what he refers to as "Intermediate Tékumel."

*You can name all of the Five Empires, understand the intricacies of the Tsolyáni kinship system, know how to peel a Chlén (and why you'd want to) and panic involuntarily when your roommate spills cinnamon in the kitchen.*

*Congrats—you have completed your beginning Tékumel courses with flying colors. If you're serious about getting a degree in Tékumel Studies, however, Prof. Barker is ready to teach you some deeper truths. (Don't worry; non-majors can always take it pass-fail.)*

**Seal:** Prof. Barker, you have said on a number of occasions that the aspects of Tékumel that most campaigns explore don't get any further than what you refer to as "beginning Tékumel," but beyond that there are actually intermediate and advanced topics.

**Barker:** There are. I wrote the original Empire of the Petal Throne kind of to suit TSR Hobbies and Gary Gygax, and he didn't want to get very far into those topics because he said they would be confusing. I wrote the Empire of the Petal Throne accordingly. I didn't go very far beyond the sort of good and evil gods, and the simplistic description of the Empire and the politics within the empires and the relations between nations. It's very, very superficial—almost like playing Monopoly and then looking at the reality of Atlantic City, New Jersey.

My theory at the time was that later on I might publish further books on the international situation and then to go from there to the interplanar situation, which is so complex that my players just love it and go just about crazy about it every week. I have several more layers to add to Tékumel. They are complex. They deal with interplanar relationships between the great gods and the powers of the Pariah Deities and possibly others. They deal with the relationships between interlocking planes, that are sort like layers of an onion. They are extremely complex to describe.

For instance, there are several directions besides the normal up, down, north, south, east, west. There are two or three more that I know of, and there are probably still more if you are a Mihállí.

**Seal:** What are the directions you know of?

**Barker:** The ones that the players often find useful are Drí and Grél. These two directions apparently are, according to Wába's Book of the Planes, the sort of... well, the problem with all of this is that you can't describe something in 6 dimensions when we are 3-dimensional beings.

There are, by the way, different kinds of nexus points. The stable nexus points open into the same places every time—that is, there is a standard nexus point which travels out of Jakállá up to Béy Sü and Sa'á Allaqiyár. These known nexus points are often guarded at each end. There is a lightning bringer at Sa'á Allaqiyár pointed straight at the nexus point in case you decide to push your way through somehow.

Then you have the type which magic-users can call for and then look around to see if one appears. These nexus points are holes or pin-points in the space-time fabric. You might walk through one right into the middle of the sun, or you might end up buried beneath the earth of some planet somewhere, or you might appear on a nice friendly surface where you can interact with the local monsters.

**Seal:** I understand that some people have gotten skilled at manipulating the nexus points.

**Barker:** Wába, the famous end-of-the-latter-times scholar, is still alive and busy in the southern continent. He is on the coast down there off to the southwest of the four maps you have now [see Gamescience's Swords and Glory Vol. I—Ed.], and he still has a small academy—10 or 12 students—and he's exploring further planes. That is a very interesting job. We had a case the other night where one of my players used the Periplus of the Planes spell, and heard a voice in his head saying, "Thank you very much for contributing new planes to the knowledge of Wába and his colleagues."

**Seal:** Just out of the blue like that!

**Barker:** Yeah. It hit him that he had contributed new knowledge because the plane which he had stepped out of was totally unknown to Wába's group up to that point.

**Seal:** So Wába tracks plane travelers somehow?

**Barker:** Wába doesn't track anything personally, but his spell does. It just suddenly says that there is no information on this plane which you are trying to jump to: We will send the information on to Wába, and he will fit it into his material.

With Wába unable to talk to you directly, you are unable to tell what plane you are going to. You can use the *Periplus of the Planes* spell—which is a very high level spell—and it will at least tell you whether the air is breathable, and that the nexus is not opening up into water somewhere. I've had players ask, "Can I tell if so-and-so is there? Is so-and-so on that plane?" My answer is, "No." You can't tell that, it's not that specific. It's like the other knowledge spells. They aren't very specific. They'll show you who the last person was who handled an object or handled a body, who killed so-and-so, but they won't tell you names. They won't tell you how it all happened. All you see is what the person saw as he was dying. It's a little complex—and probably more so than most players would prefer—but that is how life goes on Tékumel.

**Seal:** I find that players with spells that allow them to create nexus points want to use them as shortcuts in the real world.

**Barker:** Of course. They don't want to waste four months marching along the Sákbe Road. My players are exactly the same. The difficulty is that, while the spells work most of the time, there are interplanar currents that keep floating between the planes and moving the nexus points in unguessable directions.

**Seal:** One way or another, interplanar travel is not without its hazards.

**Barker:** No, you can come out in the damndest places. The other night I had a bunch of player characters out extremely far in interplanar space. They were almost out to the Pylons, which is the farthest recorded area of interplanar space. No one knows what the Pylons are, or who built them, but they're miles high. They stand up there in the middle of a jet-black sky and are apparently some kind of guardian warding wall around unknown space. So the characters cast their planar spell, and one of them then ended up in a Mexican prison in 1914. He had a hell of a time. His golden ball to speak the language didn't work at all, and the Mexicans were not very kind to him. He had a devil of a time getting out of there.

That was one adventure. The other night, the whole group went and visited the Trojan War where everyone spoke Greek.

**Seal:** It's possible to get to versions of our Earth via the planes?

**Barker:** Oh, it's very possible. In each case, the Mexican case and the Greek case, they did not get right to the exact "real" version from our history. They got to side versions where something else had happened which made slight differences in the culture. In the Greek visit, the party brought a whole bunch of people and, when they were trying to get out of there, a sorceress appeared who claimed to be from Syria and to have genuine magical knowledge. Also, she quoted other sorcerers of the age. Then she managed to help them get out. She wasn't in the original Greek myth at all.

**Seal:** One of the things which people have traditionally taken as canon is that Tékumel is immune to technology transfer—not only culturally but because there wouldn't be any sources from which to obtain the technology.

**Barker:** When I wrote *Empire of the Petal Throne*, I felt that it was a good idea to prevent players from instantly inventing gunpowder. They want to ruin the economy and society of a culture that you're enjoying and playing in just by human greed or curiosity, so I simply said that you can't transfer anything.

In reality, this is only partially true. It is true in the sense that most cultures in Tékumel would not even think of gunpowder: they would not recognize the chemicals, and they wouldn't know how to put them together in the right proportions. This is one thing that everyone has a hard time imagining because we modern types use technology. We think of it as a normal way of life. Our ancestors three or four hundred years ago would have had no clue whatsoever. They were still discovering oxygen and things like that, and having a great time talking about phlogiston, the substance of the universe. There is no way that Americans and Britishers or whoever hundreds of years ago could invent some of the things that players want.

Now, you say, "What about the devices of the ancients?" They are as far from Tékumel in real terms as our knowledge of, let's say, technology—cybernetics or whatever you want to call them—is from bows and arrows, and it would be very difficult for a bow and arrow person to even image what a computer is and what it does.

**Seal:** But you've still come closer with that Mexican story than many gamemasters would dare.

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**[O]ne of them then ended up in a Mexican prison in 1914. He had a hell of a time...**

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**I don't really care—and I don't think anyone should care—if somebody else wants to play Tékumel with machine guns.**

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**Barker:** I've come close... but what did those Mexicans have that this guy did not do or could not duplicate in some way?

**Seal:** Horses, for one.

**Barker:** They had horses. That surprised him. But there are beasts all over Tékumel. You can ride the Bazháq, you can get a Horse on one island in south Tékumel, and there are various things like that. The Hokún travel around riding their own species, but a somewhat different subvariety. So the idea is around.

**Seal:** Even if you've *seen* people riding horses, that doesn't mean...

**Barker:** That you're going to jump up and do it.

**Seal:** You'd still have to find horses, which I know exist on Tékumel, but in a fairly obscure location.

**Barker:** They're quite obscure, and if you did find them, you'd have to bring them back over the sea, which is a long way.

**Seal:** And then you'd have to deal with cultural inertia if you were trying to introduce them on a wide scale.

**Barker:** That's another point, of course. You can't expect cultures to just jump and say, "Let's have that! Let's introduce it right now!" Look at the problem they're having with cars of different styles and shapes. Electric cars are not becoming popular instantly, even though they have their good points. It's very, very difficult to move a culture. We don't have the mindset of the medieval or ancient world any more. Things are not given by the gods any more. Things have to be thought out, and given over to a research team, and then invented and put into the society gradually in order not to rock any economic boats.

**Seal:** Even in our culture, technologies have been suppressed even when they have not been in the interest of the people with money. Here in Detroit there was originally a plan to set up cable cars in the city, and all the things to do with that were bought up by the auto manufacturers and then basically junked.

**Barker:** What was the name of that man who invented a car and drove it around, taking it out and showing it off, and trying to get donations for it?

**Seal:** Tucker?

**Barker:** They say that the Tucker car never actually worked, it was actually inert. The engine would not work. Well, I have news for them—my father and I saw it with our own eyes. We saw Tucker come to

our small town in Idaho, and he displayed this car and drove it up a hill so fast you could hardly see it go.

**Seal:** My understanding is that some are still even running, but I could be wrong.

Anyway, let's move back from technology transfer; I know that's a subject which you've had to beat to death on the Blue Room mailing list on the Internet so many times.

**Barker:** I've beat it, kicked it, and stomped it, but it doesn't die. The fact is that I don't really care—and I don't think anyone should care—if somebody else wants to play Tékumel with machine guns.

**Seal:** I think it would be an interesting variant.

**Barker:** Sure, you could play Tékumel with machine guns, rocket launchers, helicopters, the whole bit. And I wouldn't care, but if you ask me what my Tékumel does, then I will tell you. And that's the only thing I'll tell you. Otherwise, I'll say, "Go play whatever you enjoy." If you want to add helicopters, go ahead. It doesn't bother me a bit. But don't say Prof. Barker authorized this or whatever I'm supposed to do. I don't authorize things. I tell you what I play and what I do and what I imagine. And if you don't want to do something similar but different, go ahead. Enjoy!

**Seal:** The nexus points are a complicated and dangerous enough means of travel...

**Barker:** Right. You open a nexus point, and sometimes it doesn't reach another nexus point, and then you come upon the marble stairways. Those were built by some race who lived god knows how many millennia ago out between the planes. This is probably back during the time of the Great Ancients or possibly during the Mihállli Age which came long, long before that.

**Seal:** I was wondering whether the Mihállli did it.

**Barker:** They might have. The squares are simply plaques of a marble-like substance, much like white marble. They are about 12 inches wide and 2 - 3 feet long and only about an inch thick, and they hang in Other Space like steps. They go down or up or around, and these step-like things lead you through Other Space until you can see a nexus point at the side or in front of them, and you can enter that one.

**Seal:** Has anybody ever gotten lost in Other Space?

**Barker:** Many times, and I've had players fall off a stairway—there are no railings, and you just go all the way down forever.

**Seal:** Or Grél, or whatever direction it really is.

**Barker:** That's one of the directions which kind of corresponds to down. You go down and down, and never come to the bottom. I've had cases where a falling being somehow or another manages to land on a stair case, grabbing it as he's falling. And then he can confront the player characters. Some of these beings were dead of old age or mummified. The player characters had one beast that fell on the stairway in front of them, and it crumbled all to pieces. They didn't even have time to look at it. It just hit, bang, and crumbled. And that was it. It was a fairly large beast, about the size of a tall dog. It was a curious thing.

But anyway, these little stairways lead you from one nexus point to another, and you may have to go through other nexus points to get to your destination. Without a guide and without Wába's book or a book like the *Periplus of the Planes*, you could end up anywhere. People often end up on the Plane of the Great Herds, a plane which looks pretty much like modern Tékumel with nice grass, trees, and so on, but there are herds of huge animals that wonder to and fro across it. Sometimes the herds get spooked and go into a stampede, and you have no one living there and you have no mountains and valleys—nowhere to hide.

**Seal:** That's a plane which a lot of nexus points open into?

**Barker:** It's very near to Tékumel. It's one of the planes you can usually get into if you can get into the nexus point system at all. But it isn't particularly fun because these critters can stomp you into the dust before you have a chance to throw up spells and destroy them. We've lost a few parties there.

**Seal:** Are there any other common planes that players stumble into?

**Barker:** It's common to travel to a different location or time period on Tékumel itself. The planes branching off from "Tékumel Prime" are "closer" in six-dimensional space than other planes. Travellers have visited the great palaces of the Engsvanyáli priestkings, the Duruób kings in the great classical age of Livyánu, and the far northeast at the city of Dza'á on its coastal island in the farthest northeast corner of the maps. It would take a whole book to describe Dza'á. You can even get to modern places and modern times, if you happen to be lucky—or if you have the *Periplus* or a copy of Wába's "Almanac." I even had one person come out in the Golden Tower of Avanthár. He was not popular with the Omnipotent Azure Legion.

**Seal:** No, I imagine not.

**Barker:** You don't want to do that kind of thing. You don't want to wind up in the boudoir of the governor's mistress, either. You tend to get shortened by a head.

**Seal:** So "I was just following the nexus points" is not a well-received excuse for trespassing.

**Barker:** Most people on Tékumel do not believe nexus points exist. The reason they don't believe in them is that they don't see them as often as some players do.

**Seal:** On the other hand, the Servitors of Silence or the governor's security people *would* believe they exist. They just wouldn't believe that you got there accidentally.

**Barker:** No, they'd believe that you broke in somehow or you were solving the nexus point so that anyone else could break in, or that you'd sell the secret to the Mu'ugalavyáni or somebody. So you're instantly dead, or if not dead, at least your mind is washed clean.

**Seal:** Is there any sort of large scale trade that goes on between Tékumel Prime and other planes?

**Barker:** The only option which people seem to have is one Gijj and Sons in Dlásh in southern Livyánu, a firm which has been in operation since sometime in the Latter Times or even earlier. That firm has established warehouses, storehouses, for interplanar products. There are alien races which trade. Some of the races are vaguely humanoid, most are not. And they bring in all kinds of commodities. There are special minerals, jewels, even candies, all kinds of things. Sometimes these things are dangerous, mostly they're not. They bring in a few barrels of pickled fruit, they taste good, they sell them for a reasonable price in the shops of Dlásh and north all the way up through Livyánu and up to Mu'ugalavyá. There are dangerous races out there, but Gijj and Sons have been in business long enough to recognize the really dangerous ones and stay away from them. Their workers are exceedingly closed-mouthed.

**Seal:** You mentioned that they have an office in Dlásh. Dlásh is a closed city, isn't it?

**Barker:** Yes. Technically, it belongs to the Syndics of Dlásh, but each Syndic is somebody at Gijj and Sons. So Gijj and Sons is the property of the Syndics of Dlásh. There are many Syndics. We don't know how many and don't know who they are. They live in Dlásh in the sealed center city. Around that, there is a solid ring of warehouses, storehouses, offices, and shipping accommodations. There are also

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**I've had  
players fall  
off a  
stairway—  
there are no  
railings, and  
you just go  
all the way  
down  
forever.**

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**There are alien races which trade.... they bring in all kinds of commodities. There are special minerals, jewels, even candies, all kinds of things. Sometimes these things are dangerous...**

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hostels there for people who want to stay while they are buying stuff or for people who are traveling in caravans. There's lots and lots of business going on.

**Seal:** So if a Tsolyáni citizen of some resources wanted access to interplanar goods, does Gijj and Sons have other offices?

**Barker:** Well, they do, but you'd have to know where they are. They're not offices, they're mostly individual merchants, always with strong Livyáni connections, who would be willing to bring items in their caravans to you.

**Seal:** So there probably is somebody out of Jakálla, for example?

**Barker:** Jakálla has two or three agents, and there are several people in other cities who will bring you things if you can give an order that makes sense. Going to Dlásh itself is often difficult because they are well aware of what you want and why you want it. They're not just automatically going to sell you submachine guns. The reason that Dlásh continues to exist is so that the high lords of other cultures can obtain commodities—like medicines—that are rare or do not exist on Tékumel.

**Seal:** Now, say, if some enterprising Tsolyáni managed to make it through, and managed to make it to Dlásh, and managed to inquire after Gijj and Sons...

**Barker:** Gijj and Sons is all around. All you have to do is walk into any warehouse and yell. Gijj and Sons has huge warehouses in Dlásh, and little ones where smaller ones and more precious items are kept and store. They even have slaves there from some of the interplanar races. Gijj and Sons go back quite a long way—to the time of the Great Ancients—and they even have laboratories capable of building anything protoplasmic.

**Seal:** And they'll deal with you if you can get to them?

**Barker:** They'll deal with you, but they want things too. They're not just going to say, "10 Káitars." They're going to ask, "What can you get us with real economic value," and they'll tell you what they value. Sometimes it's one thing, and sometimes it's another. I mean, they'll tell you, "We value certain minerals. We value certain particular types of plant substances, or sea substances. We want to buy all sorts of things. We have an order for a beautiful slave girl from a guy who you don't even want to think what he looks like," and et cetera.

Once we had an auction in Dlásh, outside the central walled and moated city, in one of the

warehouses. The auction included a Sa'á Allaqiyáni princess, and her player friends were trying to buy her back. The bidding got too high for them and they couldn't do it, and they were disheartened and about ready to quit and go home. But her brother, who is a Sa'á Allaqiyáni prince, managed separately—without anybody recognizing him and knowing who he was—to reach Dlásh and he managed to bid on her and he got her.

**Seal:** Sounds like all the players succeeded in doing was running up the price on him.

**Barker:** Well, yes. They didn't know any better. If you want to buy something in that fashion, you offer your commodities, whatever commodities you've got—or you offer your magic items; the Dláshi will buy those, especially rarer ones—and the Dláshi will issue you a certificate with how many credits you have, so you use those credits to buy things with.

**Seal:** Do they have shops in the Tsolyáni sense?

**Barker:** Sure, a lot of them. A lot of shops around the perimeter of the inner city. Places where you buy and sell things. There are also workshops out there where normal sorts of stuff is made. You can buy good sandals in Dlásh. I remember somebody buying a set of very fine tooled leather sandals that were too good to waste walking in the road, so she packed them up in her luggage and took them home. And there are excellent art objects—statues of different gods, made of all sorts of odd materials. There are amulets—some of which are genuinely magical, most of which aren't. There are clothes, and sheets, and pillowcases, and everything else you might want in life. The Dláshi just sell it off as they pump it out. They're quite honorable. They won't cheat you. They've learned that over the millennia. They won't offer a guy a ringer, bait and switch, or something like that. It's unnecessary, and it ruins their reputation.

**Seal:** So they offer honest value at high prices?

**Barker:** Well... they can be a little slippery at times. They might offer something which doesn't quite match what you thought it was going to do, but it's still pretty good. You'd better know what you want. You'd better know how much it's worth, and roughly, how it works and what it will do when you do things to it.

**Next Issue: Trans-planar Mu'ugalavyáni plots, Intefogulators, and The Pariah Deities.**

# GURPS TÉKUMEL

## Adventuring in the Empire of the Petal Throne

By Brett Slocum

Illustrations by Giovanna Fregni and M.A.R. Barker

This is the first of a series of articles which present rules for playing on Tékumel using GURPS rules. A less complete version of these rules was originally published in Pyramid magazine #11. Familiarity with GURPS is assumed in these articles. This first article contains the character building rules.

### About GURPS

GURPS is an acronym that stands for "Generic Universal Role Playing System". It is a rule system published by Steve Jackson Games that is designed to handle any genre (fantasy, swashbucklers, cyberpunk, etc.) and any time period (ancient, medieval, Victorian, modern, far future, etc.). No more changing rules when you want to play a different game.

The essential rules for GURPS have been distilled down to a 32-page version called *GURPS Lite*, which is freely available on the Internet. *GURPS Lite* and this article have everything you need to get started playing GURPS Tékumel. Once you decide that GURPS will work for you, you can purchase the other books recommended for a GURPS Tékumel game: *GURPS Basic*, *Magic*, and *Grimoire*. *GURPS Lite* is available from the Steve Jackson Games web site (<http://www.sjgames.com/gurps/lite/>). It is in PDF format, so Acrobat Reader is necessary (<http://www.adobe.com/acrobat/>).

### About the Author

The first roleplaying campaign that Brett Slocum played in was an EPT campaign in 1975 run by Craig Smith, one of the players in Barker's original Thursday Night Group (and artist in many Tékumel publications). He has used many game systems, including Traveller, Chivalry and Sorcery, The Fantasy Trip, Champions, and GURPS, as well as EPT, Swords and Glory, and Gardásiyal. He felt Tékumel and GURPS made a perfect combination and has been working on this conversion since being introduced to GURPS over ten years ago. His web site contains much Tékumel- and GURPS-related material (<http://www.io.com/~slocum/>). He has gotten his gaming fix over the last ten years while without a gaming group by playtesting GURPS, writing chapters and articles for GURPS,

writing a regular contribution to All of the Above, the GURPS APazine, and running games at conventions.

In mundane life, he's a computer consultant (read mercenary programmer), a part-time single father, and a generally weird guy. His book collection (science fiction, fantasy, history, religion, conspiracy, etc.) takes up two rooms, which his girlfriend is still not happy about.

### Page References

Rules and statistics in this article refer to *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition, Revised*. Any page reference that begins with a B refers to the *Basic Set* - e.g., p. B102 means page 102 of the *GURPS Basic Set*. A reference that begins with CI refers to *GURPS Compendium I*, M to *GURPS Magic*, and G to *GURPS Grimoire*.

Only *Basic Set* (or *GURPS Lite*) and this article are required to play. If magic-using PCs are present, *GURPS Magic* and *GURPS Grimoire* will be needed.

### Next Issue

The next issue will contain the equipment chapter, including Chlén-hide weapons and armor, the cost of steel items, and the costumes of The Twenty-Four Forms, suitable for wear to the gala parties of the social elite.

### About this Center Section

*Seal of the Imperium* is pleased to present Brett Slocum's GURPS rules for Tékumel as a series of four articles, each laid out in the center of the magazine so you can pull them out and use them. These rules are in standard GURPS format, rather than the *Seal's* format, for the same reason. GURPS is a trademark of Steve Jackson Games, and no challenge to the trademark is intended.

# Chapter 1: Characters

Create characters for Tékumel using the *Basic Set* and *GURPS Magic*. 100-point characters are suggested for the average campaign with a limit of 40 points in disadvantages and 5 quirks, but a cinematic campaign with 150 or even 200 point characters is possible. In campaigns where court intrigue plays a major role, the extra 50 to 100 points could be restricted to social advantages, such as Status, Wealth, Military Rank and Clerical Investment.

Treat humans as pre-19th century humans for determining height, and subtract 3" from average height.

The advantages, disadvantages and skills in *GURPS Lite* or *GURPS Basic* can be used to build characters. Any changes, plus additions from other *GURPS* sources are listed below.

## Advantages

### *Administrative Rank* (p. C119) **1 point/Circle**

This advantage represents a character's position within a governmental bureaucracy. In Tsolyánu, this is a position within one of the Four Palaces of the Empire: the Palace of the Realm (government bureaucracy), the Palace of Ever-Glorious War (military bureaucracy), the Palace of the Priesthood of the Gods (religious bureaucracy) and the Palace of Foreign Lands (diplomatic bureaucracy).

Four Circles translates to one level of normal *GURPS* Administrative Rank.

Circle	Rank	Typical Posts
22+	7	Higher capacities
19-21	6	Provincial governors, high functionaries at Avanthár, the Court of Purple Robes
16-18	5	Provincial Palace chiefs, legates and ambassadors, senior provincial advisors
13-15	4	District Palace chiefs, mayors of large cities, members of Governor's suite
9-12	3	Local department heads, rural fief administrators, District Prefects, higher aides and attaches
5-8	2	Supervisors, overseers, middle-level clerks
1-4	1	Low-level clerks, scribes, petty functionaries

The difference between Ranks is applied as a reaction bonus or penalty. For example, the reaction penalty for a petty clerk attempting to influence the Provincial Governor is -6. When the Provincial Governor is influencing the clerk, the clerk's reaction is at +6 ("Yes, Sir! Right away, Sir!"). Starting characters should probably be limited to 12<sup>th</sup> Circle or less.

### *Clerical Investment* (p. B19, C122) **2 points/Circle**

The character is a priest or priestess in the hierarchy of one of the temples. This leveled version of Clerical Investment is described in *GURPS Religion* and *GURPS Compendium I*. The priesthood has a number of advantages that the laity lack, including a reaction bonus equal to their Rank of Clerical Investment among their co-religionists and others who respect their faith.

He or she will be addressed by a title, such as Rashángto (Chief Ritual Priest) or Hrúgash (Grand High Priest). Also, priests receive a bonus to their roll when calling on their deity for Divine Intervention. No other powers are granted by this advantage. Some priests will have Magery as well.

Three Circles translates to one level of normal *GURPS* Clerical Investment. Priests are also divided into three categories: ritual priests, administrative priests, and scholar priests. It is recommended that beginning characters be limited to 9<sup>th</sup> Circle or less. The ranks of each of these categories and the equivalent Circles are given below:

#### *Ritual Priests*

Circle	Rank	Title
15	5	Ritual Preceptor (Mriyán)
12-14	4	Grand High Priest (Hrúgash)
10-11	4	High Priest (Qusúnchu)
8-9	3	Chief Ritual Priest (Rashángto)
2-7	1-2	Junior Priest (Su'umél)
1	1	Priest (Shárto)
0	0	Acolyte (Kengyé)

#### *Administrative Priests*

Circle	Rank	Title
15	5	Administrative Preceptor (Mriyán)
12-14	4	Senior Commandant (Otlú)
10-11	4	District Commandant (Hrúgash)
8-9	3	Temple Commandant (Njáshte)
2-7	1-2	Junior Priest (Su'umél)
1	1	Priest (Shárto)
0	0	Acolyte (Kengyé)

#### *Scholar Priests*

Circle	Rank	Title
16	5	Great Proctor (Qurupengátodali)
11-15	4	Proctor (Qurupengáto)
9-10	3	Licentiate (Jokálto)
7-8	3	Ranking Scholar (Kusijáktodali)
5-6	2	Senior Scholar (Kusijáktosa)
2-4	1	Scholar (Kusijákto)
1	1	Priest (Shárto)
0	0	Acolyte (Kengyé)

Priests of Rank 5 from each branch are members of the High Council for the temple. This body elects an Inner Synod of 10-50 Patriarchs, which in turn elects an Advisory Curia of 3-5 Lords Adept and a Grand Adept for the whole religious order. The Ranks of these Titles are given below:



**Upper-level Priests**

Circle Rank		Title
21-30	8	Grand Adept (Tirtlén)
19-20	7	Lord Adept (Jáshten)
16-18	6	Patriarch (Tsémel)

**Extra Fatigue (p. CI24) 3 points/level**

At character creation, mages can buy up to 3 x Magery points of Extra Fatigue for use in casting spells. This cannot be used as normal fatigue, as Spell Energy is segregated from normal fatigue. Recovery of Spell Energy is covered later in the section on Magic. Extra Fatigue represents a larger than normal reservoir of mana for spell use.

**Legal Enforcement Powers (p. B21) 10 or 15 points**

This advantage is available at various levels for local headmen, members of city guards, Tomb Police, and Sákbe road guards and members of the Omnipotent Azure Legion. The notion of civil rights is unknown on Tékumel, so most characters with this advantage fall into the 10-point version. Members of the Omnipotent Azure Legion or other national enforcement bodies use the 15-point version.

**Literacy (p. B21) 10 points**

Literacy among the populace is pretty low, averaging about 10% within the Five Empires, but the wealthier clans are more likely to educate their members in the appropriate temple schools. Literacy costs 10 points, unless the character is Status 3+ or Wealthy, where Literacy is free. (Illiteracy is not a Disadvantage for characters of any status or wealth.)

**Magical Aptitude (p. B21) Varies**

The use of magic requires Magical Aptitude and an IQ of at least 10. Those with IQ 6+ can use techno-magical devices, such as Eyes, but cannot cast spells.

**Mana Damper (p. CI40) 40 points**

This advantage creates a no-mana area around the person in which spells cannot be cast. This area extends in a 2-yard radius around the person. Magic that originates outside of this range acts normally on those within it. A person with this advantage cannot have Magery. This advantage is common among the Ahoggyá.



**Military Rank (p. B22)****5 points/level**

The Five Empires keep highly organized standing armies, so legion members need Military Rank. The terms used below are for Tsolyánu. Starting characters should probably be limited to Rank 3 or less.

Rank	Title
7	Senior General (Kérdudali)
6	General (Kérdu)
5	Higher Officer (Dritlán)
4	Lower Officer (Molkár)
3	Captain (Kási)
2	Higher Subaltern (Heréksa)
1	Lower Subaltern (Tirrikámu)
0	Soldier (Changadésha or Kuruthúni in Elite Heavy legions)

A Tirrikámu commands a *semétl* or squad of 20 soldiers. A Heréksa leads a *karéng* or company of 100 soldiers, and a Kási commands a *tsurúm* or cohort of 400 soldiers. A *niqómi* or legion is composed of 20 cohorts. Each legion has two Molkár who command the left and right wings of the legion in battle, and two Dritlán who assist the Kérdu as his staff. A *kenéng* or army is composed of several legions, and is commanded by a Kérdudali, a temporary rank granted on a campaign, or even battle, basis from among the generals of the attendant legions.

**Patron (p. B24)****Varies**

Nearly everyone has a patron of some sort. Clans, temples or legions are the most frequent. Some sort of duty may be required, often of equal Frequency as the patron.

Priests and temple guards can take the temples of the ten Gods as very powerful patrons (25 points) and the ten Cohorts as 20-point patrons + 5 points for each Rank of Clerical Investment beyond the first. Secret societies within the temples can also be taken as Patrons.

Princes and Princesses of the Realm count as 20-point Patrons, regardless of how many points they are built on.

The cost of clan patrons depends on the Clan Status of the clan as follows: *Tlakotáni* or Very High = 25, High = 20, Medium = 15, Low or Very Low = 10. Most clan members will at least have their clan as a patron at Rare frequency.

Legions are 15-point patrons, unless they have less than ten cohorts or have only recently been formed, where they are 10-point patrons.

**Psionic Resistance (p. B22)**

Psionic powers, as defined by Basic, are not known on *Tékumel*, so this advantage is not allowed.



### Reputation (p. B17)

*Varies*

Normal reputation rules apply for Tékumel. One particular Reputation is the Gold of Glory. This honor is only given for particularly outstanding deeds done in the service of the Tsolyáni Empire. It gives a +3 reaction from most citizens, and is worth 15 points. Acquiring an honor such as this should probably be the result of game play and not purchased at character creation.

Other empires have similar decorations.

### Status (p. B16)

*Varies*

Social Status is an extremely important and complex subject in Tsolyánu. The influence of clan and lineage determines your place in society. A character's Clan Status and Lineage Status are purchased separately and added together to give the final Social Status.

It is recommended that beginning characters be limited to total Social Status of 4.

### Clan Status

*5 points/level*

Status	Title
-1	Very Low status Clan
0	Low status Clan
1	Medium status Clan
2	High status Clan
3	Very High status Clan
4	Imperial Clan (Tlakotáni)

### Lineage Status

*5 points/level*

Status	Title
-1	Very Low status Lineage
0	Low status Lineage
1	Medium status Lineage
2	High status Lineage
3	Very High status Lineage
4	Clan Head (Emperor, if Tlakotáni)

### Wealth (p. B16)

*Varies*

In the Five Empires, the connection between Social Status and Wealth is reversed from normal GURPS; a Social Status of 3 or more lets you pay 5 fewer points for Wealth levels. A rich slaver (a very low status occupation) still is at the bottom of the social ladder and won't be invited to the grand balls of the social elite.

## Disadvantages

### Addiction (p. B30)

*Varies*

Almost all the drugs used in the Five Empires are both non-addictive and legal. Two exceptions are Vípu (an addictive, incapacitating narcotic costing 1 to 2 Káitars a day, which is difficult to obtain outside Háida Pakála, worth -10 points), and Zu'úr. Zu'úr is totally addictive and causes the victim to indulge in frenzied feats of sexual athleticism for as long as their strength holds out. Addicts must make Aging

rolls every week. Most addicts are in a coma after three months and die after six months (treated as Terminally Ill - worth -100 points). Only the highest healing adepts in the temple of Thúmis can cure this addiction at great cost. Therefore, Zu'úr addiction is only suitable for NPCs.

### Albinism (p. B27)

*-10 points*

This condition is an extreme oddity on Tékumel, and an albino is likely to find themselves as "special" slaves or captives in some zoological garden.

### Berserk (p. B31)

*-15 points*

People with this disadvantage will receive +1 reaction rolls from followers of Vimúhla and similar religions.

### Intolerance (p. B34)

*-5 / -10 / -15 points*

Intolerance is rampant in the societies of Tékumel. Religious, social, racial, national, and class intolerance are possible.

### Primitive (p. B26)

*-5 points / level*

This disadvantage is appropriate for remote regions of Tékumel. The technology of the Five Empires is generally TL 3. N'lüss, Tsoléi, Háida Pakála, the states of the northeast, Jánnu, Kílalámmu, and the Nyémesel Isles are TL 2, and the tribes of the Desert of Sighs, Lorún, M'mórcha, Nmartúsha and Rannálu are TL 0.



**Pyromania (p. B36)**

**-5 points**

The Temple of Vimúhla and his cohort regard this as a holy obsession

**Social Stigma (p. B27)**

**Varies**

Women who do not declare themselves 'Aridáni' (giving them the same rights and responsibilities as men) are considered "Second-class Citizens" (-5 points). Tribal peoples, such as the N'liss and the natives of M'mórcha, and many nonhumans, like the Ahoggyá, and essentially anyone from outside the Five Empires are considered as "Outsiders / Barbarians" (-15 points). Citizens of the Five Empires may not always like each other, but they recognize their common inheritance from the ancient empire of Engsván hla Gánga and outsiders are always seen as inferior for that reason. Slaves are "Valuable Property" (-10 points).

**Skills**

**Animal Skills**

**Riding**

**p. B46**

As there are no riding animals known within the Five Empires, Riding skill is not allowed.

**Combat Skills**

**Beam Weapons/TL16**

**p. B49**

Eyes, small techno-magical devices of the ancients, use the Beam Weapons skill, but due to limited numbers of charges and limited opportunities to practice, Beam Weapons can only be taken at the default level of DX-4.

**Blowpipe (Physical / Hard)**

**p. B49**

This skill is known by the tribal peoples of M'mórcha and Nmartúsha.

**Brawling (Physical / Easy)**

**p. B50**

This skill is can be learned on the streets or rural villages. The aristocracy feels it is vulgar and ignoble.

**Fencing (Physical / Average)**

**p. B50**

This skill, called *Arruché*, is only taught in the form of "Florentine" fighting with a long sword in one hand and a main gauche in the other. It is a specialty of the duelists of Salarvyá, Pecháno and Háida Pakála, and only taught in those regions.

**Judo**

**p. B51**

No form of Judo is known on Téकुmel. Judo is not allowed.

**Karate (Physical / Hard)**

**p. B51**

Two forms of Karate are taught in the Five Empires. They should be treated as separate skills:

*Dedarátł* is taught by the temples of Thúmis and Keténgku and uses only the hands as weapons, but is

otherwise identical to Karate. No kick attacks are taught; use DX-2 or Brawling-2 instead.

*Hu'ón*, taught by the temples of Ksáruł and Grugánu, emphasizes the use of kicks and footwork. The attacker should use his full skill at Hu'ón when attacking (not -2 as with Karate) and may substitute Hu'ón, instead of DX, to see if he lands properly after missing a kick. Although this skill cannot be used to parry, advanced footwork gives a bonus equal to 1/8 of Hu'ón skill (rounded down) to Dodge against barehanded and thrusting attacks. No bonus is given for swinging or ranged attacks.

Both of these skills are restricted to members of the appropriate temple. Finding a tutor in them outside the temples should be difficult. Members of the assassin clans and the Omnipotent Azure Legion (or the intelligence organizations of other nations) have easy access to such tutors.

**Main Gauche (Physical / Average)**

**p. C1134**

**Defaults to DX-5**

This skill allows the use of a knife either offensively or defensively in the off-hand, with another weapon in the other hand. This skill combined with Fencing is the duelist's art of *Arruché*. It includes the Knife skill, but not Knife Throwing.

This skill has the following advantages: 2/3 skill to parry, no penalty for off-hand use on defense, and there is no -1 for parrying with a knife. On attack, the normal -4 penalty for off-hand usage applies, unless the user is Ambidextrous.

**Staff (Physical / Hard)**

**p. B52**

This skill is a specialty of the states of the northeast: Sa'á Allaqí, Chayákku and to some extent Jánnu and Kilalámmu. The Sa'á Allaqiyáni have raised this to a high martial art known as *Kichána*.

In other nations, treat this as a Physical/Average weapon with normal 1/2 skill parrying abilities.

**Wrestling (Physical / Average)**

**p. C1136**

**No default**

This skill, known as *Charáge*, teaches takedowns, pins, holds, and locks in close combat. Wrestling skill can replace DX when used in close combat. Also, add 1/8 of skill to effective ST when attempting a takedown or pin, to grapple, to use an Arm Lock (p. C1165) or to break free (p. B112).

It can be learned from the gladiatorial schools or from private tutors. Members of high status clans consider this skill beneath them. Practitioners of this skill perform in the Hirilákte Arenas and at private parties.

**Craft Skills**

**Mechanic/TL (Mental/Average)**

**p. B54**

**Defaults IQ-5**

This skill covers the diagnosis and repair of mechanical problems in machinery. Specialization is required; types include:

- Clockwork and locks
- Primitive machines: siege engines, etc.

**Characters**

- Wagon

The first successful roll can diagnose a problem, while the second successful skill roll can repair it. Familiarity (p. B43) with specific types of machinery within the specialization applies. The GM can give penalties for attempts to fix unfamiliar equipment.

**Tanning (chlén) (Mental / Average) No default**  
*Prerequisite: clan member*

The secret of how to turn chlén-hide into armor and weapons is a clan secret and only available to members of the tanning clans.

## Knowledge Skills

**Performance/Ritual (Mental / Average) p. C1147**  
*Defaults to IQ-5, Acting-2 or Bard-2*

This is the skill of performing a specific religious ritual (wedding, sacrifice, funeral, etc.) in public. Each ritual is a separate skill. Ritual priests in the temples will know the rituals they participate in, even if their part is only a small part of the ritual.

**Rituals and Ceremonies (Mental/Hard) p. C1147**  
*Defaults to IQ-6*

This is the TLO version of Theology, giving knowledge of religious beliefs, as well as how to perform the ceremonies. It is known by the tribal peoples of M'mórcha and Nmartúsha and other primitive areas.

**Bardic Lore (Mental / Hard) p. C1146**  
*Defaults to IQ-6*

This skill covers the ability to remember poetry, songs, and stories word for word. The reciters of epic poems, such as the Lament of the Black Wheel, use this skill to memorize thousands of stanzas. This skill does not cover the creation of new songs or poetry; use Musical Instrument or Poetry skills, respectively.

On a successful roll, the piece is accurately remembered. On a failed roll, something was forgotten or garbled. A separate roll on Bard skill is necessary to make the performance good.





## Hobby Skills

### Games (Mental/Easy)

p. C1146  
Defaults to IQ-5

Examples of games played in Tsolyánu: Daqú, a draughts-like game, Dénden, a board game, Kévuk dice, Tsahltén, a gambling game of stick throwing to form called patterns, and Náрку cards. Each game is a separate skill.

If games form a major part of the campaign, or if the character makes a profession out of gambling, this skill should be considered a Professional skill, and should not be purchased at half cost.

## Language Skills

p. B54

The languages of Tékumel are generally Mental/Average, except Ái Ché, Duruób, Ghatóni Llyáni, Mihállí, Thu'úsa, the Tongue of the Lord of Worms, and Zna'yé, which are Mental/Hard, and the Tongue of the Priests of Ksárul and Sunúz, which are Mental/Very Hard.

Ghatóni and Qùó have no written form. Only Fourth Circle clergy of Hnálla, Avánthe, Belkhánu and their Cohorts can start learning Thu'úsa. Fourth circle clergy of Sárku and Durritlámish can begin learning the Tongue of the Lord of Worms. The Tongue of the Priests of Ksárul can be learned by Fourth Circle clergy of Ksárul and 12<sup>th</sup> Circle clergy of Grugánu.

**Modern languages:** Aòmórh, Ghatóni, Hijajái, Jannuyáni, Livyáni, Lo'orúnankh, Milumanayáni, Mu'ugalavyáni, N'lússa, Nuru'ún Sí, Pecháni, Pe'é, Pijenáni, Qùó, Rantiké, Sa'á Allaqiyáni, Salarvyáni, Tká Mihállí, Tsoléi'i, Tsolyáni and Yán Koryáni.

**Ancient languages:** Ái Ché, Ancient Mihállí, Ancient N'lússa, Bednálljan Salarvyáni, Classical Mu'ugalavyáni, Classical Tsolyáni, Duruób, Engsvanyáli, Llyáni, Sunúz, Thu'úsa, Tongue of the Lord of Worms, Tongue of the Priests of Ksárul, Tsáqw and Zna'yé.

## Scientific Skills

### Astronomy/TL 3 (Mental/Hard)

p. B60

This skill only applies to the sun and planets of Tékumel's system, since there are no stars. The temples use it to establish the calendar and to predict the seasons and planting times. It is also used to create astrological charts, especially for the aristocracy.

### Engineering (Mental/Hard)

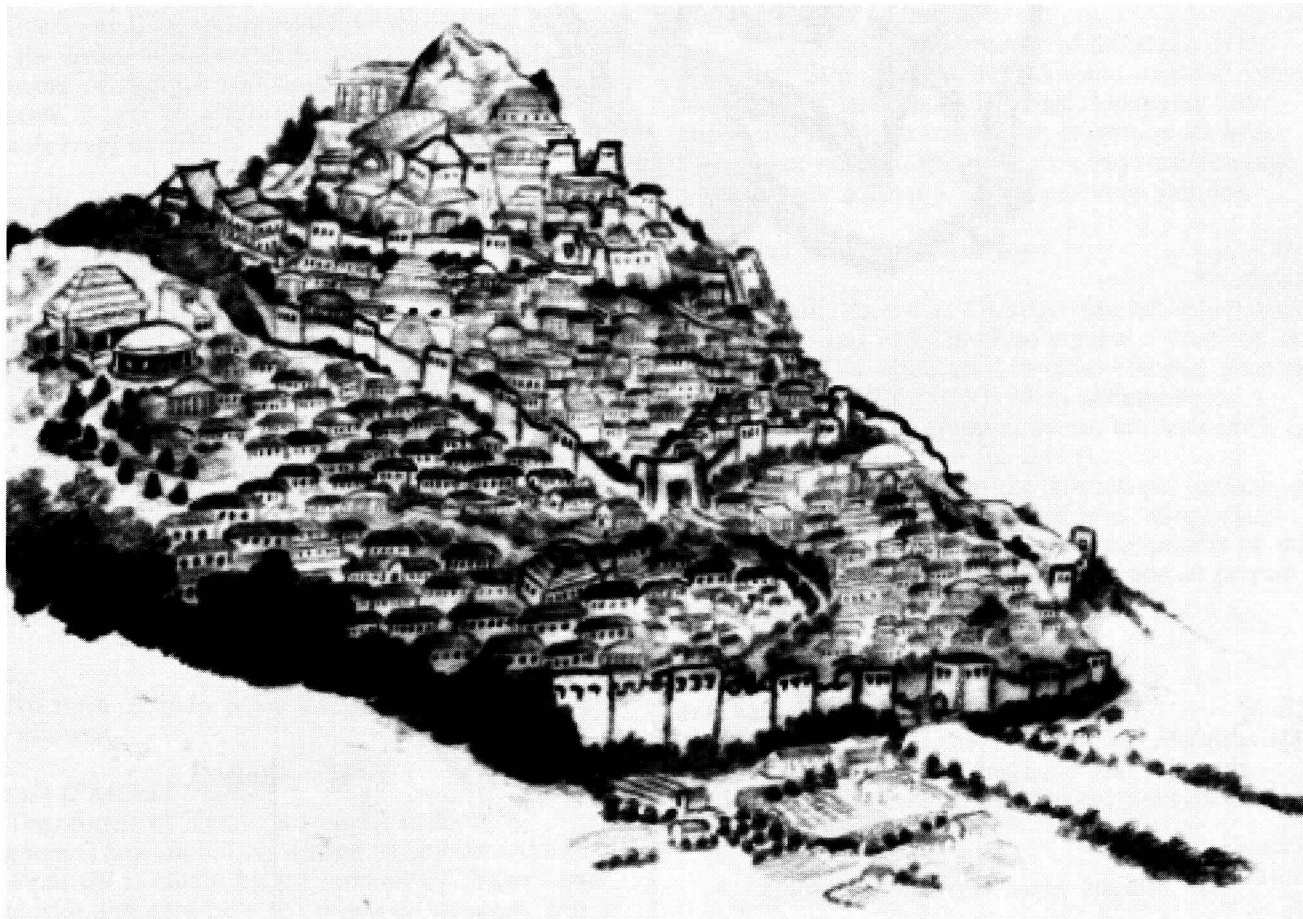
p. B60

Defaults to appropriate Mechanic specialty-6

Prerequisites vary with specialty

This skill covers the design and construction of complex equipment and structures. Specialization is required; types include:

- Civil: aqueducts, bridges, etc. (no prerequisite)
- Clockwork: (prerequisite: Mechanic)
- Combat/Military: fortifications (no prerequisite)



- Mining and sapping (prerequisite: Geology)
- Primitive machines: siege engines, etc. (prerequisite: Mechanic)
- Wheelwright (prerequisite: Mechanic)

A successful skill roll can diagnose or fix a problem, design a new device, identify strange equipment, or improve a gadget.

## Social Skills

**Erotic Arts (Physical/Hard)** *p. C1159*  
*Defaults to Acrobatics-5*  
*Prerequisite: Sex Appeal-13*

This is the knowledge of advanced sexual techniques. Exact game effects are up to the GM. This skill is highly prized in the temples of Dlamélish and Hriháyal.

## New Skills

**Apothecary (Mental/Hard)** *No default*

This skill covers the preparation of drugs, poisons and chemicals. It includes some Alchemy (p. C1148), Chemistry/TL 3 (p. B60), and Herbarry (p. C1150). Some ingredients are herbal, some chemical. The product may be a healing salve, a love potion, or a deadly poison. The elixirs of Alchemy from GURPS Magic cannot be produced.

**Puppet Master Art (Mental / Average)** *No default*  
*Prerequisite: clan member*

Puppets are a highly respected art form involving small figures animated by magic. This skill is the art of making a puppet performance beautiful and exciting. It has nothing to do with animating the puppets. That spell will be handled in the Spells section in a later chapter. The only clans that teach this skill are the Society of the Hands Which Are Not Seen and the Clan of Striding Incantation.

**Tsahltén Judging (Mental/Hard)** *No default*  
*Prerequisite: clan member*

The ability to judge the intricate patterns of this gambling game is highly valued. A successful skill roll will accurately judge whether the player has achieved a given pattern. The Clan of the Balanced Stone is the only provider of Tsahltén judges for the parties of the social elite, and is the only source of training for this skill.

## Economics, Jobs and Wealth

### Social Status and Cost of Living

*p. B16*

Final Status = Clan Status + Lineage Status

Final Status	Monthly Upkeep (Káitars)
8	12,500
7	5,000
6	2,500
5	1,250
4	500
3	250
2	125
1	65
0	25
-1	13
-2	10
-3	6
-4	1

If a person is living in a group situation, such as in a clan house, army barracks, or temple dormitory, reduce monthly upkeep costs by 25%.

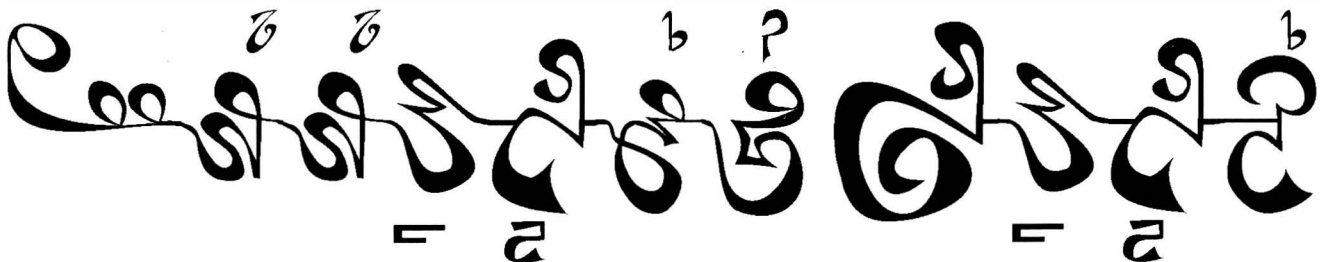
### Money

1 gold Káitar = 20 silver Hlášh  
 1 silver Hlášh = 20 copper Qirgál

The other nations all have their own coinage, as well as some ancient coins from eras past. In addition to coin and gems, the other method of transferring funds is the "letter of credit", which can be obtained by paying one's clan, temple, legion or a moneylender clan. The letter of credit can then be redeemed at a distant representative of the organization involved. Travelers often carry letters of various amounts to accommodate continuing expenses.

### Starting Wealth

Standard starting wealth for a Tekumeláni character is 250 Káitars. This includes all possessions, not just cash. Starting wealth is modified by the Wealth advantage (p. B16).



## Jobs Table

### Job (Required skills)

#### Poor Jobs

	Monthly wage	Success Roll	Critical Failure
Farm Laborer *† (Agronomy 8+, ST 11+)	1-3 K	11	2d/3d SM
Litter Bearer or Porter *† (ST 12+, Savoir Faire 10+)	1-5 K	PR	1d/3d
Miner *† (ST 11+)	1-3 K	PR	2d/5d
Street Guide* (Area Knowledge (city) 12+)	10 K	PR	1d, -1i/3d, -1i
Street Vendor* (Merchant 9+)	10 K	PR	-1i/2d
Unskilled Servant (Status 0-, No Attribute below 7)	5 K + L	IQ	LJ/2d, LJ

#### Struggling Jobs

Acolyte (Theology 9+, Literacy)	10 K + L	IQ	LJ
Apprentice (Clan, Craft skill 10+)	10 K + L	PR	1d/2d, LJ
Artist* (Artist or Sculpting 12+)	PR	PR	-1i/-2i
Bazaar Wizard* (IQ+Magery 12+, 7 marketable spells)	IQ + Magery	IQ+Magery-2	-2i/2d
Bodyguard/Caravan Guard* (any combat skill 12+)	PR	PR	2d/4d LJ
Clerk or Scribe (Literacy, Administration or Calligraphy 10+)	PR	PR	-1i/LJ
Entertainer* (Bard, Singing, Musical Instrument, Performance 13+)	PR	PR	2d
Gambler* (Gambling 10+, Fast Talk 10+)	Gambling x 2 K	Worst PR	-2i/3d -1i
Hirilákte Gladiator* (2 weapon skills 13+)	PR	Worst PR-1	3d -1i/6d -2i
Hunter* (Survival 11+, Tracking 11+)	PR	PR	2d/3d, 1i
Militia / Sákb Road Guard (3 combat skills, level totaling 40+)	PR + 5 K	PR	1d/3d
Prostitute* (Attractive or better, Sex Appeal 10+)	Sex Appeal + App	PR	-1i/2d -2i
Seaman (Seamanship 11+)	10 K + L	PR	-2i 2d/-3i 4d
Soldier (Military Rank 0, legion's primary and secondary weapons at 10+)	15 K + L	PR	2d/4d C
Soldier, Elite Heavy legion (as above, plus Status 1+)	20 K + L	PR	2d/4d C

#### Average Jobs

Lowest-level Priest# (Clerical Investment 1-3, Admin., Theology or Scientific 12+, Literacy)	5 K + (Rank x 5 K)	PR	-1i/-2i demoted
Low-level Priest# (Clerical Investment 4-6, Admin., Theology or Scientific 12+, Literacy)	10 K + (Rank-3) x 20 K	PR	-1i/-2i demoted
Lowest-level Administrator (Administrative Rank 1-4, Literacy, Admin. 12+)	5 K + (Rank x 5 K)	PR	-1i/-2i demoted
Low-level Administrator (Administrative Rank 5-8, Literacy, Admin. 12+)	10 K + (Rank-3) x 20 K	PR	-1i/-2i demoted
Courtesan* (Attractive or better, Sex Appeal 12+, Savoir-Faire 12+)	Sex Appeal + App x 2 K	PR	-1d -i
Craftsman (Clan, Craft skill 13+)	PR x 2 K	PR	-1i/-2i
Magical Bodyguard* (IQ+Magery 13+, 5 combat spells)	Lowest PR x 2 K	PR	2d C/4d C
Ship's Officer* (Seamanship 13+, Leadership 12+)	50 K	PR	-2i/-4i, 3d
Shop Owner* (Clan, Merchant skill 12+, 1000 K investment)	Merchant x Inv/100	PR	-i/- 2d x 100 K
Sorcerer* (IQ+Magery 14+, 15 spells, Status 1+)	Total Spells / 2	IQ+Magery	2d/5d
Subaltern (Military Rank 1-2, legion skills at 12+, Tactics 10+)	(Rank x 40 K) -10 K	PR	2d/4d C

#### Comfortable Jobs

Mid-level Priest# (Religious Rank 7-8, Administration, Theology or Scientific 13+)	10 K + (Rank-3) x 20 K	PR	-1i/-2i E
Mid-level Priest# (Religious Rank 9-10, Administration, Theology or Scientific 13+)	150 K + (Rank-9) x 50 K	PR	-1i/-2i E
Mid-level Priest# (Religious Rank 11-12, Admin., Theology or Scientific 13+)	100 K + (Rank-10) x 200 K	PR	-1i/-2i E
Mid-level Administrator (Admin. Rank 9-10, Admin. and Law 13+)	150 K + (Rank-9) x 50 K	Worst PR	-1i/-2i E
Mid-level Administrator (Admin. Rank 11-14, Admin. and Law 13+)	100 K + (Rank-10) x 200 K	Worst PR	-1i/-2i E
Mid-level Administrator (Admin. Rank 15, Admin. and Law 13+)	1000 K	Worst PR	-1i/-2i E
Courtesan (Beautiful or better, Savoir Faire 14+, Sex Appeal 14+)	Sex Appeal + App x 5 K	Best PR	-1i/-3i
Healer (Physician 14+, Diagnosis 14+ or healing spell)	PR x 8 K	PR	-1i/Sued
Junior Officer (Military Rank 3, legion skills at 14+, Tactics 12+, Leadership 12+)	200 K	PR	2d/3d C
Master Merchant* (Clan, Merchant skill 16+, 5000 K investment)	Merchant x Inv/100	PR	-1i - 1d x 2000 K
Master Craftsman (Clan, Craft skill 16+, Merchant 12+)	PR x 8 K	PR	-1i/-2i
Ship's Captain (Leadership 14+, Seamanship 14+, Merchant 12+)	PR x 8 K	PR	-2i/3d -4i
Wizard* (IQ+Magery 16+, 20 spells, Status 2+)	Total spells x 2 K	IQ+Magery	2d, 2i/4d, 4i C

#### Wealthy Jobs

High Priest# (Religious Rank 13-14, Admin., Theology or Scientific skill 14+, Politics 14+)	100 K + (Rank-10) x 200 K	PR	-2i/-4i E
High Priest# (Religious Rank 15, Admin., Theology or Scientific skill 14+, Politics 14+)	1000 K	PR	-2i/-4i E
High Priest# (Religious Rank 16-17, Admin., Theology or Scientific skill 14+, Politics 14+)	1200K + (Rank-16) x 300K	PR	-2i/-4i E
High Priest# (Religious Rank 18-20, Admin., Theology or Scientific skill 14+, Politics 14+)	Rank x 100 K	PR	-2i/-4i E
High Priest# (Religious Rank 21-23+, Admin., Theology or Scientific skill 14+, Politics 14+)	1000 K + (Rank-20) x 2000 K (max = 7000 K)	PR	-2i/-4i E
High-level Administrator (Admin. Rank 16-17, Admin. 14+, Law 14+, Politics 14+)	1200K + (Rank-16) x 300K	Worst PR	-1i/-4i E
High-level Administrator (Admin. Rank 18-20, Admin. 14+, Law 14+, Politics 14+)	Rank x 100 K	Worst PR	-1i/-4i E
High-level Administrator (Admin. Rank 21+, Admin. 14+, Law 14+, Politics 14+)	1000 K + (Rank-20) x 2000 K (max = 7000 K)	Worst PR	-1i/-4i E
Senior Officer (Military Rank 4+, legion skills at 14+, Leadership 14+, Strategy 14+)	Rank 4=500 K, Rank 5 =800 K, Rank 6=1500 K	PR	3d/5d E

\* = freelance job, see p. B193.

† = slave occupation, see p. B193. Wages are in the form of tips and presents. Slaves have no cost of living, as their owners pay this.

# = Administrative priests earn 5% more and scholar priests earn 5% less. Priests of Cohorts should reduce income by another 10%.

Clan = must be a member of the appropriate clan to exercise that profession in the Five Empires. Foreigners without a local clan must restrict themselves to the Foreigners' Quarter and will earn 20% less than the standard income for any job that has 'Clan' as a prerequisite.

Sued = Sued for Shámtla

C = Make a HT roll or have a limb crippled.

E = The character has made a new enemy in the hierarchy of his profession who is worth a penalty of 1d-1 points against future reaction rolls for promotion.

SM = Sold to the mine.

## Sample Characters

Here are a couple characters to get you started.

### *Kálti hiHlutu'ún* 125 points

Female guard at the Temple of Kárákan in Jakálla, the City Half as Old as the World.

5'8", 150 lbs, age: 18, short black hair, brown eyes.

Clan of the Red Mountain (High status, Very Low lineage)

**ST:** 12, **DX:** 14, **IQ:** 10, **HT:** 11

**Advantages:** Eidetic Memory/1, Literacy, Combat Reflexes, Status/1, Patron - Incandescent Blaze Society (Appears Rarely), Patron - Temple of Kárákan (Appears Fairly Often, supplies equipment).

**Disadvantages:** Fanatic: Vimúhla worshipper, Impulsive, Secret (agent for Incandescent Blaze Society, Imprisonment), Duty to Incandescent Blaze Society (Fairly Often), Duty to temple of Kárákan (Quite Often).

**Quirks:** Sexually aggressive, Screams in battle and in bed, Longs to travel to foreign lands, Hates the ocean, and Adores flowers.

**Skills:** Broadsword/16, Calligraphy/12, Cipher (Vimúhla)/12, Fast Draw (Broadsword)/14, Fast Talk/12, Holdout/12, Knife/14, Pickpocket/11, Savoir Faire/12, Sex Appeal/13, Shadowing/12, Shield/14, Shortsword/14, Sleight of Hand/13, Spear/12, Stealth/14, Tactics/10, Theology (Kárákan)/8, Theology (Vimúhla)/9, and Tsolyáni language/10.

**Equipment** (weapons and armor are all chlén-hide): Broadsword, short sword, large knife, medium shield, corselet, greaves, vambraces, pot-helm with chain aventail, leather gloves, leather boots, small pouch with 71 Káitars, small backpack with the following: personal basics, toilet articles, tinderbox (flint, steel, tinder), rope (10 yds.), grapnel, mallet, 5 Chlén spikes, bed mat, rations (2 days), and water bottle. Armor is on loan from the temple of Kárákan.

**History:** Kálti has always wanted to be a warrior. Nothing interested her as a child more than the tales of the ancient warriors of legend. The mythology of Vimúhla, Lord of Flame and Destruction, was also filled with great battles and warriors, and Kálti's devotion burned hot as well. As a teen, her teachers recognized the fire in her eyes and her unique memory talent as important assets, and began training her for a special duty to the temple.

She is now acting as a low-level agent in the Temple of Kárákan. Though Kárákan is one of the Stability Gods and Vimúhla one of the Change Gods, they are both military-oriented deities and have a lot in common, both theologically and politically. Many situations have seen these two temples on the same side of an issue, as is the case with the war with Yán Kór. These alliances aside,

though, they still keep a close eye on each other, and that's where Kálti fits in.

She has held her present position as temple guard for a year. She reports to another agent within the Kárákan temple, and is also sent on various minor errands occasionally.

### *Durnál hiKirutlár* 100 points

Male physician-apothecary, age: 37, 5'5", 135 lbs. First Moon Clan (Medium Status, High Lineage)

**ST:** 9, **DX:** 10, **IQ:** 14, **HT:** 10

**Advantages:** Literacy, Status/3, and Wealthy.

**Disadvantages:** Absent-mindedness, Odious Personal Habit/1 (unkempt), and Sense of Duty (Humanity).

**Quirks:** Bathes daily, Wears blue clothing, Mildly paranoid about money, Clothes often stained and smelly from accidents in the lab, and Devout follower of Thúmis.

**Skills:** Accounting/13, Apothecary/20, Area Knowledge (Jakálla)/14, Area Knowledge (Tsolyánu)/13, Botany/14, Cooking/15, Cyphering/12, Diagnosis/17, Diplomacy/15, First Aid/20, Language (Tsolyáni)/14, Naturalist/15, Physician/20, Physiology/15, Poisons/17, Savoir-Faire/16, Staff/11, Surgery/17, Survival (plains)/13, Survival (woods)/13, Theology (Thúmis)/11, Weaving/12, and Zoology/13.

**Equipment:** Quarter-staff, dagger, several sets of middle-class clothing, wool cloak, boots, leather sandals, small backpack, flint-steel-tinder, medical bag filled with medical supplies and various salves, elixirs, unguents, ointments, and pills, cord (20 yds.), small water bottle, Tsurál buds, herbs, samples, etc., belt pouch (\$339), money belt (\$200), apothecary lab, medium-sized shop (\$300/month rent), slave porter ("Tsúkh"), and \$500 invested in clan enterprises.

**History:** Durnál has always had a strong sense of purpose. From an early age, he wanted to help people. Since he had no magical talent, he studied medicine and apothecary in the temple of Thúmis in Páya Gúpa. He rose to be one of the top physicians in Páya Gúpa before he decided to move to Jakálla find more advanced teachers. He has a marketplace shop where he sells his services and his salves. He lives at his clan house.

When he isn't treating patients, Durnál works long hours in his lab, preparing his concoctions. He often leaves preparations burning on the brazier, having forgotten them. He also forgets to change his robes after spilling ingredients. This causes some consternation at his clan house and the temple.







# Redefining the Sword

by Patrick Brady

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The swords of Tékumel can look incredibly exotic to out untutored eyes, but closer examination (and the kind advice of Chirringa hi Koródu, noted swordsman and duellist) suggests that there may be a variety of good reasons for their appearance. We will hopefully clarify some of the reasons that Tekumeláni swords look and work the way they do. They are not just bizarre; they can be quite practical.

## **Why are Tsolyáni swords not just like Earth swords?**

The simple answer is because most Earth swords were not very good. The Tsolyáni swordmaker produces a weapon that is radically different from the broadsword of the European Middle Ages mainly because he can. There are two main sources of difference.

First, humans on Tékumel have been developing swords for over twenty thousand years, whereas the window for longsword design on Earth was less than a tenth of that. So the Tekumeláni have simply had much more time to develop swordmaking than was available to the sword smiths of Earth.

Rather like the Japanese, the lack of radical technological change lead to great artistry in the art of weapon construction and use. Instead of exploring rapidly changing weapons technologies, such as the lances, handguns, muskets and rifles which became the aim of Europeans smithing, the Tsolyáni artisan has had the sword as a permanent centre-piece of his cultures' martial tradition. A sword-maker who can create a great sword will always find a ready market and will bring honour to his clan. So they have the motivation and the time.

Second, the use of Chlén-hide makes a big difference in what is practical and how easy it is to construct exotic blades. Raw Chlén-hide can be handled like heavy leather, which means it can be cut from a pattern rather than requiring each sword to be individually hammered into shape. Iron encourages simplicity and elegance, Chlén hide allows for complexity and lightness. Chlén-hide is made hard by process similar to tanning, and it is less than a third of the weight of steel. In other

words, its properties are more like those of fibre-glass than of a metal.

But, like a fibre-glass crash helmet, if it gets a crack, it has probably just saved your life, and you should replace it with good grace. This lesser durability would have created a steady demand for replacements and may in turn have encouraged experimentation with blade shape. Since Chlén hide is cut soft, new features are easy (and relatively cheap) to try out. Many probably do not work, but enough find a home to make blade choice a real decision for the discerning Tsolyáni swordsman.

## **What could you realistically do?**

Generations of talented artisans can push the design envelope on sword-making quite a long way. For example, curving a sword blade allows for an increased impact velocity, but there are many types of curve. The blade of a katana is precisely made to maximise the impact velocity of the last 5 cm of the blade, whereas the blade of a scimitar also becomes broader as the curve develops (to increase inertia), and gives a long fighting edge. Blade curves can also be inverted (as with the Livyáni chidók); such scythe-shaped swords were used to great effect by the Dacians in their conflict with the Roman Empire. The concave shape makes it easier to get a swing past a shield and allows the point to hit your opponents armour at a perpendicular angle (assisting in the penetration of armour plate). The effectiveness of the scythe blade design was sufficient to require a major change in the design of Roman legionary helmets. So, given the same basic concept, of a sword which can be swung, the sword-makers of earth managed to figure out several radically different designs. Expect no less of the Tekumeláni.

Highly specific features are also possible, for example, the Italian and Spanish duelling swords of the 18th century had very extended quillons (projections parallel to the blade) because they make it much easier to perform a disarm, whereas the Chinese Butterfly Sword has a blade specifically designed for use at extremely close range. So it has been quite practical to develop swords which made favoured techniques (disarms, etc.) more likely and

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**Humans on Tékumel have been developing swords for over twenty thousand years...the window for longsword design on Earth was less than a tenth of that**

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even to design swords which make new manoeuvres possible (the Butterfly Swordsman will *first* step inside your reach, and *then* start using his swords, something you simply cannot do with a sabre). If the humans of earth could figure all of this out inside a few centuries, imagine what those of Tékumel could do after millennia of sword based combat.

### **So do they have the perfect sword?**

There is no perfect design of sword, but it is possible to develop weapons for particular styles, tactics or preferences. No weapon could carry features for every eventuality (unless you wanted a Swiss army sword?), and there is a point of overload at which design elements would start to interfere with each other. Even with Chlén-hide, weight would eventually become an overriding factor. So we can assume that some people prefer one major design “extra” while others prefer numerous, smaller

features. Where you stand on this is a matter of personal preference, and the Tsolyáni can probably be as boring about this as we can about our hobbies (an evening in the clanhouse with your uncle the sword-bore is barely preferable to wrestling a Hrá).

Design can make some tactics possible or more likely to succeed, but success is still dependent on user skill. In practice, each Imperial Legion is big enough for it to have its own sword design (if an armourers clan knows they have thousands of clients, over hundreds of years, it becomes economic to specialise) and combat styles obviously favour the strengths of the issued weapon. You can see this by looking at the illustrations in *Armies of Tékumel I: Tsolyánu*. Veterans will tend to promulgate both the combat style and the weapon design they are most familiar with.

*Rhán hi Koródu is a veteran of the 12th Medium Infantry, whose primary weapon is the longsword. He still buys his swords from the armourers clan who supply his legion, because it suits his style of swordplay.*

*His sword has three distinctive features:*

*First, the end of the blade is triangular, which improves penetration on a downward cut by effectively giving it a small, pointed, axe head near the end of the blade.*

*Second, there are three “teeth” on the blade; these act like meat hooks on unarmoured flesh and also tend to catch armour joints on a back-swing.*

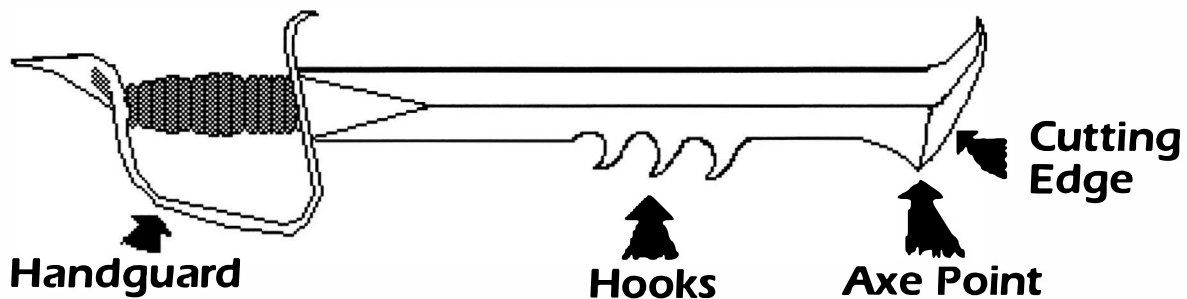
*Third, there is an armoured hand guard with a rear facing spike, for use in hand to hand combat. In the crush of melee the hilt can be used even when there is no room to swing a sword.*

*These features reflect the training and attitude of their users.*

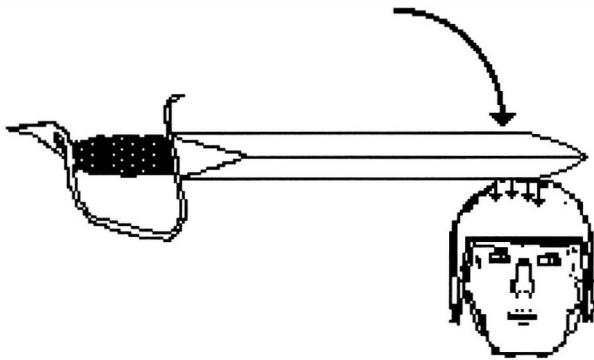


*Soldier, The Cohort of Lord Chegarra, the Hero-King  
(12th Imperial Medium Infantry)*

## Application: **the Longsword of the 12th Medium Infantry**

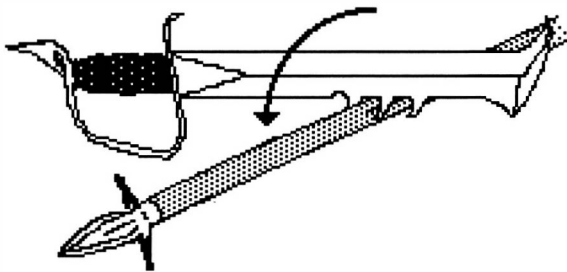
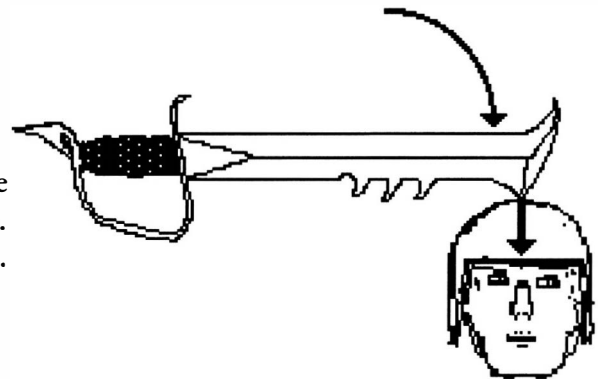


Sword swings allow the length of the blade to act as a lever, increasing the force of impact. The design of this blade further increases impact force by concentrating the impact on a very small area.



A straight blade produces long, relatively shallow wounds. It has poor armour penetration because it spreads the impact along its length.

In contrast, this blade's axe point concentrates the impact for better penetration and a deeper wound. A thrusting sword could not develop the same force.



The blade hooks are vital when facing spearmen, as they allow the swordsman to grapple down the longer weapon. They are spaced to catch a pike shaft, but can also trap a sword blade.

Finally, the cutting edge is a sheering blade—like a bacon slicer—and the handguard both protects and allows for the hilt punch manoeuvre. This is a sophisticated weapon for a soldier who must use it in a variety of tactical situations, from full stretch to close in.



*Soldier, The Legion of Kaikama of Béy Sü (36th Imperial Medium Infantry)*

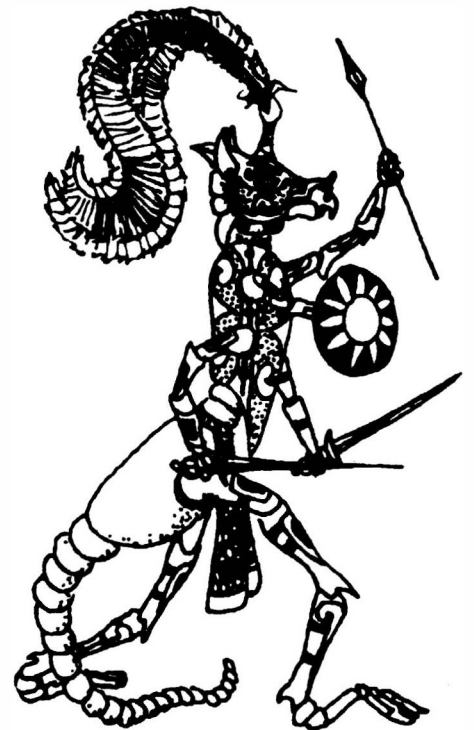
*The Legion of Kaikama is sponsored by the temples of Dlamélish and Hrihayal. Their primary weapon is the spear, but they carry swords as well. Their sword has one major feature, a blade-trapping hook on the upper edge of the blade.*

*If a Legionary has lost his spear in the press of pike, he can use this to catch an incoming polearm, and then force the spearpoint upward as he advances. Once inside the reach of the enemy he can simultaneously disengage the hook and deliver a downward cut.*

*It is a standard tactic, and it has been a lifesaver for many a Legionary.*

*The Legion of Ttik-Deqéq (9th Pé Chói Auxilliary) use rapiers. The Pé Chói use them because, although they tend not to be as physically powerful as humans, they do have more hands to fight with. They can use two rapiers simultaneously in a way that would be impossible with normal swords (because of their weight) and still carry a shield for protection.*

*A rapier-armed Pé Chói has a major advantage in reach over a sword armed human. Unless that swordsman wants to impale himself on one or both of the ever-dancing rapier points, he will find it difficult to close to his effective range. Twin sword attacks are notoriously difficult to defend against, and this combination is particularly effective against lightly armoured opponents.*



*Soldier, The Legion of the Nest of Ttik-Deqéq (9th Imperial Pé Chói Auxilliary Medium Infantry)*

## **Signing your work**

It may also be worth considering the distinctive wounds that these weapons will inflict. Many soldiers and physicians could easily tell the difference between someone killed by the longswords of the Cohorts of Chegárra compared to someone who fell under the rapiers of the 9th Pé Chói Auxilliary. Of such detail are stories made.

## **Killing in colour**

Chlén-hide weapons are lacquered to protect the blade and for decorative purposes. This ranges from a simple monochrome protective layer to fine art. This can be very colourful indeed (like Japanese laquerwork from the 17th century) with artists using pigments, and even gold and silver dust, in well realised works of art.

The majority of Legion swords will be in the appropriate colours (scarlet and gold for Karakán, green and purple for Hríhayal etc.) but wealthy people may commission favoured subjects, sections of religious texts, scenes from the Epics and so on. Lacquerwork leaves plenty of room for craft, and a really fine piece of plain black lacquerwork can shine and sparkle when compared to the most gaudy products of lesser skill.

Ceremonial weapons and armour will be particularly highly decorated, never see combat and be astonishingly expensive to buy. Good work takes time, the process of layering is notoriously slow as each thin layer must be allowed to dry perfectly under controlled conditions, before the next layer can be delicately applied with a fine brush. It may take longer to apply the decoration than it took to make the rest of the sword and fifteen layers of lacquering could be destroyed by someone opening the wrong door on a dusty day.

There is therefore no effective upper limit on how much money you could spend on a sword and a fine swordmaker may simply not accept clients who are not from aristocratic clans (matter of reputation). But, for the successful person of honour, really nice gear is an important part of the image. So when you think of a Tsolyáni swordsman, think in colour.

## **The Saréiq**

The complex design of Chlén-hide blades makes carrying them in a scabbard impractical (all those hooks etc. would make it impossible to draw the sword) so instead the sword is held in a Saréiq, or "sword-clip." All Saréiq are practical but some people have strong preferences in type. Naturally there are some which are rigged for a faster draw whereas others are intended to provide greater

security. The Saréiq of a Jakállan bravo is likely to be of a very different design from that of a Chegárran war veteran from Usenánu.

Your Saréiq matters, because an old or faulty one could drop the blade onto your leg as you run (ouch!) or refuse to surrender it at a critical moment. A jammed Saréiq would have to be wrenched from the belt to enable the sword to be used, the sort of problem that would lead to stern words with your armourer (if you are lucky enough to survive the experience).

## **But they use metal swords sometimes ?**

They do indeed, but the use of metal remains a minority choice for practical weapon construction. Someone carrying a metal sword is easy to spot, because the blades are usually straight and often scabbarded. There are two main types of metal sword found on Tékumel—bronze and steel. (There are also the special copper weapons used by the Temple of Sárku and equivalents, but these are relatively rare and do not form a significant part of the armoury of any outside the worm god's faith.)

### *Bronze swords*

Bronze is heavier and much less amenable to clever design than Chlén-hide. But it is more durable, so it is used by people who expect regular combat with little or no resupply between engagements. For example, N'lüss mercenary units often use bronze swords and armour. The N'lüss tend to blunt their swords quickly (because they do tend to push them through people rather a lot) and mercenaries generally have poor logistics. So they carry weapons that can be easily repaired and resharpened in the field.

Basically you can repair a bronze blade if you have access to a rock, a hammer, and some oil, whereas a cracked Chlén-hide sword would only be used in desperation. The repaired bronze sword may be increasingly inferior to a new one, but at least it is still a sword. The use of bronze weapons allows a unit to have a shorter logistical "tail" than that required by Chlén-hide weaponry, which is obviously important in the less well organised armies. In that sense the bronze sword can be seen as the low-tech "survival" sword. It is a bit more expensive, and it does not come with any nice extras fitted as standard.

### *Steel swords*

These are worth much more than their weight in pure gold. So using them to just kill people with is something of a waste, you should remember that

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**Most Legion swords will be in the appropriate colors (scarlet and gold for Karakán, green and purple for Hríhayal, etc.)**

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actual combat may scratch the blade, tarnishing the beautiful sheen which is so hard to attain. Steel is much harder to work and requires rare and specialised skills (like a gem cutter) but it does have one major practical advantage over a Chlén-hide blade. Steel is much more dense than Chlén-hide, as is shown by the comparative difference in weight (roughly 1:3). So a steel blade will cut Chlén-hide like a diamond cuts glass.

In practical terms a steel sword is armour piercing against Chlén-hide armour, which enhances its position as a status symbol even more. Of course, if you own a steel sword, you may well be wealthy enough to have other people do your fighting for you, and such a blade should not be risked for any common killing.

### **Conclusions**

A good swordsman can read your blade almost as easily as he can read your clan badge, and from that make a good guess at how you may fight and what your background is. The type of sword, the style of blade, even the colour and quality of the lacquer, all of this says something about you in Tsolyánu. Someone ignorant of these implications may get themselves into serious trouble when they borrow a cousin's sword or draw one casually from their clan's armoury.

Let the bright colours and strange shapes be a spur to your imagination. There is no such thing as a generic sword and so no-one should be a generic swordsman.

# Sétnakh

by M.A.R. Barker and Zane Healy

Wherever the roads of commerce cross, towns crop up. So it is with the town of Sétnakh, located on the bank of the Ranánga River where the Sákbe road dips southward from the west toward the Equnoyé River to the south, perhaps 275 Tsán from Jakálla.). From here one branch of the road heads along the riverbank to the northeast till it finally reaches Thráya. The other branch leads southeast to the Equnoyé River and on to Jaikalór.

On the original TSR and Gamescience (Zocchi) maps, the town is located in hex 2917 where the Sákbe roads meet. In the DWP (Different Worlds Publications) reprints of the Sourcebook, Book 1, pg. 20, this is three hexes from Jakálla slightly to the NE. In the center of Book 2 it is located roughly halfway between Jakálla and Jaikalór.

Sétnakh is a small town of only five to seven thousand people. Still, it is crowded and bustling with activity as caravans pass through it headed east or west, and ferry boats dock at its wharves. It is a dirty, muddy, crowded, noisy sort of place, about which there isn't much nice that one can say.

Thankfully, some of the less-desirable locations are located outside of town along the top of the rise that lies between the Ranánga and Equnoyé rivers. Here stand the great Chlén barns and the slave pens used to hold slaves from the caravans. Because of the stench from these, few clanhouses are built out here; yet some do exist. The ones that do are mainly those concerned with transport, or the removal of refuse from the town.

Where the town is located, the Ranánga River reaches a maximum width of about 500 feet during the flood season of spring and early summer. During the hottest months of the summer it shrinks to a mere 20 to 50 feet in width. On average, though, it is about 200 feet wide. The depth ranges from approximately 20 feet at its peak, to a low of five to six feet. It is only navigated by flat-bottomed skiffs and barges at best; and when the river is low, water traffic is almost impossible. The deep areas become swamps, and the shallows become marshland. In earlier times, during the first centuries of the Second Imperium, the Tsolyáni maintained dredges all along the river, but these are long since gone.

The town sits on a steep bank which is reinforced with dikes that are 15 to 18 feet in height. The land slopes away to the north of the town, which helps to prevent flooding when the river rises. Despite this, floods do occur, and many people take to the Sákbe roads and take refuge on higher ground. The region between the two rivers rises to elevations of 50 to 100 feet above sea level, and there are some very nice villas and farms up there.

## Religion

Religious affiliation in a little town like Sétnakh is coincidental or dependent upon local history. Each member of every clan follows one of the deities. On a world like Tékumel, where the deities actively participate in human affairs, the only atheists are fools. Even if one's clan is not religiously aligned, one's own lineage — or one's personal beliefs — will usually be so. Members of "religiously fixed" clans,



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**The White Stone clanmaster is Hóruk hiTírissu... He loves food, music, gambling, and story-telling — anything to avoid dealing with his clan's commercial ventures.**

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too, may not always belong to the sect of that clan: e. g. a person may be Red Sun and not follow Vimúhla but Avánthe or Hnálla or Thúmis! This leads to some prejudice and unpleasantness, especially in the “hard core” clans (e.g. Copper Door, Vríddi), but it is possible, and is occasionally found. A child generally chooses a religion when growing up, and this sometimes differs from the preferences of his lineage and his relatives, although the pressure to follow one's parents and family lineage is strong.

A clan's lack of sectarian affiliation is not an indication of religious “moderation”. It just means that the clan, as a whole, has no single religious belief or sectarian membership. A Sárku worshipper who belongs to Golden Bough, by some quirk of fate and family history, may be just as devoted to his deity as any member of Open Sepulchre.

Clans, lineages, and families all share in the “guidance” of a child and try to steer him into a particular sect. Some young people are stubborn, however.

Here in the southeastern corner of the Empire, Hnálla, Avánthe, Belkhánu and their Cohorts predominate. In Sétnakh, however, Lord Thúmis has a larger following than Lord Belkhánu. To a lesser extent one finds followers of Lord Karakán, Lord Sárku, and their Cohorts. There is also limited worship of Lady Shiringgáyyi, thanks to the number of Salarvyáni immigrants.

Sétnakh is really too small to have public temples — just private “house shrines” for the wealthier citizens. The largest and most public is the shrine that White Stone has built for Lady Dlamélish. Other families have various shrines, too, but these are smaller.

There are also tiny public shrines on some street corners: little altars where pious citizens come and burn a bit of incense and say a prayer or two. The members of the Priesthoods that operate these shrines are normally employed as “house-priests” in the service of one of the clans or well-to-do families. When there is a ritual or a public holiday (e.g. those of the last 5 days of the year), these people produce small ceremonies and festivities to celebrate.

### Clans

The clans are the fabric of Tsolyáni society. One who is not a member of a clan is worse than a nobody. The individual is nothing, the clan is everything. What follows are most of the more prevalent clans found in Sétnakh.

### Might of Gánga

Of the clans having real presence in the town, Might of Gánga is foremost. This clan traces its roots back to Engsvanyáli royalty. It maintains a commercial depot here, which handles the transshipping of goods to barges to go east to the great cities there, or southwest to Jakálla and the islands of the southern sea.

Clan agents handle grain, cloth, Salarvyáni goods, salted meat, pottery, glassware, metalwork, etc. Some of these persons deal with more than one type of commodity, others work with five or six items. Whenever a load comes into the warehouse, whether by boat, chlén-cart, or slave caffle, the dealers send letters to the relevant forwarders.

Might of Gánga has a small clanhouse in Sétnakh. This is not even as large as those of lower clans, its residents are better off than some other higher clans. Those clans having no house here must rely upon agents.

The clanmaster of this clan is Mirék hiMazhán, a busy, harried man in his mid fifties. He is a worshipper of Lady Avánthe and piously pays for some of Her yearly celebrations from his own pocket. He has two wives and nine children, some, it is said, from his slave concubines. He tends to be helpful to travellers but never misses a chance to earn a Káitar or two for his goddess and his clan. He claims direct descent from those inhabitants of Gánga Isle who managed to flee before the island sank into the ocean.

### White Stone

This clan contains members at both ends of the social spectrum. Some follow Lady Avánthe and her Cohort Dilinála, others Dlamélish and her Cohort Hriháyal. In Sétnakh most of White Stone's clansmen are adherents of Dlamélish and Hriháyal. They maintain a small shrine and perform the rudiments of the rituals for these two ladies. White Stone has the largest clan house in the town. Its people are primarily from Jakálla, and are involved in the cloth trade.

The clanmaster is Hóruk hiTírissu, a plump, indolent man in his sixties. He loves food, music, gambling, and story-telling — anything to avoid dealing with his clan's commercial ventures. For these, he employs a number of accountants, managers, and junior clansmen, who thus receive training in basic administration. Hóruk has a great scar on his right cheek, the gift of an angry Küni-bird with which he was hunting. This has not stopped him from marrying two young wives and

fathering six children; his wealth and generosity are legendary among the maidens of Sétnakh.

### **Great Stone**

While primarily a northern clan, it is not surprising to find Great Stone maintaining a presence in this place, as it is concerned with trade, shipping, caravans, and mercantile ventures. Many of its members are followers of Lords Ksáruł, Hrü'ü, and their Cohorts. In conjunction with shipping concerns, the clan builds barges and small craft here.

Kagór hiSsanyúsa is the clanmaster: an undistinguished man of about 50. He has the sort of face that one forgets at once. He is grim and humorless, devoted to Lord Grugánu, the Cohort of Lord Ksáruł, and extremely conservative and miserly. Kagór is married and has a son, about fifteen.

### **Amber Cloak**

The clan maintains only a small clanhouse and is of little importance in Sétnakh. It contains primarily followers of Belkhánu, Thúmíis, and their Cohorts.

The present clanmaster is Vírudai hiViridáme, a powerful, craggy-looking man who instantly attracts attention in a group. He has a loud, commanding voice, a mien befitting an emperor, and considerable charisma. Women find him overpowering and a bit frightening, however, and he has only three slave concubines. From these, he has three adolescent daughters and a baby son upon whom he dotes. He is a good choice for clanmaster because he does not represent any of the interests that have held economic and political power here for centuries.

The Mayor of Sétnakh belongs to this clan: a pleasant old bureaucrat: Miyésu hiMáika. He is further described below in the section on politics.

### **Standing Stone**

This agrarian clan has a large clanhouse directly north of the White Stone clanhouse. Controlling a substantial expanse of land directly to the east of the town, the clan is considered to have some of the best orchards in this part of the Empire, with much of their produce finding its way to Jakálla.

The clanmistress is Mnéssa hiTlángtel. She "inherited" the post from her father and has done so well at it that her clansmen have confirmed her in the job. She is stout, rather stumpy, and energetic, constantly inspecting products and contracts, issuing commands, and giving advice to her minions. Her husband, Anér hiTlángtel is a non-entity; few people even recognize him in the street!

Mnéssa is an Aridáni woman and has never married. She has no children.

### **Rising Sun**

Found throughout the eastern Empire the Rising Sun clan maintains one of the smaller clanhouses along the western border of the town. This clan is primarily concerned with mercantile pursuits. The clanhouse provides a stopover place for merchant caravans, where travellers can rest, send reports home, and gain information. The clan also maintains a warehouse and arranges for goods to be transferred from land to the rivers or vice versa.

The clan currently has no official clanmaster. The former occupant of the post died, and the clan is still waiting for word from its high council in Béy Sü. A committee of junior clansmen now operate its considerable business interests.

### **Green Bough**

The Green Bough clan is one of the agricultural clans that own property and maintain a clanhouse near Sétnakh. Most of this clan's land lies to the north, across the Ranánga River. Its members operate a small wharf on the northern side of the river for efficient transport.

Thanks to the splendid food-preparing facilities of its Rooms of Delectable Dining, this clan boasts a steady stream of visitors. These guests often leave behind a respectable sum of money in exchange for a superbly prepared meal.

The clanmistress is Tháila hiSírúkkú, a Dlamélish-worshipper from Jakálla. She admits to being about 22 years of age (but is more likely in her late twenties). She displays the piquant, sharp-featured prettiness of the south. Tháila has brought in the best cooks and gardeners she can find, with an eye to making Sétnakh a popular travel-stop along the busy route from Jakálla to Thráya and Jaikalór. Tháila is unmarried and has a veritable legion of suitors. Rumor has it that she was once a priestess of Lady Hriháyal but was expelled for refusal to perform some of the goddess' less desirable rituals.

### **Golden Sphere**

Another clan with large agrarian interests in the region surrounding Sétnakh is the Golden Sphere clan, which controls some of the richest farmland in this part of the Empire. It possesses tracts of land on both sides of the Ranánga, including a majority of the marshes along the river's banks.

The clan also owns the large warehouse next to the clanhouse and has extensive business contacts

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**The Green Bough clanmistress is Tháila hiSírúkkú... Rumor has it that she was once a priestess of Lady Hriháyal but was expelled for refusal to perform some of the goddess' less desirable rituals**

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**Narkodlán returned to find his post taken over, his wives forcibly married to Bálesh, his daughter made into a concubine for Bálesh's son, and his property divided amongst Bálesh's relatives...**

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among the clans of Sétnakh, the surrounding hinterlands, and as far away as Jakálla. Members are primarily adherents of Lord Thúmis.

The previous clanmaster died in the recently concluded civil war. His replacement, Jésekh hiWarúkka, about 45 years of age, is just settling into his responsibilities. Jésekh is an ex-soldier: tough, vulgar, quick-tempered, easily insulted and slow to forgive. He has large tracts of his own personal land, in addition to administering those of his clan. He is married and has two small sons. Ostensibly he worships Lord Thúmis, but gossip has it that he belongs to Tháila hiSírukku's small inner circle of friends.

### **Blue Stream**

Another of the agrarian clans with interests in the area near Sétnakh, this clan controls sizable stretches of land on the northern side of the Ranánga. Members are mostly followers of Lady Avánthe, though a few are followers of her Cohort Dilinála

The clanmaster is Ekhumén hiTlakán, an undistinguished bureaucrat in his late forties. He holds dogmatic and highly biased views about the supremacy of Lady Avánthe among the gods. His clanbrothers often shake their heads at what they perceive to be dangerous fanaticism. He is married (three times -- two of his wives died), and has no children. His current wife, Amyála, is said to be a secret worshipper of one of the Pariah Deities, with ties to various underground organizations. Ekhumén pretends not to notice her activities.

### **Black Pinnacle**

Another of the clans with agricultural lands surrounding Sétnakh, the Black Pinnacle clan also possesses a large number of skilled craftsmen and artisans. Most of the clan members do not live in the clanhouse, but instead live in their places of business in the commercial sections of the city. Many of its members here are also followers of Dlamélish.

There is a longstanding dispute after the death of the previous clanmaster. Narkodlán hiKhanúma claims that the old man had selected him, while Bálesh hiSayúncha holds that he is the first choice. Narkodlán was away at the War and returned to find his post taken over, his wives forcibly married to Bálesh, his eleven-year-old daughter made into a concubine for Bálesh' hulking grown-up son, and his property divided amongst Bálesh's relatives. A lawsuit is going on, but there is no quick end in sight. Narkodlán is a big, smiling, easygoing man, running to fat, with a hairy chest and arms (some

Salarvyáni ancestry, perhaps?). Bálesh, on the contrary, is small, courteous but devious, and ugly. He has one other wife besides Kínath, Narkodlán's "ex": Miléya hiKhanúma, a much put-upon woman of about thirty. She has no children as yet.

### **Black Monolith**

The Black Monolith clan is one the Black Pinnacle clan's primary sources of competition in Sétnakh, since it includes the other sizable block of artisans in town. It also runs an import business bringing goods from surrounding regions. Because the Clanhouse isn't overly large, a good portion of its members have their homes and places of business in the area to the north of the clanhouse.

The clanmaster is Chénggesh hiVraisúna, a man of perhaps 80 years, who tends to dodder and forget things. He was once Mayor of Sétnakh and even held several minor posts in the Imperial government in Jakálla. He has three elderly wives, many children, hosts of grandchildren, and hordes of great-grandchildren. He is more or less retired, though greatly respected, and spends his days basking in the warmth of the clanhouse' verandah.

### **Open Sepulchre**

The clanhouse stands just outside the city proper, located next to the City of the Dead. Unsurprisingly, its members are followers of Belkhánu, Sárku, and their Cohorts. Members are mostly employed as embalmers, tomb guards, and professional mourners.

The clanmistress is Gayén hiKaméthu, a dark, smoldering, bitter woman in her early thirties. She is good with business and clan duties, but unfriendly and aloof. She worships Sárku in a small temple she has had built in the back courtyard of her clanhouse. People whisper that she has taken slave children there at night, never to return. She is unmarried, and the one man who admits to kissing her long ago averred that "her breath would fell a Chlén-beast!" He has since fled the region.

### **Open Hand**

The Open Hand clan's members provide much of the labor for the agricultural clans' tracts of land, and many of the common laborers within the town itself.

The clanmaster is Hués hiBurusá, a roly-poly, jolly fellow who eats and drinks with such gusto that he has become proverbial: people speak of "The Feast of Hués," which is jokingly celebrated each year by his clansmen. There is much rural jesting and raillery, and the food is excellent. Hués is about



## Adventure Seeds

What follows is meant to inspire the gamemaster and aid in developing ideas for play-scenarios. Some of these “adventure seeds” begin before or during the recently concluded Civil War in which Prince Mirusíya was victorious. Prince Rereshqála gave up the Gold to go to Avanthár to serve as High Chancellor. Dhich'uné has fled away from Tékumel's plane entirely. The Empire is now more or less at peace, although the Mu'ugalavyáni still occupy Pán Cháka, and the Salarvyáni continue to push into Chaigári and Kerunan.

This section is split into two parts: the first, “For the Players,” contains kernels of information which can be used to start scenarios. The second section, “For the Gamemaster,” offers suggestions for the development of these scenarios and is found at the end of the article.

### For the Players

1. While the town of Sétnakh is solidly loyal to Prince Rereshqála, not everyone shares this opinion. Rumor has it that certain parties in Sétnakh have learned of a shipment bound from Jaikalór to Prince Rereshqála's estate east of Jakálla. It is hinted that there will be a raid on this shipment. Who these people are is as yet unknown, and the nature of the shipment is also shrouded in secrecy. Going to the authorities is likely to produce dire results, since these people may be foes of Rereshqála and his party.
2. A strange old man appears and claims to have uncovered evidence of wrongdoing by one of your ancestors. If he can prove this and make it public, your family's reputation would be greatly damaged. The old fellow wants something from you in return for not airing this skeleton in the closet. Do you do as he asks, do you come up with proof that what his claims are wrong, or do you eliminate him! (In the last case, you must first be sure he has no clan or relatives to take you to the magistrate or take personal revenge.)
3. You are approached by a merchant, who is traveling in a caravan bound for Thráya. He wants to hire you as a bodyguard. This person has about two dozen slaves who carry mysterious-looking bundles. All the merchant will say about this merchandise is that they must be kept totally dark, so that no light falls on them.
4. In your clanhouse it seems that one room has always been cooler. No one knows why. You have heard the elders of your clan whisper amongst themselves that the room harbors ghosts and spirits. You don't see how this could be, though. After all, old Nagór hiTlekkáne, one of your venerable clan-relatives used to spend considerable time in this room when you were growing up.
5. On the bluffs to the west of town something, or someone has been killing chlén-beasts at night. It is said that no one hears anything, yet almost every morning another of these powerful creatures is found dead. Members of the *Woven Whip* clan, which has its clanhouse there, are beside themselves. They have been unable to determine the cause, and their livelihood is fast disappearing. They have appealed to the Mradúharétokoi, and he has sent guards to investigate, but they have been unable to discover anything.
6. One of your young clan-brothers is missing. Some of his friends last saw him when playing near the *Marketplace of the Fourth Emperor*.
7. Your clan-elders ask you to travel to Sétnakh. They have been informed that Balú hiMaráshu has been seen there. This rogue has brought great shame upon the clan by absconding with a caravan of goods entrusted to him.
8. An ancient Engsvanyáli book has come into your possession, but unknown forces want it. This is a very unusual book, for it seems to be magically sealed. The only clue to its contents is the Engsvanyáli inscription on its binding.

thirty-five years of age, married to one long-suffering, overworked wife, and the father of four sons, all of whom are as rotund as he is. He once had a daughter, too, but she was kidnapped by a slaver and sold to Shén traders in Jakálla. She was probably made into stew, a custom these creatures sometimes follow with human prisoners. Hués' jollity disappears when he thinks of her, and he would give anything to find her alive again.

### **Green Forest**

This clan has clanhouses throughout the east, and along the Mssúma River. It is based in Sokátis. For the most part its members are worshippers of Avánthe, Dlamélish, and their Cohorts.

The clanmaster is Níkku hiSorúna, a powerful, heavily-muscled ex-professional gladiator in his sixties. He is said to be rather unintelligent and loud rather than clever, but his clan has prospered under his leadership. He is married to a pleasant clansister of about forty and has three children: two unmarried girls and a boy. The girls are quite pretty and have many suitors. The boy, Ménes, is reclusive and has interests in ancient languages, history, and other such topics. Other children are a little afraid of him, for reasons not gone into here.

### **Red Sail**

This the offshoot of a smallish Jakállan clan that specializes in nautical pursuits. Some of the finest seamen in the Empire belong to this clan. It only maintains a few clanhouses along the major rivers, and in Jakálla. The only exception to this is a small presence in

Béy Sii, and a few chambers for guests in Avanthár. For the most part these people follow Karakán and Chegárra, though other sects are also represented.

The clanmaster is Dorjái vuKánsü, a Vrayáni sea-captain settled in the Empire. Dorjái embroiders upon his narrations with the skill of an artist, making him a centre of attention at any gathering. He is quickwitted, agile, and devious, with skills in swordsmanship, sailing, and—it is said—piracy. He is a good friend of Captain Harchár hiVárshu, the "Terror of the Seas," who plies the waters of the southern oceans.

### **Ewer of Gold Outpouring**

This clan is primarily found in the southeastern part of the Empire. Its members usually belong to the sects of Avánthe, Hnálla, Thúmis, and their Cohorts. Belkhánu members are rare near Sétnakh, but are common nearer to Thraya.

The clan handles transshipping along the Sákbe Roads and the rivers in the area, charging small percentages on loads transferred from one means of transport to another: ship to chlén-carts, ship to slaves, slaves to carts, etc. It arranges for loading and unloading, guarding, storing, etc. of cargoes.

The clanmaster is Achán hiRírutla, a hurried, impatient young man of about twenty-five. He shouts, commands, counsels, argues, and discusses all at the same loud and breathless speed. His clansmen appreciate his hard work, but nobody seems to like him very much. He is a devotee of Lord Hnálla and regularly holds small services in the clanhouse' back garden. Priests of Hnálla are very welcome in his establishment, and followers of Drá always receive a meal and a few coins, if they will take them. He is unmarried.

### **Wicker Image and Black Mat**

These two clans are among those that have clanhouses on the rise to the west of town between the Ranánaga and Equonoyél Rivers. They are both socially very low clans and see to the removal of waste from the town. Waste disposal is not permitted in the river, and it must be taken out of the town in heavy carts to be spread over the fields.

The clanmaster of Wicker Image is a simple, stolid-looking, bearded man in his forties, named Hóro hiTakú. Some people say that he once had another name and escaped from prison somewhere in the western Empire. He seems to be safe enough here; the clan likes him; he has married; and his two small sons are much spoiled by his clanbrothers.

The clanmistress of Black Mat is Biá hiMáni, a forty-year-old Aridáni ex-soldier from Jakálla. She retired here and was soon selected as the head of her lowly clan. She has more education than the usual Black Mat member, however, and is physically quite pretty, but her humble station prevents her from finding a husband in one of the medium clans. She is quick at business and aggressive in clan meetings.

### **Political**

There isn't much of an Imperial presence in the town. There is a Palace of the Realm, but it is small and unimportant. The clans administer the town with some modicum of efficiency; however: business is what matters. There are no reasons for other palaces of the Tsolyáni bureaucracy here: i.e. Palace of the Priesthoods, Palace of Foreign Lands, or Palace of Everglorious War. Those are for the larger cities.

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**The Red Sail clanmaster, Dorjái vuKánsü, is quickwitted, agile, and devious, with skills in swordsmanship, sailing, and—it is said—piracy**

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The Mradùharétokoi (Mayor) of Sétnakh is Miyésu hiMáika, of the Amber Cloak Clan. He's about 55, stout, affable, bald, smooth faced, beardless as a baby, and worships Lord Qón. He had hoped for promotion to a bigger and better post, but he is neither very smart nor well-connected. He spends his days in the Palace of the Realm (see the map, upper left side), playing Dén-Den with his cronies, collecting bribes, and keeping the town's little band of officials together. He has quarters near the Palace of the Realm in the administrative building there. His two wives and six children are a terror to his staff of five scribes and three servants. He has a security force of twenty city guards who live here and there about the town.

The town's guards are reinforced by fifty Imperial road guards, who mostly live in the three Sákbe Road towers shown on the map. The Captain of these guards is one of Miyésu's friends, a short, wiry-haired, bandy-legged officer named Bolón hiSirámul, a member of the White Stone clan, from the southern coast near Jakállá. He also is a Qón worshipper.

As has always been the case, politics is a strange and complicated realm of fluid alliances with each faction vying for more power and prestige. The town council is made up of representatives of the most important, and the wealthiest clans (not always the same thing).

The mayor is appointed by the Imperium, through the Palace of the Realm in Jakállá. While it is possible for some hardworking individual from the town to obtain this appointment, more often than not this post goes to an outsider. If someone from the town is appointed to the post, it is likely that he will be transferred later to another post should he prove to be either very successful, or conversely, very inefficient.

If the Mayor should die in office, the town council sends its recommendations to the Palace of the Realm in the prefecture's capital city, in this case Jakállá. In the meantime someone will be appointed temporarily to the post by the local power blocs. This may be the person recommended by the council or simply a temporary placeholder.

In each of the smaller settlements around Sétnakh, instead of a Mayor one finds a Laithturúnkoi (Headman), who is administratively under the Mayor of Sétnakh. In reality however, these outlying areas are controlled by the clans.

The council is responsible for establishing economic and social policies. The Mayor can often persuade his council of his point of view, but he may also fail

and have to accept defeat, or else call for support from higher officials in the Prefecture hierarchy. If he is defeated, he does not necessarily lose his job; he does lose prestige, and note is taken of this in the Prefecture's headquarters. Enough losses, and he will be transferred – downward to some less enjoyable posting.

Everywhere in the town you will find people who are part of the political machine, such as the market tax collectors, and the like. These people are locally appointed by the Mayor, usually with the concurrence of the Town Council. As has always been the case, there can be disagreement and power plays surrounding these appointments. All appointees are part of the Imperial system, of course; yet they tend to be appointed to their posts for long periods and are not as frequently transferred as higher officials are.

## **Surrounding Points of Interest**

### **A Temple of Lord Thúmis**

Should you find yourself on the Sákbe road traveling towards Jakállá, after you have gone ten to fifteen tsán you will notice a nice grove of Gapúl trees on your right. If you leave the road and go around the grove you will find one of Lord Thúmis' temples, a pretty, simple colonnade of late-Engsvanyáli pillars around a central hall. There are priests and priestesses in residence here who specialize in healing and medical herbs.

The Prior is Hakhár hiSayúncha, an elderly scholar of many interests and talents. Hakhár is a follower of "the Young Orator of the Grey Godhead": Sanjésh hiKirisáya, who once stopped here to preach.

### **A Monastery of Lord Hnálla**

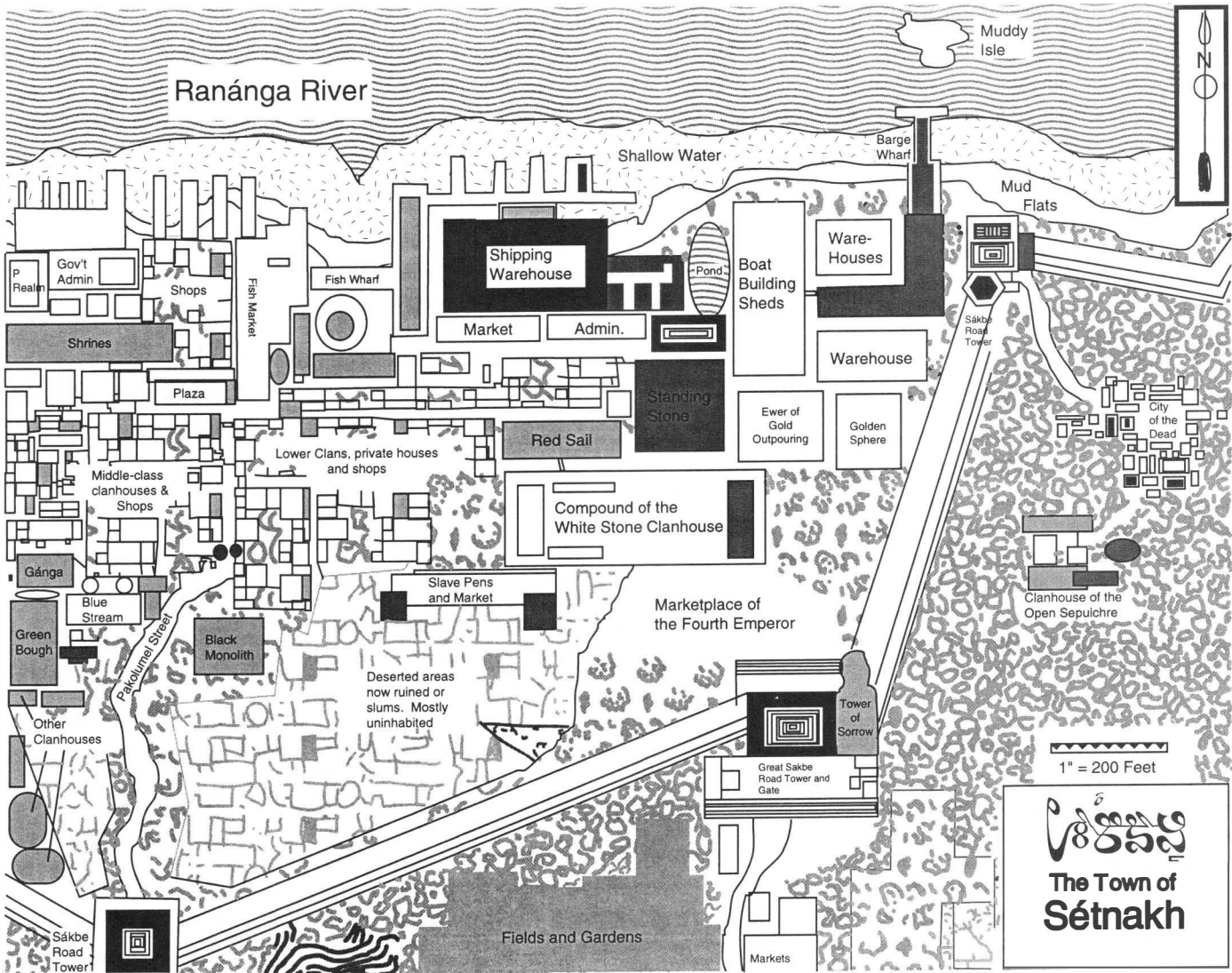
After one has traveled roughly ten tsán southeast along the Sákbe road headed towards Jaikalór, one looks out over the fields to the northeast to see a moderately-sized Monastery. This is built upon land donated by the White Stone clan, who also have set up a fund to support duty-priests and rituals for travellers and local members. This place was build some years ago but still has an air of newness. Its chief patron is Achán hiRírutla; see above. He supports this monastery, organizes services, hires clergy and other staff, and offers prayers here whenever he can.

At the moment, Achán is searching for a competent high priest from Jakállá. Now that the Civil War has

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**The Mayor of Sétnakh is Miyésu hiMáika, of the Amber Cloak Clan. He had hoped for promotion to a bigger and better post, but he is neither very smart nor well-connected.**

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ended, he hopes to see several candidates who seek posts in smaller towns.

## Locations in Town

### Marketplace

In between the White Stone compound and the Tower of Sorrow stands the Marketplace of the Fourth Emperor. This is a fairly large market, where one can expect to see goods from the Five Empires laid out on every side. There are other markets in the town, but this is the largest of them.

The market is comprised of a large open square surrounded by larger and more substantial shops. In the square itself people squat on blankets or tarpaulins upon which fruits, vegetables, or other wares are piled high.

While always bustling with business, the marketplace becomes a riot of activity on Market Day. This occurs on every Rū'usa

(fourth day), and on the first day of each month. On market day the peasants from the surrounding areas bring in produce, livestock, crafts, clothing and other items to sell. Established merchants in the stalls surrounding the square provide free wine and beer, which is naturally watered down. Some also provide entertainers who entertain the crowds with folk music and dancing.

On the monthly Market day one sees merchants from other parts of the Empire. These bring in imports not only from nearby towns and also from farther away. This is the best day to find slaves, as often there is a slaver caravan or two in town. It is also when most of the buying and selling of the larger animals, carts, and the like is done.

The surrounding shops are primarily lines of long, narrow, doorless rooms. The shopkeepers sit in the doorways upon slightly raised platforms to keep out the water and the mud. They have goods spread out around them for show. One can stop and inquire whether the shop has a particular item. If so, the shopkeeper invites you to climb the step and sit on a pile of mat daises inside

the shop. A shop assistant sizes up the customer and makes a pile of mats high enough to suit the customer's clan and station.

Shopboys and clerks then bring out merchandise. If it is one of the better shops the shopkeeper will often provide refreshment, a cup of Chumétl. If it's a nice one can expect a covered tray containing sweetmeats or pastries. Be forewarned: shopkeepers don't always maintain the highest of sanitary conditions when it comes to culinary delights, and one may come away with something less pleasant! (Politely known as "The Jakállá Footrace"—an ugly variety of tummy-trouble!)

As is common throughout the Empire the actual mechanics of making a purchase depends on what it is. Little items are not haggled over; these are after all, small and of little importance. Large items, on the other hand, are most definitely haggled over, however this is normally done obliquely with all due courtesy so as not to offend anyone. No one, for instance, speaks contemptuously of another's goods, although the implications are there.

The buyer is expected to know the approximate value. The seller assesses this and sets a starting price according to the buyer's visible status and wealth. One converses pleasantly and then suggests a price for the wanted article. The seller then usually refuses and asks for more. The buyer then goes up a little and the seller comes down a little. Eventually both come to a place where further concessions are not possible. Then both must make a decision.

A seller may state a starting price first, or the buyer may start with an offer. There is no set rule. One usually only leaves if no agreement is possible, although some people do leave and then come back with a new offer later – or send another person with a better offer.

### ***Old Kurésh***

As one wanders through the marketplace one may run across a stall run by a dingy little man who appears to be impossibly old. Sitting on the ground under an awning, amongst what would appear to be piles of trash, it would be easy to pass him by. Yet it would be better to have a bottle of something to drink, so that old Kúresh might invite you to sit down and converse.

Despite his destitute appearance, Kurésh is a valuable source of information, and amidst the refuse that surrounds him in his stall all sorts of goods are offered for sale. No one knows much about the old man: who he is, where he comes from, yet even the eldest townfolk insist he could be

found in the marketplace when they were young and that even then he was an old man.

### ***Gayán hiSarélte***

Gayán is a thin, dark-complected man with a wide, short mustache. A dealer of fine rugs, he maintains a large shop on the outskirts of the great marketplace. He is frequently seen sitting in front of his door with a few of his nicer rugs rolled up and stacked around him.

Gayán often looks a little harried, which is not surprising since both his wives are often at him mercilessly, demanding that he sell what people want and not just carpets that please him! After all, rugs are not as popular here as they are in the east, and as a concession to Tsolyáni custom, he does carry a fair selection of mats and cushions. Still, he does love his rugs, and believes that everyone should own a few. Besides, business really isn't that bad.

If a customer wants to look at his wares, his shopboy ushers the buyer into a fair-sized room. The white walls can barely be seen beneath the rugs that hang on them. There, along one side, are mat diases to sit upon. Once the customer is seated, Gayán claps his hands and through a door hidden behind a large rug a slave brings a tray of refreshments.

Then a pair of assistants appear from another hidden door. While Gayán describes the technical details of the various rugs, the youths flip over examples of their master's carpets. With much skill these boys toss them to land just within the buyer's reach so that the workmanship can be examined more closely. If one are interested in mats or cushions instead of a carpet, the boys bring those out, but without the delightful showmanship they exhibit while displaying the rugs. After all, a rug is so versatile, it can be used as a wall hanging, or a floor covering, unlike a simple mat.

### **The Slave Market**

Bordering the White Stone compound and a short distance from the Marketplace of the Fourth Emperor are located the slave market and pens, a grim place reeking of despair. On three sides one finds rundown ruins and slums; the fourth side is open, with a fair-sized auction block of mortared stone. This is almost always a busy area. There is no shortage of customers looking for strong healthy slaves to transport their goods.

Slaves make up somewhere between 10 to 15% of the Tsolyani population, the highest percentage of any of the Five Empires. The majority of the Empire's labor force is made up of free peasants who work clan-owned lands, either as proprietors or



tenant farmers. Others work as craftsmen or serve on the estates of the nobility.

There are many ways a person can become a slave, including kidnapping. The most common reason is defaulting on one's debts. If the head of a household defaults on his debts and his clan is either unable or unwilling to pay them off, he is put into prison for some months. If his family is unable to pay the debts during this period the individual will be sold as a slave, and the sale price is divided amongst his creditors. Unless he has used his family as collateral, or has run away from his debts, his family is not normally sold into slavery with him. [For a further explanation of slavery on Tékumel see section 1.721 of the Sourcebook.]

While a person is in jail the Empire provides for food, but his family is expected to provide anything else he may need. In Sétnakh, the prison is located underneath one of the buildings of the Palace of the Realm. It is so small that prisoners are rarely kept there for long, and are instead transferred to one of the larger cities.

#### *Misúnu hiRayástqa*

Recently arrived in Sétnakh, Misúnu tends to keep to himself. While it is widely believed that he came from the Northern part of the Empire, no one can say with certainty. He is a thin, oily, hatchet-faced individual, secretive and mysterious, with a strong sadistic streak. Since taking over as Head of the slave market the slaves cannot wait to be sold!

#### *Kotáru hiKétkolel*

He is a middle-aged man with receding hair, soft-looking, and decidedly overweight. A member of the Ewer of Gold Outpouring, Kotáru has spent the past few years working in the slave market. An adherent of Lord Ksáru, he is not on very good terms with his clan, although his clansmen would probably aid him if he needed it. A close friend of the previous master of the market, he does not get along with Misúnu hiRayástqa, and does not approve of his treatment of the slaves. When possible he tries to protect them from Misúnu's tender mercies.

#### *Mikúsa hiMarássu*

A young Aridáni woman, with considerable skill in fighting, Mikúsa is not attractive by Tsolyáni standards. She is short and stocky with closely cropped hair. She is a member of the Red Sword clan, and a follower of Lord Vimúhla, with an equally fiery temper. Only recently arrived, she has been in town for less than a month. When she first came to the market looking for work, she was

immediately hired as a guard for the higher-valued female slaves.

Mikúsa is somewhat of a mystery; no one knows much about her past, although from the way she carries herself, and what little she has let slip, it can be inferred that she has served as a member of one of the Empire's legions. Based on her looks and accent it is probable that she comes from one of the northwestern cities.

### **The Ruined Section**

For many years this had been a poor section of town. Then about eight years ago there was a massive fire in Sétnakh, that devastated much of the area from the slave market to the Sákbe road and west to Pakólumel Street. The only major structure to escape the fire was the Black Monolith clanhouse. A year later the same area was flooded when the Ranánga escaped its banks.

As a result of these dual catastrophes, and the poverty of the district's inhabitants, few have rebuilt their homes here. This area has become a treacherous maze of fallen ruins overgrown with weeds.

### **Palkólumel Street**

Winding northwards from the southern Sákbe tower and passing by various clanhouses, Palkólumel Street is where one finds the town's other large market. This, too, is an outdoor market. From the wee hours of the morning till the hot part of the day, it is crowded with folk who buy, bargain, and sell enthusiastically and vociferously. Many of these are peasants from the hinterlands come to sell their baskets of produce, hand-woven colourful neck-clothes, poorly made leather tunics and sandals, wooden furniture, pots, Chlén-hide and wooden tools, Chlén-carts, baubles and bangles, etc.

In spite of the transitory nature of this market many of the dealers run stable enterprises. The same people are thus to be seen here, day in and day out. Some of these business people have elaborate stalls which they set up each day.

### **Places to get a meal**

Hungry travellers arriving in town can visit the Marketplace of the Fourth Emperor to get supplies to prepare a meal. Some of the vendors in the marketplace also sell pre-prepared dishes.

Alternatively, one can visit one of the many clan food-preparers of the town. There are no "restaurants" or "taverns" as such in the Tsolyáni Empire. Food-preparing clans do exist in bigger

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cities, however, but in Sétnakh these services must be performed by the larger agricultural clans. These maintain stores, cooks, ovens, etc., and people buy what they wish and take it home to eat. Special dishes depend upon the clan's other occupations: e.g. a clan which has winemaking interests often runs an establishment that primarily deals in wines, but offers meals in addition. Most visitors thus purchase prepared food and take it back to their lodging. There is no custom of eating or drinking together with strangers: there is too much fear of a loss of social prestige if one's fellow-eaters are of lower station than one's own.

A typical arrangement for a food-preparing establishment is a large courtyard with a large public room where customers order food. This courtyard is surrounded by small private rooms for those who (for whatever reason) do not wish to return to their lodgings to eat. Such chambers can be rented for a Hlásh or two per day.

One of the best known places to eat in Sétnakh is the clanhouse of the Green Bough which stands near the ruined section of the town, next to the clanhouse of the Might of Gánga. Green Bough maintains a sumptuous kitchen, offering many of the traditional delicacies of the empire. It owes much of its popularity to the fresh produce it cultivates in the surrounding region. Specialties include roasted Hmélu, spiced in the fashion of Jakállá, and served with vegetables in season. Another is boneless Káika-bird, marinated in slightly sour amber wine. Sweets and delicacies are considered among the best in the south.

### *Nélel biTétkuru*

When she was a young woman, Nélel went to the Palace of the Realm in her home city of Tūmissa, and declared herself to be Aridáni: i.e. socially and legally independent from her clan and family. She then went to the Recruiting Hall of the Palace of Ever-Glorious War and joined the Legion of the Lord of Red Devastation.

She spent the next twenty-two years with the Legion, fighting occasional battles, but mostly suffering boredom. This continued until the war against Yán Kór. Then, her Legion was sent to the Eastern front and saw fierce fighting. Towards the end of the war Nélel suffered near-fatal wounds. When recovered, she was discharged from the Legion. She then headed towards Jakállá. Several months later found her in Sétnakh, exhausted, she decided to visit the house of her clan, Green Bough.

Not being one to loaf about, while recovering from her travels, Nélel obtained a post in the clan's Rooms

of Delectable Dining.. As time passed, she recovered her health, and discovered that she liked Sétnakh and liked what she was doing. Thus here she has remained. Recently the clan has given her charge of the Rooms of Delectable Dining.

### **Sákbe Road & Tower**

The Sákbe Roads are a well known feature to those who travel the Tsolyáni Empire. These raised and fortified stone roads provide the main means of travel. This network of roads was begun about 15,000 years ago during the time of the Bednálljan Empire. It reached most of its present expanse roughly 10,000 years ago when the Engsvanyáli Empire was at its height. The Five Empires inherited this marvel of engineering, and they have striven to keep it in good repair. For the most part, they have succeeded, except where the terrain makes this difficult. Near the frontiers of the Empire and beyond in other lands, these roads either do not exist or tend to be in ruinous condition.

The Sákbe road beside which Sétnakh is located, has the benefit of being on a major east-west route. Much effort has gone into maintaining it, and most of it is in better shape than other links in the Five Empires. Even so, a close look at the great paving stones shows them to be cracked with age and worn smooth by the passage of many, many feet.

The Sákbe road is a reminder of the social stratification present on Tékumel. The roads are made up of three separate levels, each three to five meters in height. The highest level is reserved for Upper-level Imperial functionaries, nobles, Imperial messengers, and the Sákbe Road guards. The fact that the Sákbe Road guards are allowed on the upper level is a concession to the defensive nature of the roads. The highest side is intended to face the direction from which an attacking force may come. This level is quite narrow and is crenellated

The middle level is wider and is reserved for the upper classes: merchants, respectable travellers, priests, etc. The lowest tier is for the common folk, caravans, Chlén-carts laden with goods, and caffles of slaves. This level ranges from eight to fifteen meters in width and has a low outside coping wall.

Most of the traffic on the stretch of the Sákbe road beside which Sétnakh lies consists of peasants bearing goods to market. There are also caravans of Chlén-carts, slaves, an occasional official, or other travelers on their way across the southern region of the Empire. frequently one meets contingents of soldiery, mostly Imperial, but sometimes temple guards or local support troops. One occasionally sees small groups of priests, or higher persons riding

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in litters. Because of the heat, people tend to travel in the evening or early morning, stopping to rest in the heat of the day.

It is only at the guard towers that it is possible to go from one level of the roadway to another, using staircases and ramps built within the tower itself. If one wishes to go up, one must prove that one's social status is sufficient! These towers line the Sákbe roads: smaller ones can be found roughly every half Tsán; larger ones can be found about every ten Tsán, a normal days journey. Each individual level has its own gates which can be closed to block the road.

Larger towers are surrounded by a large raised courtyard where caravans and other travellers can spend the night. These platforms have cooking areas, and supplies are available. Depending on the tower's location and the level of security, often there is a ramp leading down to the ground. It is common to find small villages gathered near these towers, usually with connections to local, secondary roads.

The Tower of Sorrow in Sétnakh is a fine example of a larger tower. There also smaller towers as well. At the Tower of Sorrow one can leave the Sákbe road and enter the town, after dealing with the customs station housed in the tower.

#### *Órodai hiMrékka*

A middle-aged merchant of the Red Sword clan, Órodai is typical of those travelling the Sákbe roads. He left his home in Khirgár while still a young man, determined to find his fortune. Taking work as a guard in a caravan, he travelled widely in the Five Empires. Then on a return trip from Livyánu, things changed for him. When his caravan was attacked, he saved the life of the merchant who had hired him and was seriously wounded. The merchant, Zagár hiTlekólmü of the respected Vríddi clan, was so grateful that when he recovered, he made him his personal body guard. Órodai watched carefully and learned, and soon Zagár realized that Órodai was more than a simple bodyguard, and that he possessed a sharp mind.

After many years, Órodai became Zagár's most trusted assistant and confidant. During this time he saved all he could and invested it. Then finally the day came when he set out on his own once again. This time, though, he had money, which he used to purchase wares, slaves to carry them, and his own guards.

He did well until the recent Civil War broke out. As the Empire fell apart, so did his fortunes. More than once he was in the wrong place at the wrong time, and lost much to hostile factions. Now he has

grown somewhat desperate and knows that one more mishap will ruin him.

#### **A clanhouse**

One of the most noteworthy sights newcomers see in Sétnakh is the clanhouse of the White Stone clan. This is the largest and most magnificent house in the town, outstripping others of higher clans, such as that of the Might of Gánga. Such perceptions are relative, however, for the grandest of Sétnakh's clanhouses would be judged small and mean by the standards of the major cities of the Empire.

For the folk of Sétnakh, however, this clanhouse is an impressive edifice, with its tiled roofs and whitewashed adobe walls. From the Marketplace of the Fourth Emperor, it seems as though one stands outside of a town, for almost the entire northern edge of the marketplace borders this long, low two-story clanhouse. It is in this wall of the compound that the main gate is located. Looking closely, however, one notices small defects and signs of wear: bricks missing from the walls, sloppily patched holes in the dark brown tile roofs, etc.

Inside the gate the courtyard is paved. One must be careful, for the great wheels of the Chlén-carts have broken some of the stones. In the rainy season these ruts become deep trenches filled with muck, where it is easy to stumble and fall, much to the amusement of the servants and caravan personnel loitering there.

The large building on the edge of the compound there smells ripely of the stench of chlén dung. It is the clan's chlén barn. Living apartments are located as far away from this distinctive aroma as possible. Most clanmembers wish that those long-perished brethren who built the compound had seen fit to locate the chlén barn on the rise overlooking the town where most of the other chlén barns have been built!

Part of the courtyard near the apartments is given over to a garden. For the most part, this is used for the growing of fresh vegetables and Dmí-sugar. However, here and there one finds small plots of flowers, including the grey-tinged Tetél flowers offered as sacrifices by the worshippers of Thúmís.

#### *Héttukeng hiTukún*

A slim young man with long, stringy, greasy hair, and a pasty complexion, he is a member of the White Stone clan, Héttukeng hiTukún has lived in Sétnakh all of his life. He is not content to join in the clan's textile-related business, however. Although he has dreams of making a fortune, he has no practical plan or serious idea of how to go about getting it. Héttukeng has recently been spending

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**It is only at the guard towers that it is possible to go from one level of the roadway to another... If one wishes to go up, one must prove that one's social status is sufficient!**

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time with certain foreign travellers. People in the town have taken notice of this, and his clan fathers have begun to worry.

### ***Miyamáshu biShashtélu***

Despite her advancing years, Miyamáshu still possesses much of the physical perfection with which Avánthe, the Maid of Beauty, blessed her in her youth. Three years ago, her husband and children perished in a plague that struck Sétnakh in the heat of summer. Miyamáshu maintains a cheerful mien, nevertheless, despite the blows life has dealt her. She dedicates much of her time caring for Lady Avánthe's shrine located along the northern wall of the compound. She is skilled in the healing arts and is known throughout the region.

### **The Riverfront**

Along the Ranánga river the waterfront is crowded with wharves and warehouses. Here goods are transferred to and from the river at the ramp leading up beside the Sákbe road tower. This district possesses some of the most extensive and impressive buildings in Setnakh. These are the warehouses — the reasons for the town's economic life.

The northern bank of the river is lined with docks and warehouses. Travelling north on the secondary roads which lead away from the river, one encounters a patchwork of villages and farms.

Throughout the Empire there is a considerable amount of river traffic, but the rivers in this part of the country are shallow and cannot be navigated by the Tnék, or even the Qél throughout their length. In the hot season matters become worse as the river shrinks down to a shadow of its self. In the winter and spring these streams are at their deepest and most navigable; yet there is still the threat of the ever present mud-bars. Almost all river traffic thus consists of flat-bottomed barges.

The transport clans have fancier barges to rent to wealthy travellers. Such comfortable conveyances usually journey upriver to one of the eastern cities. Travellers find this preferable to tramping along the Sákbe roads for days and weeks. The most luxurious of these barges are rather festive, and have a party atmosphere, with good food, wine, singing, and sleeping in the shade of the barge's colourful awnings.

The Palace of the Realm and other government offices are located near the riverfront. These are not impressive; in fact they are old and rundown. It is here that the Mradúharétokoi (Mayor), his family, and small retinue live. Between the governmental

buildings and the river itself one encounters the first of the wharves for the ferries that carry travellers across to the northern shore. This district is crowded, busy, and noisy, as merchants vie to get their goods transported across the river.

Except at its lowest ebb, the river provides an excellent source of fish. These are sold in the nearby Fish Market. The wharf for the fishermen is located between the Palace of the Realm and the main shipping warehouse.

As one travels east, one finds another small marketplace. This is devoted to the selling of cargo shipped along the Ranánga. Next to this marketplace one finds the administrative offices for the transshipping concerns of the clans.

Sétnakh hosts a fair-sized boatbuilding workshop run by the Great Stone clan. While this clan is primarily interested in producing riverboats and barges for its own shipping concerns, it also builds rivercraft for sale to other clans. One of its chief customers is the Red Sail clan which has obtained special discounts by agreeing to purchase a certain number of barges and small craft per year.

### ***Méshumyel biTlekólmü***

Now a thin, elderly man with wispy, silvery hair. Méshumyel has worked in the boat works all his life. He started out as a young boy sealing seams with tar and worked his way through various jobs until the Great Stone clan entrusted the entire boatworks to him. He is happily married with three wives and a large assortment of children, several of whom work alongside their father.

### ***Diusérish Makkára***

Of Mu'ugalavyáni name and lineage, Diusérish is a member of the Red Sail clan and a fourth generation Tsolyáni. In his fifties, heavyset and rather red in the face, he speaks in a loud voice and is none too delicate about his personal habits. In spite of this, he is a shrewd businessman, always looking to advance his clan's fortunes.

### **Shrines**

Just south of the government buildings one encounters a row of small shrines. The town the size of Sétnakh is too small to have large temples, and the wealthier clans maintain their own "house-priests" and have private shrines inside their clanhouse. As a service to the gods, however, these priests have set up public shrines, most of which consist of a brick or adobe building containing just a room or two. Elsewhere, such public shrines are scattered around the town, often near the clanhouse

where the priest serves. In Sétnakh, however, tradition dictates that they be located on “The Walk of the Shrines”.

Besides the “Marketplace of the Fourth Emperor,” “The Walk of the Shrines” is one of the busiest locations in the town. At any time of the day or night pious folk come to pray and make offerings at the shrine dedicated to their deity.

### *Süinkóretl hiTukkolén*

In his youth Süinkóretl dreamed of being an influential priest in the service of Lord Karakán. It

soon became apparent that his clumsiness would preclude such an aspiration; and he has found a place in the service of the Rising Sun clan. Now middle-aged, he is balding, overweight, and fond of hearing his own voice proclaiming the glories of Lord Karakán. He is usually to be found managing one of the small shrines on the “Walk.” He does have other income, the source of which is unknown. He is also a regular patron at the Green Bough’s Rooms of Delectable Dining.

## **For the Gamemaster**

1. The caravan may contain weapons, devices of the Ancients or the Latter Times, drugs, special medicines for various ailments, etc. Discovering what these items are and who wants them can set off a very interesting adventure.
2. The old man may be telling the truth, or he may be lying for some reason. Who he is and what his objectives are can only be found out through a clandestine investigation.
3. The merchant can be almost anyone. He may even be who he claims, a simple commercial traveller who needs protection during this trip. However, he may be transporting dangerous or illegal goods or have still other, darker motivations.

Further twists may be added: the merchant is a foreign spy; he is in the employ of an opposing faction in the current civil war; he is murdered during the trip, and one of the players is blamed for it.

The bundles the slaves carry may be exotic plants from a distant land which display odd properties when light touches them. They contain devices of the ancients. They may be ritual statues and vestments being shipped through the Tsolyáni Empire to some city in far-off Salarvyá. Are these items worthless to any buy the merchant, or could they be immensely valuable?

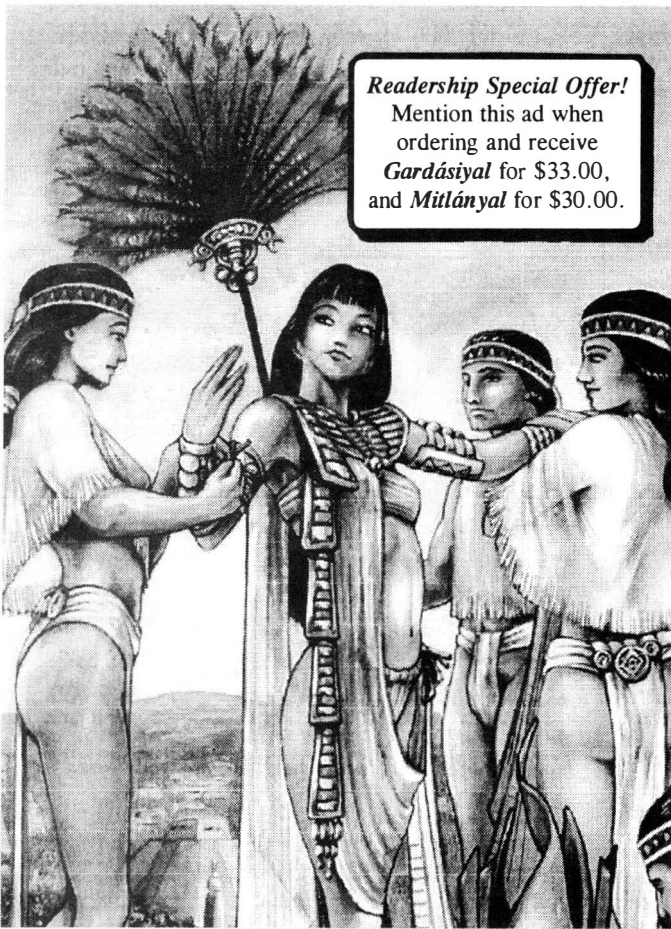
4. The room may contain a spirit, a demon, or some unknowable power that has leaked across from the Planes Beyond.

5. Who is slaughtering the chlén-beasts? A strange religious faction? A merchant who wants to destroy his rivals’ animals? A hungry alien? A great beast that dwells in the nearby forests?

For a good scenario, it should not be someone the players can easily deduce. It may be some of Prince Dhich’uné’s people attempting to stir up dissatisfaction. It may be agents of “She Who Must Not Be Named,” performing ancient, lost rituals to expand the goddess’ power in this region. This may be a plan by Prince Rereshqála and his agents. It may even be a plot by the Mradùharétokoi and/or the captain of the Sákbe road guards to strengthen his/their powerbase. Worse, there may be a faint odor of cinnamon in the air... Can it be a party of the deadly Ssú?

6. The boy may be dead, kidnapped, run off with someone, etc. This can lead into any number of adventures.
7. Bálu hiMaráshu has changed his name and appearance. It is up to the players to find his new identity and bring him to justice.
8. A famous priest of Ksárul is passing through Sétnakh on his way from Jakálla to Sokátis. When he hears of the book, he shows little interest but offers to buy it for a small sum. He is closemouthed, but people suspect he has more than a little interest in it. The book can be opened and read in various ways, and it may contain anything from recipes for Engsvanyáli pastries to a time machine that has the power to alter world history! There are others seeking the book, including some of the nonhumans of Tékumel, and players must act quickly and cleverly to avoid them.





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# Return to the World of the Empire of the Petal Throne

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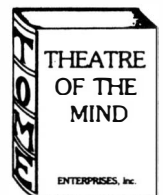
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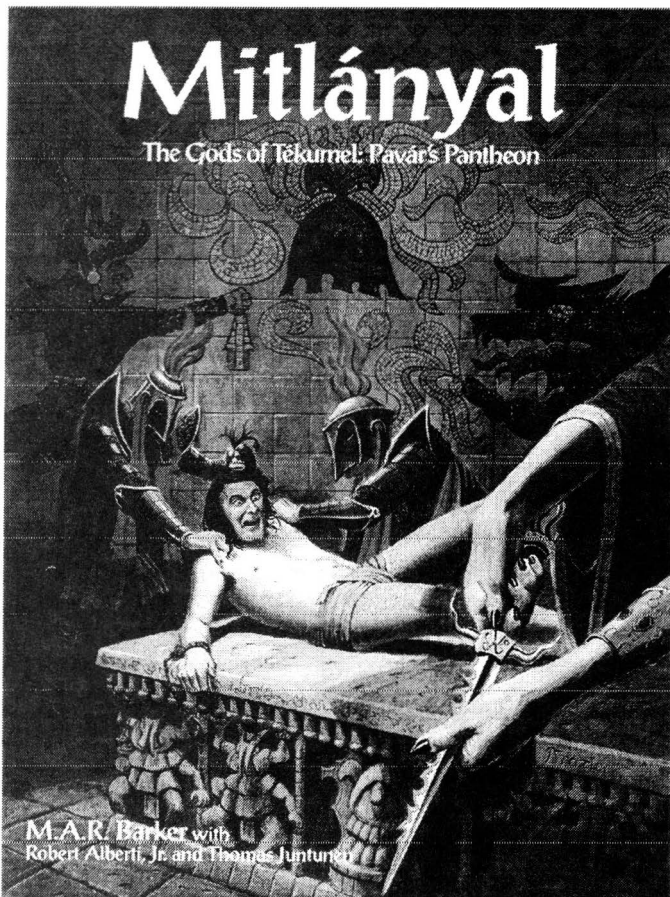
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# Mitlányal

The Gods of Tékumel: Pavár's Pantheon

M.A.R. Barker with Robert Alberti, Jr. and Thomas Juntunen

# The Gods, the World of, the Empire of the Petal Throne

## *Mitlányal - Coming in 1999!*

by Robert Alberti

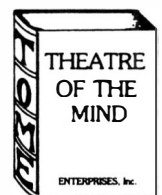
An ancient land, gods and demons and mysteries half an aeon old, an esoteric theology that leads across the millennia to other planes and dimensions no human has ever seen...

At the very end of the Bednálljan Age, when Tékumel had become sated with endless strife, a priest named Pavár dwelt upon the Isle of Gánga in the warm southern sea. His insights into the nature both of humans and of the immensely powerful other-planar beings who rule Tékumel's universe as "gods" brought about the creation of a cosmology that has endured twice ten thousand years. From his writings arise the sects and practices and doctrines that govern the societies of Tékumel today.

"Fall upon your faces," cry the priests. "Worship, for all humanity is less than a nest of Dri-ants before the almighty gods! Serve the gods, make sacrifice, erect temples, and heed their every command! Ritual is power! Dogma is all! Obedience is humanity's ultimate goal! Humility is perfection! The gods are the players; we are the pawns!"

Yet there are those who question, those who are not satisfied, those who thirst to know more...they can find out for \$40.00.

This book describes the curious religion of Pavár. If you love strange worlds and stranger philosophies, then read and enjoy.



TEK-1006

# Mitlanyál: La! Our Prayers Are Answered

by Bob Alberti



Bob Alberti gives us an excerpt from, and a discussion of, his eagerly-awaited supplement on the Tsolyáni religion

**A**ka'èla crouched behind an elaborate bench. Despite her training, her thoughts kept turning to Shána.

Arriving in Béy Sü, Aka'èla had sought the blessings of Lady Eshátl upon her mission. The lissome attendant of Lady Dilinála's Aspect, the priestess Shána Tlakotáni had captivated her. For several nights they had dined and loved. It pained Aka'èla that she would be reassigned following tonight's mission.

Aka'èla's reverie was interrupted by the arrival of her target. A small, portly aristocrat of genteel tastes, Lord Méngan did not appear threatening or resourceful, despite her clanmaster's warnings. Silently, Aka'èla drew the slender garrote between her fingers and stepped towards him.

Suddenly a dreamy lethargy swept over her. She drooped towards the floor, the garrote falling from her limp fingers. "Careless!" her internal voice chided, "Of course Lord Méngan has a bodyguard!"

Then her training took over: her left hand described a glyph in the air, and she mumbled the word of dispelling energies. Awareness returned with an invigorating shock. Before her, Lord Méngan was turning; at her back Aka'èla could feel the energy of another spell building.

With a practiced twist, the sheathed daggers called "Springing Doom" slipped into her hands. Continuing her spell-induced slump, Aka'èla tucked into a ball, crossing her arms to fling a dagger at each of her foes.

Simultaneous cries indicated her daggers had not missed. Aka'èla rolled to her feet.

Lord Méngan knelt with a dagger in the left side of his chest. Even if the wound itself was not mortal, he would soon succumb to the poison. Aka'èla turned her attention to the bodyguard.

Shána stood with fierce anger glistening in her eyes. With one glowing hand she pulled Aka'èla's dagger from her shoulder. The blade flashed and spattered into a silvery puddle on the floor.

"Marékh," whispered Aka'èla involuntarily.

"Yes, I am marékh," said Shána between her teeth, "and guardian of your prey. Although we worship the Goddess and share a love, yet you will precede your prey to the Isles."

"Then our love was a trap?" accused Aka'èla, delaying her doom and shifting her weight. Rumors claimed the marékh guarded those whose lives and decisions formed the foci upon which the fate of the many worlds hinged. Little was known of the marékh or of how one was determined to require such a guardian, but dread tales had been whispered about their skills and powers. Although one of the finer assassins of the Black Y Clan, Aka'èla had no confidence of victory against a dread marékh.

"No, no trap," said Shána, "even now my affection hinders me. But though it breaks my heart I must..."

Her statement was incomplete when Aka'èla attacked. Thus had she ever greeted her fears and her loves.

While the battle raged, Lord Méngan removed the dagger, countered its poison, and healed his punctured lung, a lengthy process complicated by the need to remain conscious. When he could breathe again, he rose to view the carnage.

His lifelong friend, Shána Tlakotáni, was dead upon the floor, covered with wounds and blood. Méngan's would-be assassin was scored with the burns and lacerations of many lethal spells, her head thrown back in a painful rictus. They were wrapped about each other like lovers, the assassin's hands clenching weapons buried in Shána's back.

Summoning his abashed guards, Lord Méngan sent for his Eye of Revivification. Shána would not remain dead very long. And by interrogating the assassin, he might learn who had targeted him for death...

*Mitlanyál* is the forthcoming book of the Gods of Tsolyánu. At first it seems a very sizable work, 210 pages of dense text as it has appeared in pre-production reading copies. Its authors are Professor M. A. R. Barker and Bob Alberti, a player in Professor Barker's weekly role-playing sessions for the last ten years.

But 210 pages are barely enough to cover the wealth of detail that has been the hallmark of all Professor Barker's work. Exploring all the rites, rituals, customs, and philosophies of the twenty gods and goddesses of the Empire of the Petal Throne in about ten pages per deity is still quite a challenge.

Each chapter follows a common format: the introduction of the deity and his or her characteristics, followed by a review of the rituals and customs common to the deity's temples around the Empire. These include modes of dress, food proscriptions, etc.

The rituals of each temple vary a lot between temples of the same god, so even *Mitlanyál*'s thorough approach can only give a flavor of what one might find in any particular temple around the Empire. For example, although all temples of Hnálla will celebrate a sunrise ritual, that ritual might vary in its execution from city to city. And there might be rituals held in one city, say a coastal town, which are not present in a city in a mountainous or desert area. To explore all these rituals in all cities would be more than even so lengthy a document as *Mitlanyál* could handle.

Following descriptions of the most common rituals is a description of the temple itself, its basic layout and other elements of its construction set forth in temple doctrine.

Politics being as important to the Tsolyáni as it is, the next section examines the various alliances and factions both in and outside the temple. Cities where the temple has broad influence are described. Legions sponsored by the temple are set forth, and clans significant to the temple are listed in brief format.

The next section describes the holidays observed by the temple across Tsolyánu. As with the rituals, the holidays vary greatly from place to place, and only those common to all or most of the empire can be described. The temple's role in the annual five-day Intercalary celebrations are set forth.

Finally, the arcana of the temple are explored, at least to the degree understood by most educated Tsolyáni. The major aspects of the deities are presented in detail. Magical spells of the temple, and demons

associated with the deity, are described from the point of view of the educated layman.

Associated with each chapter is a character sketch of some member of the faith. Some of these are very simple, examining the routine of a priest or priestess going about their temple duties — others are more colorful descriptions of persons of the faith involved in matters both exceptional and mundane. These character sketches strive to illustrate the ways in which religious faith is sometimes essential to daily life and sometimes secondary to the affairs of the moment.

By multiplying the chapter layout times twenty, and adding five introductory chapters regarding the history and culture of Tsolyánu, you have an idea of the scale of this five-year project.

The Empire of the Petal Throne presents a lush, intricate, and sometimes bewildering view of a culture quite unlike our own. By examining the faiths and philosophies of the twenty gods and goddesses of Tékumel, the authors endeavor to make the Tsolyáni and their culture more understandable to the faithful adherents of the game.

---

**...the  
Marékh  
guarded  
those whose  
lives and  
decisions  
formed the  
foci upon  
which the  
fate of the  
many worlds  
hinged...**

---

# Join the Tékumel Revival!

**Tita's House of Games**, c/o Carl Brodt, 1608 Bancroft Way, Berkeley, CA. 94703,  
*CarlBrodt@AOL.com*, is spearheading the Tékumel revival and now carries the following  
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## Empire of the Petal Throne RPG System

Empire of the Petal Throne \$19.95 (DWP) **\*\* (1) \*\***  
Western Tékumel Map \$4.95 (western half of large  
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Jakállá Map (a 22" x 23" b&w Gamescience  
reproduction) \$2.50 **\*\* (2) \*\***  
The Nightmare Maze of Jigrésh (Judges Guild  
adventure) \$5.95  
The Best of the Journal: The Pettigrew Selections  
(HOG reproduction) \$7.95

## Swords and Glory RPG System

Swords and Glory Vol. 1, Books 1-3 (HOG  
reproduction/world sourcebook) \$35.00 (includes  
the maps below) **\*\* (3) \*\***  
Tékumel Maps \$14.00 (attractive full color, 11"x17"  
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Swords & Glory, Vol. 1: Book 1 (DWP)  
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Swords & Glory, Vol. 1: Book 2 (DWP)  
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Index to S&G Sourcebook Vol. I (HOG  
reproduction, good only for Gamescience S&G  
above) \$5.95  
Swords and Glory Vol. 2 with Combat/Sorcery  
Summaries \$40.00 **\*\* (3) \*\***  
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Players Guide - visually stunning 4-color cover  
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Swords and Glory Combat/Sorcery Summaries (HOG  
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Gardásiyal \$44.00 (TOME; includes vol. 1-3  
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## Other World Information

Tsolyáni Language / 2 vols (HOG reproduction)  
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Book of Ebon Bindings (DWP) \$19.95  
Northwest Frontier Gazetteer and Maps \$10.95  
Northwest Frontier Gazetteer (HOG reproduction)  
\$7.00  
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## Miniatures Combat

Missúrn \$3.95: Miniature Rules (Imperium Games)  
Legions of the Petal Throne: Fantasy Miniatures  
Wargame Rules (HOG reproduction) \$6.50  
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Miniatures Painting Guide (HOG reproduction for  
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## Miniatures

25 mm Salarvyáni Soldiers by Robert Richardson  
\$1.25 per figure (any 2 figures=miniatures pack)

E-1	Nchéch of the Mace of Steel	E-8	Slinger
E-2	Nchéch of the Sable Sea	E-9	Sreddéq
E-3	Nchéch of the Grey Standard	E-10	Standard Bearer
E-4	Nchéch of the Silver Standard	E-11	Warrior with 2-Handed Axe
E-5	Nchéch of the Black Standard	E-12	Trumpet Player
E-6	Nchéch of the Unsheathed Blade	E-13	Light Foot Soldier with 2-Handed Axe
E-7	Archer	E-14	Unavailable
		E-15	Light Foot soldier with Axe & Spear
		E-16	Sapper

EPI303 "Skimmer Hawk" (air car) by Epicast  
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*PHD Games' Tékumel miniatures are also available through Tita's House of Games! See PHD Games' ad elsewhere in this magazine.*

## Military History and Statistics

- Deeds of the Ever-Glorious (HOG reproduction) \$9.95
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- Flamesong (DAW novel; used) \$15.00 **(5)**
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- Seal of Imperium #1 \$9.95
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# Battle Kibitzer's Guide #1: Armies of the 5 Empires

by Ken Fletcher

## World of Tekumel Battle Kibitzer's Guide #1

### ARMIES of the 5 Empires

**Tsolyanu** NATIONAL COLOR: Light blue. (Central coding dot). As a general, you would tend towards intricate, sophisticated plans, & are courageous and cool in adversity. Some of your favorite formations:



**Yan Kor** NATIONAL COLOR: Light green. As commander, you are willing to take a gamble and admire the tactics of bravery. This is good as your sub-commanders are inclined to go bravely forward without orders...



**Mu'uglavya** NATIONAL COLOR: Red. As a general, you would fight with cold-blooded fierceness, and obsessive planning. Some Mu'uglavyan generals have been known to plan themselves out of a battle...



**Livyannu** NATIONAL COLOR: Yellow. Your command would be cool and calculating, heavy on the surprise tactic and use of magic — which helps make up for outdated arms and tactical doctrine...



**Salavyya** NATIONAL COLOR: Black. Yours would be a more reckless command — showy and prone to an impulsive response — and easily enraged. Some of your fellow generals have been known to start wars without knowing about it. Some favorite formations:



There are other, smaller nations that may be represented on the battlefield. Some of the nations hire mercenary units from smaller human and non-human nations. **GADARDALIKOI** miniature battles are fought with 1 miniature figure representing 100 men (in most cases). Battlefield scale: 1 meter = 1000 meters (1 km).

This World of Tekumel was created & is described by M.A.R. Barker.

**GADARDALIKOI** © 1982 Jeff Berry & M.A.R. Barker.  
This page © 1982 Ken Fletcher AUGUST 1982

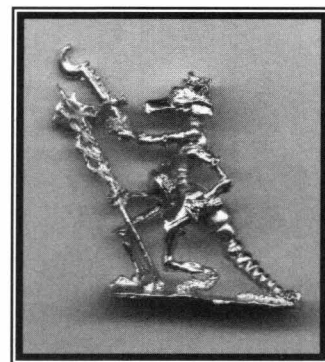
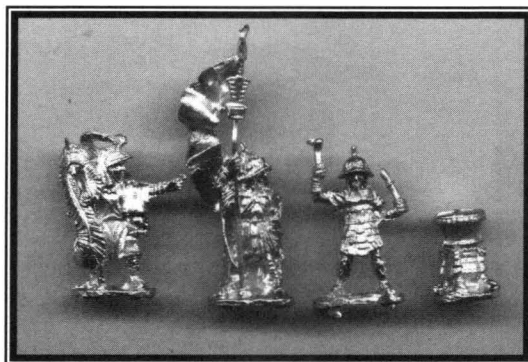
Editor & Opinion-expressor:  
Vidliáche hi Sesmúga  
Black Stone Clark

The **Battle Kibitzer's Guides** were originally distributed at GenCon in 1982 to people watching Tékumel miniatures events.

**Ken Fletcher** has graciously allowed us to reprint them—some of the rarest of all Tékumel material—for your enjoyment and information.

Look for one in each of the next three issues of **The Seal**.

# Tékumel Miniatures



For a catalog contact  
**PHD Games, Inc.**  
P.O. Box 177  
Anderson, IN 46011

PHDGames1@AOL.com

## Contributors

**Bob Alberti** of Minneapolis, Minnesota, is the author of *Mitlanyál*, the forthcoming book on the gods of the Empire of the Petal Throne. When not gaming as part of Professor Barker's Thursday Night Tékumel group, he is a husband and father of three children, and is a computer consultant specializing in Internet connectivity and security.

**Patrick Brady** of London, England, is an academic neuropsychologist who says that he spends an implausible amount of time organizing and running role playing games. His *Hall of Stone* campaign is coming up to its first decade with, amazingly enough, some of the original players' characters still alive.

**Ken Fletcher** and **Giovanna Fregni** of Minneapolis, Minnesota, both do freelance illustration work and share a studio in St. Paul, MN.

Giovanna's primary source of income comes from making jewelry and gemcutting, and Ken works at Uncle Hugo's Science Fiction Bookstore on weekends and does computer graphic work. Both are part of Prof. Barker's Thursday Night gaming group.

**Theron Goudeau** is currently working as a purchasing agent for a Richmond, California, software firm. He first learned of Tékumel through back issues of *Dragon* magazine, and purchased the Different Worlds sourcebooks and the reprint of *Empire of the Petal Throne* in 1987.

**Zane Healy** of Aloha, OR, is a UNIX Systems Administrator of a Fortune 500 company. Zane has been "into" *Empire of the Petal Throne* since about 1994 when he chanced across the Different Worlds reprints of the *Swords and Glory* worldbook in a local game store. Since then, he has read everything on Tékumel that he could get his hands on and finally decided to try his hand at writing.

**James Maliszewski** of Scarborough, Ontario, Canada, is a Ph.D. candidate completing his dissertation on innate ideas in the philosophies of Locke and Leibniz. He has been a fan of Tékumel for many years, but only recently returned to it after having been put off by every other fantasy setting. The article is an outgrowth of detailing the city of Khirgár for his own campaign in the northwest of the Imperium.

**David Peters** of La Crescenta, California, works for Apollo Automotive Warehouse as a customer service/receiving clerk. He became interested in *Empire of the Petal Throne* after he purchased the original boxed set from TSR a couple of days after his high school graduation.

**Stephen Pisani** of San Pablo, California, is a courier for Access Courier Inc, a husband for ten years and a father for five. The idea for the article on N'lüss came in response to some of his players who were unfamiliar with and alienated by gaming in Tsolyánu. Using the N'lüss setting provided plenty of action with less fear of accidental character (and gamemaster) social suicide.

**Brett Slocum** has included a little biographical data in this article on GURPS-compatible character development for Tékumel. (How is that line to get you to turn to his article?)

**Trevlin Utz**, the cover artist for the *Seal*, resides in Richmond, Virginia, and is an artist in "real life." He began role-playing in Tékumel years ago and got his first major professional assignment doing the box's back cover and interior art for *Gardásiyal*.

**Joe Saul** of Ann Arbor, Michigan, is the layout person for and my constant adviser concerning the *Seal*. He is the organizer of the U•Con Tékumel Track, and is working on several Tékumel-related projects. In "real life," Joe is an information technology policy consultant, with a BS, a Certificate in Gaming and Simulation Studies, and a JD from the University of Michigan.

Your lowly editor is a vice president at a major commercial bank in California, and gained his appreciation of Tékumel as an elaborate and exciting gaming world from his many Internet customers. Thanks to each of you.

—Carl Brodt

P.S. A final thanks goes to **Shawn Bond** of Richland, Washington, who suggested the name of "Seal of the Imperium" as the title of this fanzine.



# T É K U M E L

THE WORLD OF THE PETAL THRONE

WELCOME to a world as

complex and fascinating

as our own, but unlike

anything you have ever

experienced.

Welcome to Tékumel.

[www.tekumel.com](http://www.tekumel.com)

A world of intricate cultures, fascinating alien races, vivid personalities—the life's work of Professor M.A.R. Barker. *Tékumel*. Setting for the second roleplaying system released after the original *Dungeons & Dragons*. *Tékumel*. Steeped in history, hoary tradition, clans and social systems, myriad flora and fauna. There is a proverb for every time and place, several complete languages and their beautiful scripts, and over thirty-two forms of the personal pronoun 'you' in Tsolyáni. [www.tekumel.com](http://www.tekumel.com) is the visually stunning home of The World of the Petal Throne. Pore over the world's history, view beautiful images of the nonhuman races, follow intricate maps, download and play game scenarios, and join the Tékumel resurgence on the web.

