

# The .. Excellent Travelling Volume

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ISSUE NO. 9

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

## INTRODUCTION

Gaming conventions have been around for as long as the hobby, but they've never really appealed to me. Even though the Origins Game Fair started in Baltimore, my hometown, and was often held there during my younger days, I only ever attended it once, in 1991. Even then, I attended primarily as a means to meet up with *Traveller* fans I'd met via 'zines and early online services like GENie. Ten years later, I attended my first – and only – GenCon and that I did because, at the time, I was doing a lot of professional work as a game writer and felt it would be a good chance to meet representatives of the companies with whom I was doing business. In both cases, I found the conventions frustratingly large in size.

Last year, at the invitation of a friend, I attended Gamehole Con in Madison, Wisconsin. I was initially wary, but, after assurances from multiple people that it was a solid, “human-sized” convention, unlike Origins or GenCon, I decided to take a chance and go. I was very impressed and had a great time, so much so that I returned this past year, making it the first time I've ever attended the same convention twice. I have every intention of returning next year; I'll probably be refereeing a *Tékumel* game or two. If anyone reading this decides to go, too, drop me a line and I'll make a point of trying to meet you in person while we're there.

I mention this for a couple of reasons. First, while I was at the con, I did have the chance to meet a few readers of *The Excellent Travelling Volume* and that's always a pleasure. Being able to put faces to names and to engage fellow fans of *Tékumel* on a personal level is a great joy for me; I wish I could do it more often. Second, among the fans I met was Jeff Dee, who's probably best known for his time as an artist at TSR and as the co-designer of the superhero roleplaying game, *Villains & Vigilantes*. Jeff is also the designer of *Béthorm: The Plane of Tékumel*, which he first published in 2014 and has been supporting ever since. I had the pleasure of playing in a session of *Béthorm* refereed by Jeff. I played Kalmúru hi-

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Briyénu, an administrative priest of Hnálla from Katalál and had much fun doing so. If you haven't checked out *Béthorm* or its supplementary materials, particularly *The Kúrt Hills Atlas*, I highly recommend you do so.

Finally, I also had the opportunity to spend some time with a number of the founders and early pioneers of our hobby. At one point, someone pointed to an older gentleman, seated on the ground, surrounded by miniatures of little sailing ships, and said, "That's Mike Carr and they're playing *Don't Give Up the Ship!*" One of his players was Dave Megarry, a player in Dave Arneson's Blackmoor campaign and the designer of the board game *Dungeon!*

After the game was over, I approached them both, since both men had played a role in my early experiences in the hobby. I played Megarry's *Dungeon!* before I ever played *Dungeons & Dragons* and Carr's adventure module, *In Search of the Unknown*, came with my beloved J. Eric Holmes edited *D&D Basic Set*. I thanked both men for the fun I'd had playing their creations and stated, without irony, that, were it not for them, I probably wouldn't have been at the con, nearly forty years after I first started roleplaying. They thanked me for my kind words and chatted with me for a while.

I came away from Gamehole Con feeling very glad I'd spoken to them both and told them how much their work had meant to me. I'd like to encourage others to do the same with game designers and writers whose works have given them joy, should they get the chance to do so.

James Maliszewski,  
December 2018

# The EXcellent Traveling Volume



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# Pygmy Folk and Swamp Folk Characters

## (Additions and Changes)

In my House of Worms *Empire of the Petal Throne* campaign, the Pygmy Folk of Yán Kór played a small but memorable role. In preparing for the sessions in which the player characters interacted with them, I made some notes to aid me in creating Pygmy Folk non-player characters. Later in the campaign, as the same characters were making their way toward the Achgé Peninsula of the Southern Continent (see issue #8 of *The Excellent Travelling Volume* for details), they encountered a Mu'ugalavyáni warship whose crew consisted largely of Swamp Folk. Again I gave some brief thought to how best to generate Swamp Folk NPCs under the *EPT* rules. What follows are expansions of my original notes with an eye toward facilitating the playing of either Pygmy Folk or Swamp Folk characters.

Though much of this article derives from information in *Swords & Glory, Volume 1: Tékumel Source Book* and other writings by Professor Barker, some of it is my own invention and should not be considered an “official” addition to the Tékumel setting. It is nevertheless hoped that it will not only prove useful to *EPT* players and referees with an interest in generating non-human characters, but also as a reminder that creating new material for one’s personal Tékumel campaign is not “wrong,” but, in fact, to be encouraged.

### 310. ALIGNMENT

Both the Pygmy Folk (or *Ninúnyal* to the Tsolyáni and *Nyéna* to the Yán Koryáni) and Swamp Folk (*Hegléthyal* to the Tsolyáni and *A'láthish* to the Mu'ugalavyáni) have complex relationships to the alignments of Stability and Change. Their native religious systems (see Sec. 2100 below) make no use of such concepts. However, when dwelling among humans, both may join human sects and thus align themselves with either Stability or Change. This is especially true among the Swamp Folk who serve in the Mu'ugalavyáni military and thus adopt the worship of either Vimúhla or Hřsh (see issue #7 of *The Excellent Travelling Volume*).

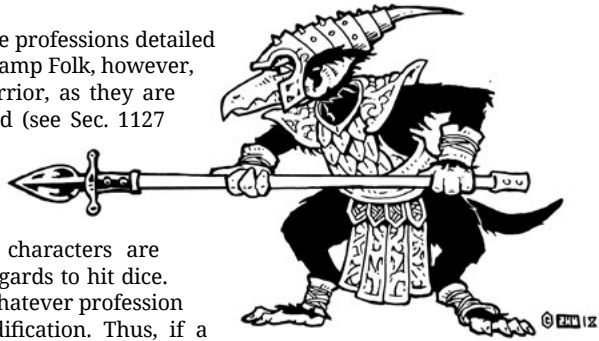
### 320. CHOICE OF SEX

The Pygmy Folk have three sexes: males (who account for 55% of their population), females (15%), and hermaphrodites (30%). Hermaphrodites are externally indistinguishable from females. This third sex has a role in reproduction, but produces no offspring. Pygmy Folk society is female-oriented, with females holding most positions of authority. Consequently, settlements of these beings are usually governed by a council of female elders.

On the other hand, Swamp Folk have only two sexes: males (who account for 70% of their population) and females (30%). Their society practices near-equality between the two sexes. However, there are a number of tasks associated with each sex (e.g. war for males and healing for females) though such arrangements vary from settlement to settlement and often reflect the influence of nearby human cultures.

### 330. PROFESSION

Pygmy Folk can choose any of the professions detailed in *Empire of the Petal Throne*. Swamp Folk, however, are limited to the choice of warrior, as they are unable to cast spells of any kind (see Sec. 1127 below for further details).



### 710. HIT DICE

Pygmy Folk and Swamp Folk characters are treated just like humans with regards to hit dice. That is, they use the hit dice of whatever profession they have chosen without modification. Thus, if a Pygmy Folk opts to be a priest at Level I, she has 1 hit die, at Level II 1+3 hit dice, and so on. The same is true of Swamp Folk.

### 900. STARTING THE GAME

Despite not being human, Pygmy Folk and Swamp Folk generally do not start the game any differently than human characters.

### 1127. DESCRIPTIONS OF NONHUMAN RACES ENCOUNTERED

Both Pygmy Folk and Swamp Folk characters possess unique racial abilities that separate them from human beings:

**Pygmy Folk:** Members of this race can see in the dark and their hearing at close range is even better than that of a Pé Chóí, allowing them to detect inaudible creatures within 60” with a 90% chance of success. Their hearing also enables them to hear through stone up to one foot in thickness. Because of their natural climbing and swimming skills, all Level I Pygmy Folk characters begin play possessing one of the following Group II original skills: Mountaineer or Swimmer-Diver. Because of their small size, they suffer a penalty of -1 to hit and damage when wielding non-magical weapons. This original skill is *in addition* to any others the character may possess as a result of rolling on the table in Sec. 420.

**Swamp Folk:** As noted in Sec. 710, Swamp Folk cannot cast spells of any kind, but this does not prevent their use of most magical items. They possess an innate ability to sense “wrongness,” such as changes in direction, tunnels that curve or slant upwards or downwards, and interdimensional nexus points. This ability is 80% effective within a range of 30“. They are natural swimmers, which grants all Level I Swamp Folk characters the Group II original skill Swimmer-Diver. Like Pygmy Folk, this original skill is *in addition* to any others the character may possess as a result of rolling on the table in Sec. 420.

### 2100. THE GODS, COHORTS, AND DIVINE INTERVENTION

The Pygmy Folk and Swamp Folk both adopt one of Pavár’s deities if they reside in human lands. In their own lands, the Pygmy Folk worship one or more of their own innumerable deities, consisting of three separate but interrelated pantheons.

These gods range in power and importance from the beloved and universally revered Burrowing Mother to the less popular Striker-from-Below to others barely-remembered. Referees are encouraged to create whatever Pygmy Folk deities they require for their adventures and campaigns, since their numbers are vast and differ from region to region.

The Swamp Folk have a similarly complicated pantheon of native deities made up of a pantheon of “high gods” who govern/embody concepts such as “Light,” “Water,” or “Thought” and a bewildering collection of “little gods” who range in importance from minor spirits propitiated with food and drink to great heroes of the past who have acquired immortality through their deeds and are thus esteemed as models of virtue. Again, referees are encouraged to create their own Swamp Folk deities as required by the needs of their campaigns.

### **Pygmy Folk and Swamp Folk Names**

The Pygmy Folk’s native tongue is nearly impossible for humans to pronounce, given that it consists of hisses and screeches intermixed with ultrasonic overtones for which special vocal apparatus are required. As such, most Pygmy Folk “words” known to humans are, at best, very rough approximations; the same is true of names. Consequently, Pygmy Folk who live among humans either use similar approximations of their actual names or adopt Yán Koryáni or Tsolyáni names. Sometimes, though, they mistakenly use ordinary or even inappropriate words for names. For example, a Pygmy Folk who goes by *Washkén Yiráutok* (“dirty thief” in Tsolyáni) is probably not joking, though the person who told him it was an honourable Tsolyáni name probably was.

A similar problem occurs with native Swamp Folk names, which are hard (but not impossible) for humans to pronounce properly. Consequently, these beings often adopt – or are given – sobriquets such as “Tall Crest,” “Four Legs,” or “Loud One” in the local human language. There are always exceptions, of course, especially among Swamp Folk who have proven themselves and risen high within human society. In such cases, they may use more “normal” human names, though this is uncommon.

### **Pygmy Folk and Swamp Folk Clans**

Neither the Pygmy Folk nor Swamp Folk have clans among their own people and instead employ different social arrangements. For example, Pygmy Folk burrows are usually run by a council of female elders, as noted above. When living among humans, though, both races sometimes seek out clan membership. This is more common among the Swamp Folk, who are well regarded in Mu’ugalavyá for their nautical skills and thus make attractive candidates for adoption into certain human clans, particularly those engaged in maritime activities. The Pygmy Folk have a reputation, even in Yán Kór, for being greedy and capricious, which generally makes them bad candidates for such an honour. Of course, comparatively few Pygmy Folk, even those who regularly interact with humans, seek out clan membership so the situation works out well for everyone.

### **Homelands**

The Pygmy Folk hail from the northern plains of Yán Kór, where they dwell underground in burrow-like towns. Despite their reputation they *are* in fact friendly

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toward human beings. In Yán Kór, they have earned a measure of respect for their military skills, sponsoring two *Gurék* (Legions) in service to Baron Áld. Furthermore, a band of Pygmy Folk was responsible for capturing the Tsolyáni general Bazhán hiSayúncha, who had impaled the Baron's beloved mistress Yilrána before the gates of Ke'ér. This act alone has raised the esteem of the race in the Baron's eyes and many influential people in Yán Kór. The Swamp Folk, meanwhile, hail from several enclaves in the Púru ab Sharár Swamps of Mu'ugalavyá to the northwest of the city of Khéiris. The Mu'ugalavyáni of the region think well of them.

### Pygmy Folk and Swamp Folk Legions

Both the Pygmy Folk and Swamp Folk serve proudly in the militaries of the human empires in which they dwell. The Pygmy Folk sponsor a medium infantry band in Yán Kór that are well known for their skill in battle. Known as the Band of the Unmerciful Ones, they are divided into two groups. The first, stationed at hex 5828, consists of 6000 soldiers wielding swords and a variety of polearms and 3000 archers. The second, stationed at hex 5829, consists of 5000 soldiers wielding swords and 3000 light infantry with blowguns (a favourite weapon of the Pygmy Folk).

The Swamp Folk, meanwhile, serve as marines in three Mu'ugalavyáni sea legions. The first is Legion I (called "Tide of Death"), consisting of 1000 humans and 4000 Swamp Folk. The second is Legion II (called "Blood-Sail"), consisting of 1000 humans and 2000 Swamp Folk. A Swamp Folk commandant known as Purple Crest serves as its leader. The third is Legion III (called "Spear Prow"), consisting of 1500 humans and 1500 Swamp Folk. Its commandant is a Swamp Folk known as Steel First. While none of these legions serves on the front line, all are well regarded by the Mu'ugalavyáni.





# Expanded Original Skills

## (Additions and Changes)

Section 420 of *Empire of the Petal Throne* details “original skills,” which is to say the abilities and expertise that a character might acquire during childhood and adolescence, prior to the start of play. These skills are divided into three categories – plebeian, skilled, and noble – based on the amount of effort and, especially, time required to learn them. Thus, a “noble” (or Group III) skill is not one that only an aristocrat could learn but one that is sufficiently complex and time-consuming that only someone with the *resources and leisure* of an aristocrat could pick up. I, therefore, propose a renaming of the groups to Elementary, Intermediate, and Advanced.

I have found the original skills, especially when used in conjunction with the Chances of Spells Working Table in Sec. 434 of *EPT* to simulate their odds of success, work quite well in play. However, there are some gaps in the three skill groupings in addition to a few oddities in terms of placement (e.g. why is Swimmer-Diver a Group II skill?). Inspired by the fuller treatment of skills in both *Swords & Glory* and *Gardásiyal*, I offer the following revised listing of original skills, along with, where necessary, some brief notes describing the function of the skills. Beware: I have not yet tested this

### Group I: Elementary

Baker  
 Barber  
 Basket Weaver  
 Bootmaker  
 Carpenter  
 Cook  
 Dyer  
 Farmer  
 Fisherman  
 Fletcher  
 Hunter  
 Mason  
 Merchant  
 Miller  
 Miner  
 Modern Language  
 Mountaineer  
 Potter  
 Rope and Net Maker  
 Sailor  
 Swimmer-Diver  
 Tailor  
 Tanner  
 Weaver

### Group II: Intermediate

Animal-Trainer  
 Bird-Trainer  
 Carpet-Maker  
 Dancer  
 Entertainer  
 Glass-Blower  
 Jeweller-Goldsmith  
 Lawyer  
 Modern Language  
 Moneylender  
 Musician  
 Paper-Ink Maker  
 Perfumer  
 Physician  
 Scribe-Accountant  
 Ship-Builder  
 Ship-Captain  
 Slaver  
 Smith-Armourer  
 Wheelright  
 Wine-Maker

### Group III: Advanced

Alchemist  
 Ancient or Modern Language  
 Artist-Sculptor  
 Assassin-Spy-Tracker  
 Astronomer-Navigator  
 Author  
 Botanist  
 Courtesan/Don Juan  
 Engineer-Architect  
 Etiquette and Courtly Manners  
 Geologist  
 Mathematician  
 Orator  
 Physician  
 Poet  
 Scholar

revision to Sec. 420 in my own campaigns, so it may need further tweaking before it is fully ready for use. Should any readers make use of this proposed revision, whether successfully or unsuccessfully, I would love to hear about it.

## NEW SKILL DESCRIPTIONS

**Ancient Language and Modern Language:** Each grants knowledge of one of the languages (or another at the referee's discretion, see below) listed in Sec. 420 of the *EPT* rulebook. Acquisition of these skills from either the Group II or Group III lists also includes the ability to read and write the language as well.

**Entertainer:** This skill has several subdivisions: acrobat, juggler, puppeteer, storyteller, and singer among others. The player must choose one of these as the focus of his character's skill. In all other respects, this skill is much like *Dancer* or *Musician*.

**Etiquette and Courtly Manners:** This skill represents knowledge of polite language, gestures, ceremonies, and honorifics, all of which are needed to succeed socially in the upper classes.

**Lawyer:** This skill grants knowledge of the civil laws of one's own nation.

**Moneylender:** This skill grants knowledge of rates, interest, speculation, prices and commodities, and foreign currencies.

## ANCIENT AND MODERN LANGUAGES

Section 420 of the *EPT* rulebook provides a list of ancient and modern languages available to the characters. In my own Tsolyáni-based campaign, I have modified and expanded the list as follows:

### Ancient Languages

Ancient Mihállí  
 Bednálljan Salarvyáni  
 Classical Mu'ugalavyáni  
 Classical Tsolyáni  
 Duruób  
 Engsvanyáli  
 Llyáni  
 Sunúz  
 Thu'úsa  
 Tongue of the Lords of Worms  
 Tongue of the Priests of Ksáru  
 Tsáqw  
 Zna'yé

### Modern Languages

Ghatóni  
 Jannuyáni  
 Livyáni  
 Lo'orúnankh  
 Milumanayáni  
 Mu'ugalavyáni  
 N'lüssa  
 Pecháni  
 Sa'á Allaqiyáni  
 Salarvyáni  
 Tká Mihállí  
 Tsolyáni  
 Yán Koryáni

## ANOTHER OPTION

An additional – and, again, untested – option is to allow characters who acquire further original skills as described in Sec. 421 of the *EPT* rulebook to choose a skill from one of the lower groups instead. For example, if Grujúng, upon attaining Level IV, succeeds in attaining a Group III skill, his player could instead opt for a Group I or Group II skill instead if that is his preference.

# The Ni'ikmá Valley

The Ni'ikmá Valley is a small geographical region within the Plain of Towers, located to the far west of Mu'ugalavyá in hex 4702. Strictly speaking, the name refers only to the southern third of the hex nearest the Qelqái Range of mountains. However, travellers to the region – which are few – have taken to using it more broadly under the influence of the people who live there (see below).

The Ni'ikmá Valley is a location I created for use in several sessions of my Mu'ugalavyáni *Empire of the Petal Throne* campaign (nominally based in Gaschné). The characters, members of the mercantile Dust of Gold clan and their retainers, were following rumours of an ancient and powerful city-state called Uruшыésha. The city reputedly lay far to the west, beyond the Plain of Towers. In seeking out Uruшыésha, they stumbled across the Ni'ikmá Valley, where they stayed to re-supply and explore with the help of the locals, some of whom eventually joined their band.

Nearly all of what follows is my own invention, though, as always, I looked to Professor Barker's published writings for inspiration. Referees are encouraged to use it either as written or as inspiration in creating their own locales. Each hex on the maps of Téकुmel is 100 Tsán across, which translates to 82.8 miles. That is *a lot* of real estate, meaning that any single hex could hold a great many significant locales and sites for adventures. The Ni'ikmá Valley demonstrates one possible way to make use of a single hex, but there are certainly others.

## HISTORY

The Plain of Towers, in which the Ni'ikmá Valley is located, gets its name from the remnants of the great starships of the Ancients that stand empty upon it. Exactly why there are so many abandoned starships in this region of Téकुmel is a mystery that few contemplate, as the true nature of the “towers” is not well known. There are a few sages in Mu'ugalavyá and especially Livyánu who know more than most, but even they have limited knowledge, since the starships long ago ceased to function. Moreover, the Plain of Towers holds little else of obvious interest and is therefore not a frequent destination for expeditions.

That said, there are many ruins from the Latter Times in and around the Plain of Towers (see pp. 26–31 for a small example of one). Likewise, travellers sometimes report finding crumbling rings of monoliths set high upon hills in the region. These are reminiscent of the so-called “Llyán's houses” associated with the mighty empire of Llyán of Tsámra, but there is no definitive evidence that the Llyáni ever ruled over this region, so this may be a case of parallel development. On the other hand, it is clear that the Dragon Warriors once roamed the area. The ruins of truncated pyramids can be found here and there, suggesting the worship of fiery Lord Vimúhla even this far west, though, again, records supporting this are scant.

The First Imperium was renowned for both its extent and its explorations across the face of Téकुmel. While it is clear that the Engsvanyáli never formally claimed territory west of Mu'ugalavyá – the lack of Sákbe roads beyond Gashchné would seem

to prove this – there are many reliable historical accounts of scouts and scholars ranging far beyond it. For example, Dikúnim Misakhán, who lived during the reign of the Priestking Dhárumesh Mssá III (1,979—2,010 A.P.), wrote extensively of his travels beyond the western frontier of Engsvanyálu and he was far from the only one to do so. In the Five Empires, the scholarly consensus, to the extent that there is one, concurs with the popular notion that Engsvanyáli explorers travelled the length and breadth of Tékumel and that, had the empire not fallen, it would one day have ruled the entire world.

In any event, the Plain of Towers today shows little obvious evidence of ever having been home to any cultures or societies of high sophistication. Its sparse population is mostly primitive (see below) by the standards of the Five Empires. There are also no permanent settlements of any size. Instead, it is a desolate, inhospitable place, reputedly the home of ghosts and equally frightening beasts that holds little of potential interest to the civilized folk of the Five Empires. However, the Ni'ikmá Valley, as described hereafter, is evidence that the common conception of the Plain of Towers is not completely correct.



## ENVIRONMENTAL NOTES

The Ni'ikmá Valley possesses a dry climate with significant seasonal temperature variations. Summers are hot (33–38° C), while winters are mild (18–20° C). The valley receives approximately 300 mm of rain each year, but much of that is lost due to the overall warmth of the region. Most of the rain comes during the months of Langála (La'ángla to the Mu'ugalavyáni) and Fésru (Fa'ásha), which constitute the monsoon season. This season can last into the month of Firasúl (Fersála) and brings with it higher than normal humidity, sudden thunderstorms with spectacular lightning, and flash flooding.

Like the Dry Bay of Ssu'úm (see issue #6 of *The Excellent Travelling Volume*), the Plain of Towers is a magically “barren zone.” Within it, neither spells nor technological devices of the Ancients (e.g. eyes) function. In game terms, this means that spells already memorized can potentially be cast successfully, but, once cast, cannot be regained until the caster leaves the barren zone. Likewise, technological/magical devices work once, if they have charges of some kind, after which they, too, cease to function while in the area. If a device lacks charges, it does not function at all. This applies to magical arms and armour as well; their bonuses are nil while in the barren zone.

The hex containing the Ni'ikmá Valley lies at the very edge of the barren zone, which means that only some of its territory, specifically the northeastern third of Hex 4702, is so affected. In the rest of the valley, magic functions normally. Unsurprisingly, Mu'ugalavyáni and other explorers sometimes make use of the Ni'ikmá Valley as a base from which to launch their expeditions into the Plain of Towers. For this reason, some of the local tribesmen (see below) have learned to speak Mu'ugalavyáni. Travellers to the area should, therefore, consider bringing a speaker of that tongue in order to improve their chance of communicating with them.

## CULTURAL NOTES

The people of the Ni'ikmá Valley call themselves the Nixkámi. They speak a non-Khishan language called Pavká. According to the Mu'ugalavyáni scholar Buyut-lénish Khinángin, who has spent considerable time in the region, Pavká bears some resemblance to Qùótl languages of M'mórcha and Nmartúsha. If true, it lends some credence to legends of the Nixkámi, who claim to have originally dwelt “over the mountains” (i.e. the Qelqái Range) before being “called” to the Valley by “the Lords of the Sky” (see below).

The Nixkámi social structure is tribal rather than clan-based, though the members of most tribes are related, if only distantly. Leadership of a tribal consisted of an elected principal chief (or *Khóchma*), who shares responsibility with male elders, war chiefs, and shamans (see below). The Nixkámi are not democratic in their decision making, like the Milumanayáni but consensus is important. A chief rarely acts without the consent of a strong majority of his advisors except in extreme circumstances and, even then, he demonstrates circumspection and prudence.

Coming from outside the Engsvanyáli cultural sphere, there is no Aridáni tradition among the Nixkámi, whose women are generally subservient to their men. Women nevertheless retain the right to choose their husbands and divorce them for any reason (men also have the latter right). Furthermore, unmarried women (whether never-married or merely without a husband at present, including widows) are permitted to take up the vocation of hunting, in imitation of the goddess Vri'á (see below), whom myths often depict engaged in that activity.

Facial tattoos are part of coming of age in one's tribe. Males receive linear tattoos, each one unique but incorporating elements of those borne by one's male ancestors and relatives. Females receive circular tattoos, again based on those of one's ancestors. Both sexes wear their hair long, though women who have given birth typically bind their hair with leather bands to indicate their status.

The Nixkámi survive by herding, hunting, and fishing with a limited amount of agriculture (consisting mostly of a leafy cereal called *mrúchru*). Herding is primarily of the Nyár (see p. 15), which is valuable for its meat as well as for its particularly sturdy hide. Among the Nixkámi, crafted items become more valuable with age and use. These heirlooms, often patched and repaired, are passed down from father to son and mother to daughter and, in doing so, acquire an almost magical aura about them. To possess a cloak or a bow owned by an ancestor is a sign of status in the tribe.

Clothing among the Nixkámi consists primarily of simple loincloths or wrapped skirts for men or tabards for women made from hides or cured leather. Over the top of these undergarments cloaks and wraps of various kinds are commonly worn, especially when travelling abroad within the Plain of Towers. Many cloaks include peaked hoods to protect against the rays of Tuléng. Beads, bones, and fringes are used as decoration. Footwear is unknown amongst the Nixkámi.

Materially, the Nixkámi are very primitive when compared to the peoples of the Five Empires. As already noted, Nyár leather and bone is used extensively. Weapons are constructed mostly of wood and stone, sometimes using Nyár sinews as thongs. Metal is, of course, unknown, but Chlén hide is equally foreign to these people. Consequently, more sophisticated weapons are valued as trade goods and the few Mu'ugalavyáni travellers to the region have gained the goodwill of the Nixkámi by offering them Chlén hide equipment.



The religion of the Ni'ikmá Valley is a good example of those found in many other parts of the Plain of Towers, where legends of the aforementioned Lords of the Sky are prominent. The Lords are believed to be the builders of the original towers, who will one day return to Téकुmel and reward their followers.

In the case of the Nixkámi, they revere five Lords by name, the greatest of which is Todái Jiósh, called “the Sky Father.” From a Tsolyáni perspective, he appears to be an amalgam of Hnálla and Karakán with aspects of Thúmis. His wife is Imká and is not unlike Lady Avánthe. Their tempestuous and often destructive daughter is Vri'á, whom the Tsolyáni would view as a combination of Vimúhla and Dlamélish. The ruler of the dead is called U'únaja and is viewed with fear. He possesses characteristics of both Sárku and Hrü'ú. Finally, there is Nióki, a trickster god said to be “from elsewhere” and who, despite his capricious and sometimes cruel jests, possesses much secret knowledge. He would seem to be an analog of Ksáruł.

The Nixkámi have no priests as such, but shamans (see *The Excellent Travelling Volume #1*) serve a similar role. Shamans are politically influential and frequently sit on the tribal council, in large part because of their role in interpreting omens. By Tsolyáni standards, the Nixkámi are very superstitious and see significance in all sorts of natural occurrences (e.g. winds, phases of the moon, animal cries, etc.). Being able to “read” these signs is vital to a shaman's role. There are no temples or shrines among the Nixkámi. Instead, they worship the Lords of the Sky at towers associated with one or more of them, including artificial ones built in imitation of the ancient ones. Shamans may be male or female, though males are generally more common.

The Nixkámi live in small villages of several hundred people, often near rivers and other bodies of water along the southwestern edges of the Plain of Towers. In general, the villages get along with one another. Conflict between them is rare, though it does occur on occasion, typically over grazing lands. In the face of a greater threat, villages will band together, even appointing a war chief to coordinate the efforts of their combined forces.

## PLACES OF NOTE

What follows is a brief gazetteer of some of the settlements and points of interest in the Ni'ikmá Valley. Naturally, this gazetteer is far from exhaustive, but it should give referees a good idea of the kinds of things that could be encountered in this region of the Plain of Towers. Referees are, therefore, encouraged to use it as a springboard for creating their own locales. In addition, they should feel free to add further sites as the hex becomes better explored.

### Field of Churúrantin

This expanse of clear terrain is named for an ancient Nixkámi hero, who bested the armies of dread U'únaja (see above) with the aid of a magic weapon given to him by Nióki. Despite this, the field is still said to be the home of ghosts and other restless spirits.

### Khú'a

A Nixkámi village of 400 whose inhabitants are primarily herders and hunters.

### Lake Gashkúna

A deep freshwater lake that is reputed to have ruins beneath its surface.

### Lake Washrán

A small freshwater lake.

### Nimá'a

A Nixkámi village of 600 whose inhabitants are primarily fishermen.

### Qelqái Range

A series of high mountains that run along the southern portion of the hex and separate it from the Unknown Forest farther to the south. Nixkámi elders claim that their people crossed these mountains when they fled their original homeland long ago.

### River of Stones

This cool, swift river is so called because of its very rocky bed.

### Ruins of Tarissú

The Nixkámi know little of this ruined structure perched high in the central mountains of the region. Their elders say a magician named Tarissú built it long ago and feuded with the sorcerer of the Fallen Tower (see below) before disappearing himself. However, strange lights are sometimes observed on the mountaintop, suggesting Tarissú or one of his otherworldly servitors might still inhabit the ruins.

### Sunál

A Nixkámi village of 400 whose inhabitants are herders and hunters.

## Tekhái Forest

This small wooded area is said to be blessed by the trickster god Nióki, who sometimes hides those fleeing unjust persecution within. Of course, sometimes Nióki also keeps those whom he hides for himself – and they are never seen again.

## The Fallen Tower

As its name suggests, this ruin is a collapsed tower. Unlike those found elsewhere in this region of Tékumel, this tower is neither an ancient starship nor an imitation of it constructed by local tribesmen. Instead, it is said to have been the dwelling place of a sorcerer known variously as Te'éksa or Thékسا, who visited other worlds from this spot. Even now, the Nixkámí believe it is possible to follow in the sorcerer's footsteps if one explores the ruins.

## The Sunken Sanctum

This structure is described in greater detail on pp. 26–31.

## Tomb of Chormórmira

Chormórmira was a great chieftain who ruled this area before the Nixkámí came here. His vast tomb lies in the northern foothills and none dare disturb it lest they bring the wrath of the Lords of the Sky upon them.





# Bestiary

## (Addition)

Though *Empire of the Petal Throne* includes descriptions of a wide range of the alien planet's flora and fauna, not to mention intelligent non-human species, Tékumel is vast and includes many more creatures than those included in the rulebook. What follows are details of four such creatures which can be found in the Ni'ikmá Valley (see pp. 8-13). Like everything in *The Excellent Travelling Volume*, these new creatures are intended to serve as examples of how to expand upon and add to the material presented elsewhere to make Tékumel your own.

### CHAÚRI "THE SNARLING ONE"

*Number Appearing:* 2-12

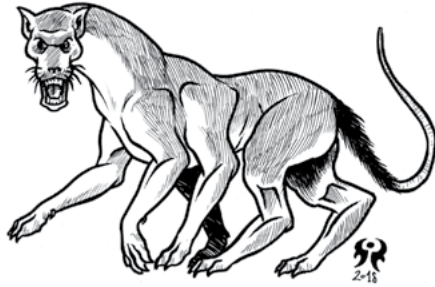
*Hit Dice:* 5

*Armour Class:* 6

*Treasure:* Nil

*Movement:* 12"

*Lair:* 20: 3-36



The Chaúri is a large, short-haired animal with a long tail and stabbing teeth that can cut into and grip its prey. The creature is about the size of a Tlékku (dog) and hunts in small packs with others of its kind. Packs single out weaker individuals and then harry them to exhaustion before moving in for the kill. Fortunately, the Chaúri is cowardly in small numbers and rarely attacks unless it has a significant numerical advantage.

### JÁLU "THE PROWLER"

*Number Appearing:* 1-2

*Hit Dice:* 5+5

*Armour Class:* 6

*Treasure:* Nil

*Movement:* 24"

*Lair:* 10: 1-6



The Jálu is a large predator whose body measures 6-8 feet in length which makes it one of the largest predatory animals in the mountainous region along the edge of the southern Plain of Towers. It possesses a low, powerful build and the ability to run quickly across rocky terrain, enabling it to burst out unexpectedly on its prey. The creature surprises its foes on a roll of 1-4. The Jálu lives in small family groups and normally hunts in pairs.

## MIRÍKKU “THE BURROWER”

*Number Appearing:* 1–6

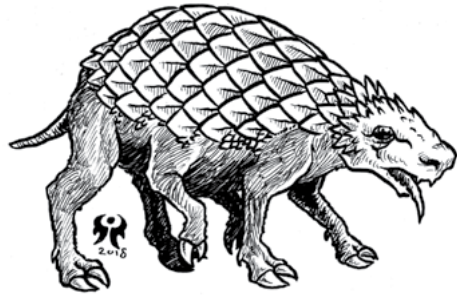
*Hit Dice:* 3+3

*Armour Class:* 3

*Treasure:* E: 50

*Movement:* 12”

*Lair:* 30: 2-12



The Mirikku is a sturdy creature with hard, interlocking scales on its back, which serve as protection against predators. Omnivorous by nature, the Mirikku fights only as a last resort, preferring to run away or hide if the possibility exists. The animal dwells in underground burrows in the hilly regions of the southwestern Plain of Towers. The Mirikku’s flesh is not very tasty to humans, which is why the Nixkámi and other peoples of the area rarely hunt it.

## NYÁR “THE GRAZER”

*Number Appearing:* 1–20

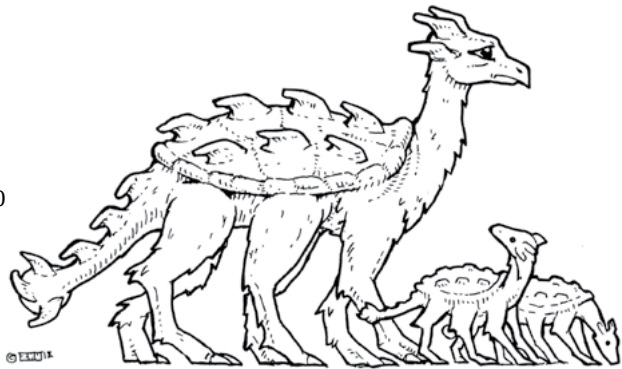
*Hit Dice:* 4

*Armour Class:* 4

*Treasure:* Nil

*Movement:* 12”

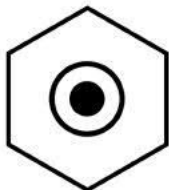
*Lair:* 30: 3–60



This big, gentle, six-legged herbivore is very distantly related to the Tsi’il. It is smaller, however, and possesses longer legs. It has a sad, wistful, rather deer-like face, reddish fur, and a short stumpy tail, which it uses in self-defence as a last resort. The Nyár is skittish in the presence of those it does not know. Its meat is gamey but tasty and a staple food of the Nixkámi people of the southwestern Plain of Towers.



RUIN



VILLAGE



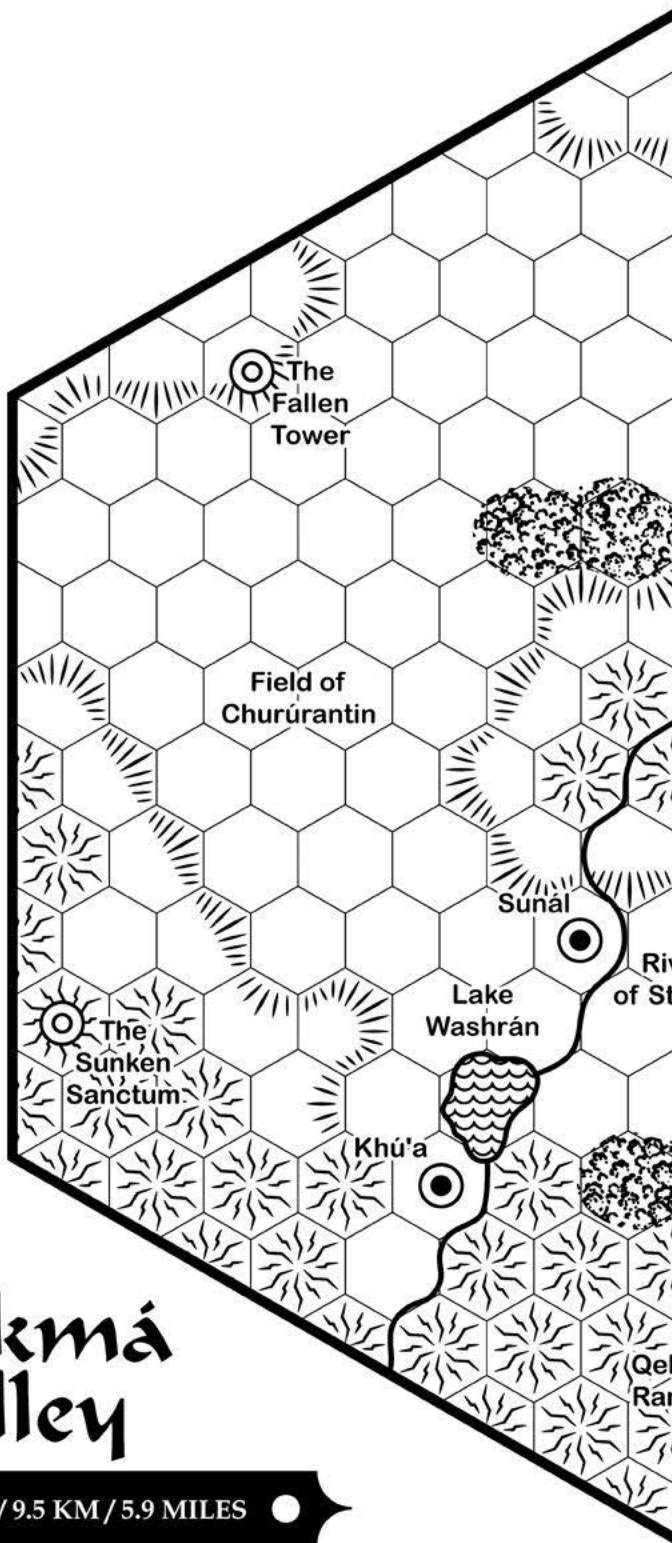
TOWN



FORT

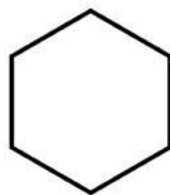
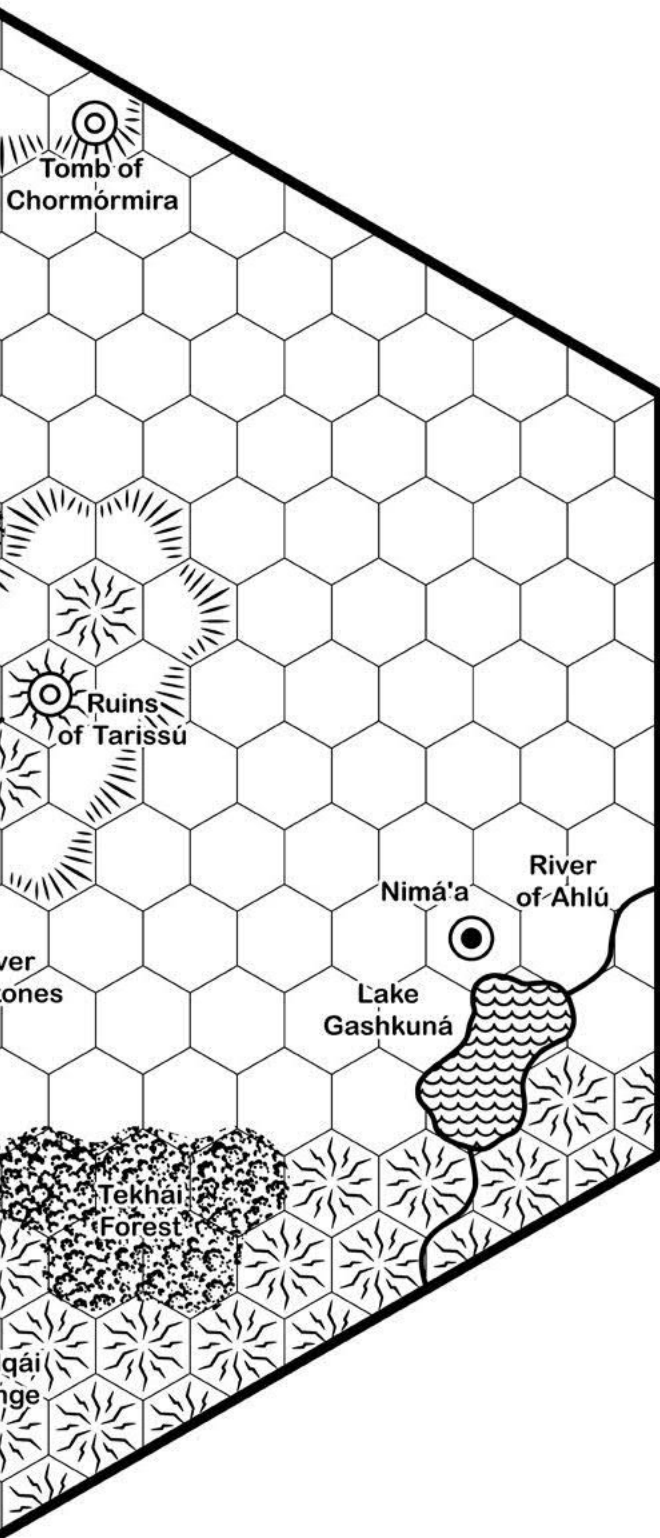


CITY



# Ni'ikmá Valley

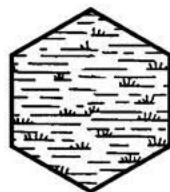
1 HEX = 7.1 TSAN / 9.5 KM / 5.9 MILES



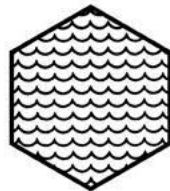
CLEAR



FOREST



SWAMP



WATER



ELEVATION



MOUNTAINS

# New Eyes

## (Addition)

Eyes are among the most memorable magical devices in *Empire of the Petal Throne*, which provides thirty-six examples for use by the referee – but this is not enough! Given the ubiquity of these tools of the Ancients, it stands to reason that there should be many, many examples of eyes beyond the “standard” ones described in *EPT*. For that reason, here are thirteen more eyes that the referee can add to his scenarios and campaigns.

### EYE OF CONSUMMATE COMPREHENSION



This eye enables the user to understand any written almost human or nonhuman text read within the next six turns. This effect applies only to the user, not to anyone else, though comprehension can be given to others with the expenditure of an additional charge. After the duration ends, the user (or

any other target) does not retain the ability to read previously unknown languages, but does retain any knowledge gained from reading while under the eye's effects. The *eye of consummate comprehension* does not grant the ability to understand the written forms of the languages of the Hlúss, the Shunned Ones, the Ssú, or the nonhuman Mihállí.

### EYE OF EFFICACIOUS TRANSMISSION

This device enables the user to send a short (25 words or fewer) vocal message to the user of another *eye of efficacious transmission* within 100 miles. Two eyes of this sort can be linked by touching them to one another. Thereafter, all messages sent from one are received by the other. In the absence of linking, a sent message goes to the closest *eye of efficacious transmission*, regardless of its current owner. If no other eye of this kind is within 100 miles, the message fails to send and does not expend a charge. Sending a message that is received expends one charge as does receiving it. A receiver can choose not to hear a sent message and thus avoid the consumption of a charge.

### EYE OF INELUCTABLE VERITY

This device projects a beam with a range of 12" at a single target, which is allowed a saving throw. If the saving throw is failed, the target is unable to utter a falsehood for the next 1-6 turns. If the target attempts to do so, he is wracked with increasing pain, dealing 1-6 points of damage upon speaking the first lie, 2-12 points of damage upon speaking the second lie, and so on. There is no upper limit to the amount of damage potentially dealt by this effect. The eye only affects humans, Páchi Léi, Pé Chói, Pygmy Folk, Shén, Swamp Folk, and Tinalíya. All other intelligent species are immune to it, as are automatons and the undead.

## EYE OF IMMEDIATE ENCAPSULATION

This device transfers a single target target within 3” (and no more than 1” wide) into a small pocket plane (a sphere 1” in diameter). The target cannot move, cast spells, communicate with the outside world or otherwise act while in this plane. No time passes for the target. There are only six pocket planes available to each of these eyes and as the eye is fired, they come up in order like the chambers of a revolver. The content of the current “pocket” is ejected back onto Tékumel’s plane and the target is encapsulated in its place. The referee should determine what objects or creatures might already be in the “pockets” of any such eye found. Encapsulation is permanent unless the target is released by the user of the eye.

## EYE OF INCESSANT ALIMENTATION

This device affects 1-6 targets of more or less human size within 4”, enabling them to survive for 1 week without food per charge. Those affected by the eye must still drink, however, or they will suffer the usual ill effects. Targets who go without food for more than three consecutive weeks will not feel the need to eat, but they will still suffer from starvation, taking 1-6 points of damage per day they do not eat.

## EYE OF INFALLIBLE VISIONING

This device projects illusory apparitions of 2–12 human-sized creatures of any type the user wishes out to a maximum range of 6”. These phantasms fight with claws, teeth, or weapons, as appropriate, as if they were 3 hit dice creatures with armour class 7 and 18 hit points. A successful saving throw against eyes enables the viewer to see through these apparitions and disbelieve them. Unless disbelieved or defeated, the apparitions last 3 turns.

## EYE OF INIMITABLE PSYCHIC NULLITY

This device causes 1–6 beings in a 1” diameter within 6” who fail their saving throws to lose the use of all spells including magical professional skills. These spells can be regained through sleep or rest as normal. Furthermore, any *amulet of peace amongst the servers of Ksárul* within the area of effect is destroyed and its owner takes 2–12 points of damage.

## EYE OF INSTANT TRANSLATION TO THE ISLES OF TERETANÉ

This device is focused upon a meteor storm on another plane. Each charge pulls one meteor into Tékumel’s plane and hurls it at a target within 12”. The meteor may be anything from a tiny pebble to a huge boulder depending on the result of a percentile dice roll: 01–10 = one target takes 1–6 points of damage; 11–40 = one target takes 1–10 points of damage; 41–70 = one target takes 2–12 damage; 61–71–80: one target takes 3–18 points of damage; 81–90 = 1–6 targets take 2–12 points of damage; 91–100 = the eye overheats and cannot be used again for 1–10 turns.

## EYE OF THE GLEEFUL STONE GAZE

This eye is similar to the *excellent ruby eye* described in Sec. 1300 of the *EPT* rulebook. It surrounds a target within 3" with a red-glowing stasis field. After 1–10 rounds, the target's substance begins to be transformed into a chalk-like, whitish mineral, beginning with the extremities and moving to the internal organs. The complete transformation takes 2 turns. If the eye is fired at a target a *second* time before the transformation begins, the target is released from stasis and unharmed. If the release charge is fired after the transformation has begun, that portion of the target that has already been affected crumbles to dust. Whatever remains (if any) is then removed from stasis. The referee should determine what percentage of the target's body is destroyed. Lost body parts can only be restored by the *eye of regeneration* or the Group II spell *heal serious wounds*.

## EYE OF OROTUND FULMINATION

By means of this eye, the user can create a cone of sound 12" long and 3" wide at its base. All within this area must make a saving throw versus eyes. Those who succeed are stunned (and thus unable to act) for 1 round and deafened for 2 rounds. Those who fail suffer 2–12 points of damage and are stunned for 2 rounds and deafened for 4 rounds. If employed against structures, the eye should be treated as a large catapult as described in Sec. 722 of the *Empire of the Petal Throne* rulebook.

## EYE OF PURPOSEFUL DEFOLIATION

This eye destroys all plants and fungi within a 3" radius of the user, turning them brown and desiccated. Plant and fungus creatures (e.g. the Sagún) suffer 6-36 points of damage, unless they make a successful saving throw, in which case they take only half.

## EYE OF SUBAQUEOUS PERSEVERANCE

This eye creates a 2" diameter sphere of force that can hold up to six human-sized passengers, including the user. If used while on land, the projected sphere is immobile; if used underwater, it moves at a rate of 3" per round in any direction under the control of the bearer of the eye. The sphere of force protects those inside from pressure effects and contains enough oxygen for its passengers for 6 hours. The sphere is transparent, which enables those within it to see outside. The sphere can be banished at any time by the user before the internal oxygen has been used up after which it disappears on its own. The sphere affords those within it a level of protection identical to that of the Group III spell *shield of defence*.

## EYE OF VOLUMINOUS TRANSLOCATION

This eye surrounds 1–2 targets in a 1" diameter and within 3" in a protective force field and holds them in it for one round. During this time, the user can move the target(s) to any other location desired within the eye's range. The distance between the user and target remains constant. The field is inertia-less and very heavy objects can thus be moved. An object permanently affixed to a wall, floor, etc. cannot be targeted. Since the target has no inertia, it cannot be hurled; instead, it drops straight down when the round expires.

# The Undying Wizards

The so-called Undying Wizards are a collection of powerful sorcerers who exist in the far future of Tékumel. They dwell at a place called the College at the End of Time, located on the spot currently occupied by the fortress of Avanthár in Tsolyánu (hex 3818). There they study, discuss, and debate matters of cosmological import as well as use it as a base from which to launch expeditions to other places, times, and planes.

Because the Undying Wizards possess magical (and other) abilities beyond those of ordinary mortals, no game statistics are given for those described below. Despite what their name might suggest, they are not, in fact, incapable of being killed, even though it is extremely hard to do so. Instead, it refers to the fact that, through their sorcery, they have all lived well beyond their years. Their long years have also afforded them the opportunity to undertake extremely long studies – and plots – that would otherwise be impossible.

Broadly speaking, the Undying Wizards are divided into two camps: the Germinators and the Accelerators. The Germinators (more properly the Escorts of Germination) believe that it is not their place to interfere with the unfolding of history. They may nudge events from time to time, particularly when outside forces, such as the Pariah Gods, seek to interfere, but, by and large, they prefer to stand aloof from it all. The Germinators are thus often aligned with one or more of the gods. The Accelerators – who are often derided as “blasphemous” by the Germinators – take an opposite approach. They are unrepentant meddlers who intervene throughout history in order to “improve” humanity and its place on Tékumel. The Accelerators tend to see all the gods, not just the Pariah Gods, as being impediments to their plans.

This difference of philosophy between the two camps rarely results in direct conflict, but Undying Wizards are not adverse to using intermediaries and agents to advance their agendas. Indeed, it is in this context that player characters are most likely to encounter them. What follows are brief descriptions of five Undying Wizards and their current interests with the goal of providing *Empire of the Petal Throne* referees with unique and unusual non-player characters who can act as patrons or antagonists of the player characters. There are, of course, many more Undying Wizards than those described; referees are encouraged to create their own.

## CHIRENÉ

Of all the Undying Wizards, the being known as Chirené is one of the more unusual – and that’s saying something! Hulking and serpent-headed, he is fanatically devoted to the cause of Change and, more so than his comrades at the College, he often backs up his zeal with violence. In battle, he uses a great war hammer, which he wields with remarkable strength and skill. Chirené originally hails from the time of the Dragon Warriors and is the source of many legends from that bygone era. In addition, several magical artifacts are associated with him, like the *gloves of Chirené* described in Sec. 1500 of *Empire of the Petal Throne*. When not at the College, he dwells either in the mountains of N’lúss or in the Tláshte Heights of Livyánu.

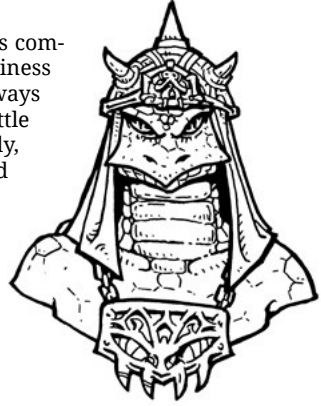
Though his command of magic is mighty like all Undying Wizards, Chirené has an inordinate fondness for martial action. He regularly rushes into battle with his foes



with little regard for his physical safety or that of his companions. On more than one occasion, such foolhardiness has brought him close to destruction but he has always escaped and his brushes with death have done little to temper his enthusiasm for warfare. Consequently, while on Tékumel, Chirené seeks out sites of wars and conflict so that he can turn the tide toward Change over Stability.

Some possible adventures involving Chirené:

1. Chirené starts recruiting warriors willing to travel to N'lúss to attack and destroy a temple of Hnálla established by Mu'ugalavyáni missionaries and whose influence he feels would be detrimental to the cause of Change.
2. The Undying Wizard wishes to instigate animosity between the Yán Koryáni city-states of Báni and Ngakú for his own purposes but lacks the subtlety to do so. He wishes to employ the characters to act as agents provocateurs for this purpose.
3. Chirené simply feels it is time to launch an attack against the Ssú on their home turf and appears in Pecháno, looking to employ warriors willing to travel to Ssuayál to battle the Enemies of Man.



## SINUSTRAGÁN DZÁSHU

Sinustragán Dzášhu appears to be a dignified, powerful, and haughty human sorcerer. In truth, he is probably a demon of some kind, though none can say for certain. This supposition is based on the fact that, sometimes, usually when in a heated debate or excited, his human head disappears and is briefly replaced by that of a giant worm – blink and you'll miss it! Needless to say, Sinustragán represents the interests of Sárku, Durritlámish, and similar deities at the College. Unlike Chirené, his devotion to the cause of Change is not so fervent that it erupts into physical violence. Instead, he prefers to employ subtler methods. He spends most of his time at the College, but can sometimes be found in the City of Sárku, Heméktu, or Tsa'avtúlgu.



Aligned with the Germinators, Sinustragán takes a particular interest in opposing the servants of the Goddess of the Pale Bone, as the success of her plans would gravely disrupt the “proper unfolding of time” that is the foundation of the Germinators’ own philosophy. Of course, Sinustragán’s own devotion to Lord Sárku is just as important and colours all of his actions on Tékumel. Consequently, he tends to seek out potential agents from among the devotees of gods of death and decay, like his own master or those of related deities. If this is not an option, Sinustragán will, with some reluctance, employ agents faithful to other gods, including those of Stability. Ultimately, his goal of limiting the influence of the Goddess of the Pale Bone outweighs all other considerations – a broad perspective that he tries very hard to impress upon anyone in his employ.

Some possible adventures involving Sinustragán:

1. Sinustragán needs agents willing to travel to the city of Tsa'avtúlgu in Sala-rvya to investigate rumours about the worship of the deity Black Qárqa.
2. The Undying Wizard has been given a dispensation by the governor of the City of Sárku to explore its underworld to search for evidence of an ancient temple to the One Other and needs the assistance of characters not aligned with Change to do so.
3. Sinustragán wishes to pay a visit to a temple dedicated to Sárku on the Plain of Towers and enlists the characters to serve as his bodyguards against the dangers of the place.

## TONESHKÉTHU VOKRÓN

Toneshkéthu Vokrón (her byname means “scribe” in Engsvanyáli) is a third stage student of the College, studying under Sinustragán Dzáshu. By birth she is the 117th and youngest child of the priestking Girándu XV. Perhaps unsurprisingly, she was little regarded by her father and largely raised by tutors, who instilled in her a deep love of scholarship. In time, she took up the study of the Ancients and their amazing devices, as well as the more “conventional” magic of her own time. This brought her to the attention to Sinustragán, who took her on as a student. Now, Toneshkéthu travels the planes as part of her education though the bulk of her time is spent on Tékumel at different points along the Tree of Time.



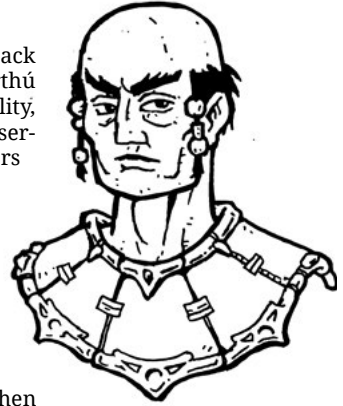
Because she is often on Tékumel, Toneshkéthu regularly interacts with its inhabitants, often helping them in manners both large and small. She is particularly interested in studying the interactions of the Planes Beyond and how they produce the magically fertile and barren zones of Tékumel. Because of her position as an Engsvanyáli princess, Toneshkéthu rewards her erstwhile assistants with lavish gifts from her own time, sometimes taking advantage of temporal differentials, such as when she rewarded the contemporary House of Worms clan of Tsolyánu by ensuring that her father granted its ancestors, the Resplendent Domicile of Amber clan, with a fief outside of Sokátis (see issue #6 of The Excellent Travelling Volume for more information).

Some possible adventures involving Toneshkéthu:

1. Toneshkéthu has a theory that the Ancients’ tubeway car system maps closely with patterns of otherplanar energy on Tékumel and asks the player characters to assist her in proving this.
2. She wishes to visit the Crater of the Unstraightened City on the Plains of Glass in the far northeast to determine if this reputed redoubt of the Accelerators is as magically fertile as is sometimes claimed.
3. Toneshkéthu wants to launch an expedition to Tsoléi Isles, one of the largest magically barren zones on Tékumel, to test a theory – she has lots of them! – that its effects can be overcome and needs non-magical companions to accompany her.

## TORISÚ

Tall, imposing, and totally bald except for ring of jet black hair around his ears, Torisú (also known as Tór or Thorthú among other names) is a foe of both Change and Stability, though he is especially hostile toward Vimúhla and his servitors. Like the other Undying Wizards of the Accelerators faction, Torisú considers the worship of the gods an impediment not only to humanity's ultimate destiny but also to the continued protection of Tékumel's plane from the depredations of the Goddess of the Pale Bone. Torisú works tirelessly against the Goddess and recruits others to his cause. When not at the College, he prefers to dwell on locations on other planes, such as the Island of Tamatósta or in the Fortress of Mirigár.



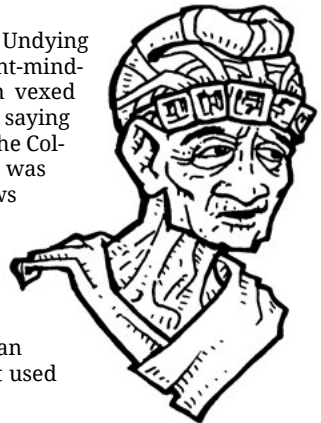
Torisú tends to take direct action when on Tékumel. When there, he frequently takes up residence in Livyánu and speaks Livyáni like a native. Whether he was once a subject of that empire or one of its historical antecedents is unclear, but there can be little question that Torisú takes a strong interest in Livyánu's safety. In this, he is unique among the Undying Wizards, who are much more concerned about Avanthár, whose continued existence throughout time is vital to the College. Torisú treats the land of Livyánu in a similar fashion, paying particular attention to the city of Tsámra.

Some possible adventures involving Torisú:

1. The Undying Wizard becomes aware of a plot by Mu'ugalavyáni agents to seize a Livyáni border city (e.g. Heméktu) by subterfuge and enlists the characters to aid him in stopping it.
2. Torisú wishes to infiltrate the sealed city of Dláš and employs the characters to assist him in this daring endeavour.
3. The Wizard becomes aware of a secret cult of the Goddess of the Pale Bone operating in Tsámra and seeks others to aid him in uprooting it.

## TURSHÁNUMÙ SSURMUTÉTL

Turshánumù Ssurmutétl certainly looks the part of an Undying Wizard. He appears to be an impossibly old and absent-minded man, who constantly mumbles to himself. When vexed by people or events – which is often – he is prone to saying “Bother!” His knowledge of magic is second to few at the College. Unfortunately, his memory is not what it once was and he often forgets how to use the spells he knows properly. This is exacerbated by his tendency to use cheap materials and to ignore safety precautions. Nevertheless, Turshánumù is well-regarded by most of his colleagues and beloved by students, some of whom hope to learn from him the infamous “spell of red goo” he developed. When not at the College, he can be found on his ship sunken under the sands of what used to be a sea in Milumanayá.



Turshánumù is quite “adventurous,” which is to say his researches typically involve visiting places that are generally considered exceptionally dangerous by most inhabitants of the Five Empire. For that reason, he often finds it difficult to attract mortal agents to his cause. He does so by offering not only “the experience of a lifetime” but also promises of wealth and other rewards. Turshánumù is quite fastidious about this last point and – provided he remembers – he always comes through with lavish remuneration for his agents. Of course, many of them wind up dead, a fact he does not hide and in fact sometimes boasts about in an effort to impress upon would-be agents the peril his adventures regularly bring.

Some possible adventures involving Turshánumù:

1. The old Wizard explains calmly that he needs to “pop over” to the island of Hlússyal to “visit some interesting ruins there” and would like to employ the characters to aid him.
2. Turshánumù is preparing to travel to the city of Lost Bayársha in the Jungle of Nmártusha, adding that the city is “not really ‘lost,’ since I know exactly where it is.” He seeks bodyguards “in case the inhabitants are as rude as I’ve heard.”
3. The Undying Wizard has “an appointment” in the city of Ureshyésha beyond the Plain of Towers and he wants the characters to accompany him to “make sure nobody tries any ‘funny business’ like the last time I visited there.”

## USING THE UNDYING WIZARDS

The Undying Wizards provide an excellent opportunity for referees to make Tékumel their own by showing just how bizarre the high-level magical goings-on of the setting can be. The Wizards are incredibly diverse, hailing from many times, places, cultures, and even planes. All that they have in common is incredible magical knowledge and a willingness to travel to and fro in pursuit of their own agendas – whatever they might be! Consequently, almost anything is possible, when it comes to these enigmatic wielders of sorcery, from a Lord of the Latter Times to an Engsvanyáli scholar to an alien being from another world in Tékumel’s solar system.

More importantly, the Wizards, even the human ones, are truly a breed apart. While some retain an attachment to Tékumel and its peoples, their interests and perspectives are usually much wider than those of “ordinary” people. The Wizards see the Big Picture, or at least parts of it, and that gives them distance from the mundane realities of existence. They worry about the depredations of the Pariah Gods, the plots of demon races, and the ultimate fate of the Universe. Furthermore, time and space are very malleable concepts to the Undying Wizards, which often makes

them seem cold and distant, even emotionless. This isn’t true, of course, but it’s important that the referee emphasize that the Wizards really are more than just really powerful wielders of spells. They are, in fact, some of the greatest movers and shakers in the cosmos and they know it.

From a practical perspective, this means that the Wizards rarely become directly involved in anything having to do with present-day Tékumel or, if they seem to do so, it’s for a hidden, possibly incomprehensible reason. This gives the referee a lot of latitude in introducing the Undying Wizards, but it also comes with the responsibility of not using them too often or too thoughtlessly. When an Undying Wizard appears, the referee should consider why and what the consequences will be for the characters (and Tékumel). As shown above, some Wizards are more inclined to act altruistically than others, but even they have no patience for characters who stand in the way of their goals. Use the Undying Wizards wisely and as a way to introduce some additional mystery to Tékumel and referees will find them great additions to their campaigns.

# The Sunken Sanctum

The so-called Sunken Sanctum is a subterranean ruin located in the mountains of the Qelqái Range within hex 4702 (see pp. 16–17). The site is well-known by the Nixkámí who dwell in this region, but they avoid it, believing it be “the abode of hungry ghosts,” whom they observe “roaming across the mountains, bringing with them the smell of death and decay.” As it turns out, they are not wholly mistaken in this belief, as the Sanctum is being used by a group of Shunned Ones (see issue #7 of *The Excellent Travelling Volume* for more details) to explore the area, after having arrived here through the tubeway car station accessible in the Sanctum.

The Sunken Sanctum is all that remains of a mountain retreat built by a minor Lord of the Latter Times. Its surface portions were destroyed long ago and even its below ground portions have suffered after millennia of disasters and upheaval on Téku-mel. What follows are descriptions of the structure’s various chambers and their inhabitants. The Sunken Sanctum is intended to provide an example of a small, relatively simple ruin of the Latter Times to inspire referees in creating their own. Likewise, the site opens up the possibility of travelling by tubeway to other locations across the planet, thereby expanding the scope of locations open to characters, should the referee wish to do so.

## 1. CHASM

A 12-foot opening in the ground gapes here. Staring down into reveals very little, beyond a small cave about 10 feet beneath the lip of the chasm.

## 2. VRINGÁLU LAIR

Six Vringálu dwell in this cave. During the day, they will be resting here, while at night there is a 50% chance that there will only be three present, as the others are out hunting.

**Vringálu (6) (AC 5 MV 6/24” HD 4+1 HP 24, 20, 18, 15, 14, 13)**

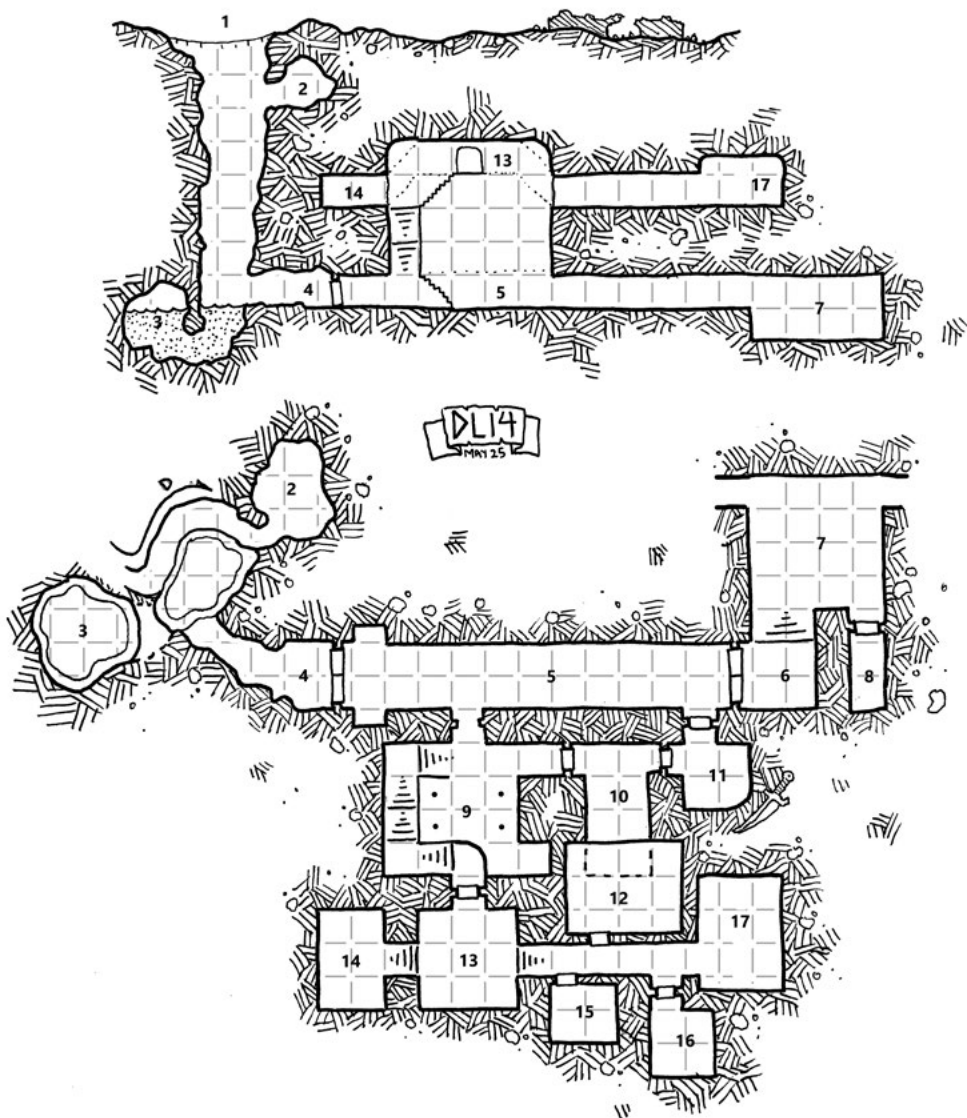
## 3. POOL

At the bottom of the chasm is a 15-foot deep pool that leads to a small cave. Lurking within the pool are two Mu’ágh, which attack anyone who enters their watery lair.

**Mu’ágh (2) (AC 8 MV 2” HD 3 HP 12, 9)**

## 4. ENTRANCE

Two large metal doors bar the way into the chambers beyond. The doors are unlocked but heavy; they creak when opened and alert the Shunned Ones in Room 5 to the approach of the characters.



## 5. LONG HALLWAY

The walls, floors, and ceiling of this hallway are made of a very hard, white, ceramic-like substance that nevertheless shows cracks and fissures here and there. Portions of the walls are decorated with squarish, blocky writing of the sort often found in ruins of the Ancients. The hallway is dimly illuminated by means of a collection of flickering discs that are attached to the ceiling.

Five Shunned Ones are currently in the area. They will attack anyone who enters from Room 4, unless they face overwhelming opposition, in which case they will flee to Room 6.

**Shunned Ones (5) (AC 2 MV 12" HD 2 HP 12, 11, 10×2, 9)**



## 6. WAITING AREA

Four Shunned Ones guard this landing to the tubeway car platform in Room 7.

**Shunned Ones (4) (AC 2 MV 12" HD 2 HP 9×2, 7×2)**

## 7. TUBEWAY CAR PLATFORM

Located down a short flight of stairs is a platform from which a tubeway car can be summoned. On the floor are three glass slabs, one red, one yellow, and one blue. By stepping upon the red slab, a tubeway car is summoned; the yellow slab lights up when the car is on its way and the blue slab is illuminated when it arrives.

At the moment, there are seven Shunned Ones standing here, including their leader, who is a Level V magic-user and who possesses two eyes (*eye of aerial excellence*, 21 charges, counter in Yán Koryáni; *eye of frigid breath*, 36 charges, counter in Pecháni). The leader has been using the eye of aerial excellence to bring him and a small number of his servants to the surface to scout the area above.

The Shunned Ones await the arrival of more of their kind in the next car, which will happen in 1–4 turns. In the event that combat is still ongoing when the car arrives, the Shunned Ones will be reinforced by five more of their kind (this station can only receive small 5-person tubeway cars and not any of the larger varieties).

**Shunned Ones (6) (AC 2 MV 12" HD 2 HP 7×3, 5, 4, 3)**

**Shunned One Leader (1) (AC 2 MV 12" HD 4+1 HP 17 Spells: Clairaudience, Clairvoyance, Control of Self, Fear, Illusionist, Paralysis, Telekinesis, Withering)**

Should the characters wish to make use of the tubeway car, they can do so. The one the Shunned Ones await is programmed to return to northern Yán Kór, where their kind have several domed cities. However, it can be set for other locales, if one knows how to operate its controls. Most likely, the characters will not and, in that case, their ultimate destination is up to the referee. This is, therefore, a perfect opportunity to send the characters on a wild adventure to a distant locale far from the Plain of Towers.



## 8. MAINTENANCE ROOM

This was once a room containing spare parts and equipment for the tubeway cars, but they have long since been looted. The room is now empty.

## 9. GALLERY

This large, well-lit chamber contains four large half-pillars made of metal, standing about two and a half feet high. If any one of them is approached by a character with a Psychic Ability score of 41 or higher, a luminescent globe suddenly appears, floating above the half-pillar. By looking into the globe, the viewer can see scenes of strange people and vistas. The people all speak languages that are incomprehensible and often command powerful magical devices. These are historical recordings from the time of the Great Ancients. Referees are encouraged to use them either as simple curiosities from the distant past or as spurs to subsequent adventures.

## 10. THEATRE

The walls, floor, and ceiling of this large room are covered in an unreflective black ceramic material. Visibly scattered across these surfaces are dozens of small (2-inch) protrusions of the same material. This is a shaped-energy theatre whose controls are located in Room 12 above. Due to safety features, the theatre cannot operate if anyone is in the room. Once in operation, both doors to the chamber lock and cannot easily be opened. Despite these precautions, if anyone should somehow remain in the theatre when it is operating, the character must make a successful saving throw versus eyes to avoid straying into a shaped-energy theatrical representation and suffering 3–18 points of damage.





## 11. SEALED ROOM

Both metal doors to this chamber have been obviously sealed from the outside by means of some sort of advanced soldering. Except by means of magic (e.g. *the hands of Krá the Mighty* or *energy bolt*) or a technological device (e.g. *the eye of raging power*), the place is completely inaccessible. The referee is the final arbiter of the means by which characters could possibly enter successfully. Should they get inside, they will find a weakened and dormant Sagún, which has been trapped here for untold ages. The fungus creature regains mobility if approached and attacks.

**Sagún (1) (AC 3 MV 9" HD 10 HP 32)**

## 12. VIEWING GALLERY

This room contains a large bank of controls along its west wall. Fiddling with these can cause one of three things to occur. First, the north wall can suddenly become transparent, enabling those within this chamber to view Room 10. Second, tiered platforms rise from the floor, which provide seating for viewing. The closer to the southern wall the platform is, the higher it rises above the floor. Third, one of several dozen shaped-energy theatrical performances begins. Figures and scenery blink into existence, looking for all intents and purposes like real things; they are simulacra presenting an ancient drama in a language long dead and unintelligible to anyone on contemporary Tékumel. Further fiddling with the controls can alter aspects of the performance (such as lighting, the appearance of figures, etc.), as well as selecting entirely different performances.

### 13. LANDING

Guarding this large room is a single Ru'ún. The automaton will not immediately attack anyone who enters the room, but will do so if they attempt to go down either of the nearby flights of stairs. The Shunned Ones have learned of this behaviour and, as such, have not explored the upper levels of the sanctum. The ru'ún will pursue targets until either it is destroyed or disabled or its targets are slain.

**Ru'ún (1) (AC 2 MV 15" HD 11 HP 43)**

### 14. DINING HALL

A single long table made from pale blue ceramic dominates this room. There is no longer anything else in this room besides an overhead illumination device and geometric patterned art along all four walls.

### 15. PRIVATE QUARTERS

The door to this chamber is locked. Inside is a low table made from a white ceramic material, as well as an oblong box-like object made from a similar material. If touched, the object opens revealing a plaque of greenish metal inscribed in Llyáni. The plaque is an *amulet of ruling the ru'ún*.

### 16. PRIVATE QUARTERS

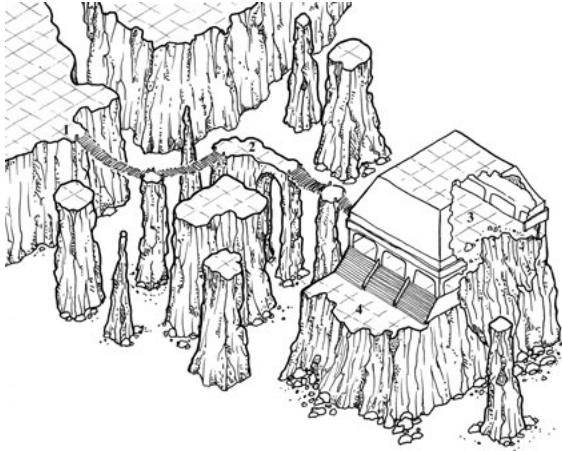
A locked door bars the way to this chamber, inside of which are two low tables made from a reddish ceramic material. There are also two chairs made of similar material, though their use might not be immediately obvious to anyone from any of the cultures of the Five Empires.

### 17. RECEPTION HALL

Beautiful and vibrantly coloured abstract artwork covers the walls of this large room. The ceiling illumination flickers upon entering the room. Four Yéleth stand inside, one in each corner of the room. They are programmed to paralyse opponents rather than hypnotise them (see Room 9).

**Yéleth (4) (AC 6 MV 9" HD 3 HP 14, 7×2, 6)**

# The Temple of Lord Aridzó



Located in hex 3827 of the Dry Bay of Ssu'úm (see issue #6 of *The Excellent Travelling Volume*, this ancient structure dates back to before the collapse of the First Imperium, when there was a large body of water here. Surrounded by 60-foot high stone pillars (several of which support bridges), the structure's original purpose is unknown. Now, it is sometimes employed by locals as a temple to their supreme deity, Aridzó.

## 1. BRIDGE

Reaching the temple requires navigating a rope bridge beginning in this area. Though wobbly, the bridge is sturdy. However, it is not wide enough to allow two-way traffic. Visitors to the temple must move as a group and in the same direction, lest their progress be hampered.

## 2. PREPARATION AREA

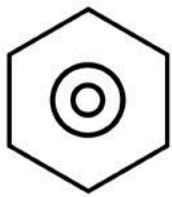
Worshippers and priests use this plateau in order to prepare themselves to enter the temple's sacred precincts by means of ritual anointing and the use of incense. Sometimes, guards are stationed here to prevent interrupting ceremonies already in progress in area 3.

## 3. SANCTUARY

This is the ritual space of the temple, where devotions to Aridzó are performed. There is no altar, nor is there any evidence of there ever having been one, leading some scholars to suggest that the structure's original purpose was not religious.

## 4. BALCONY

Accessible by three sets of stairs, this area offers a view of the surrounding area of the Dry Bay of Ssu'úm. Sometimes ceremonies to the other local gods are performed here.



RUIN



VILLAGE



TOWN



FORT



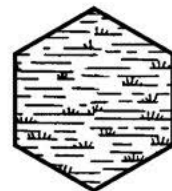
CITY



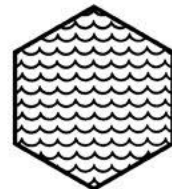
CLEAR



FOREST



SWAMP



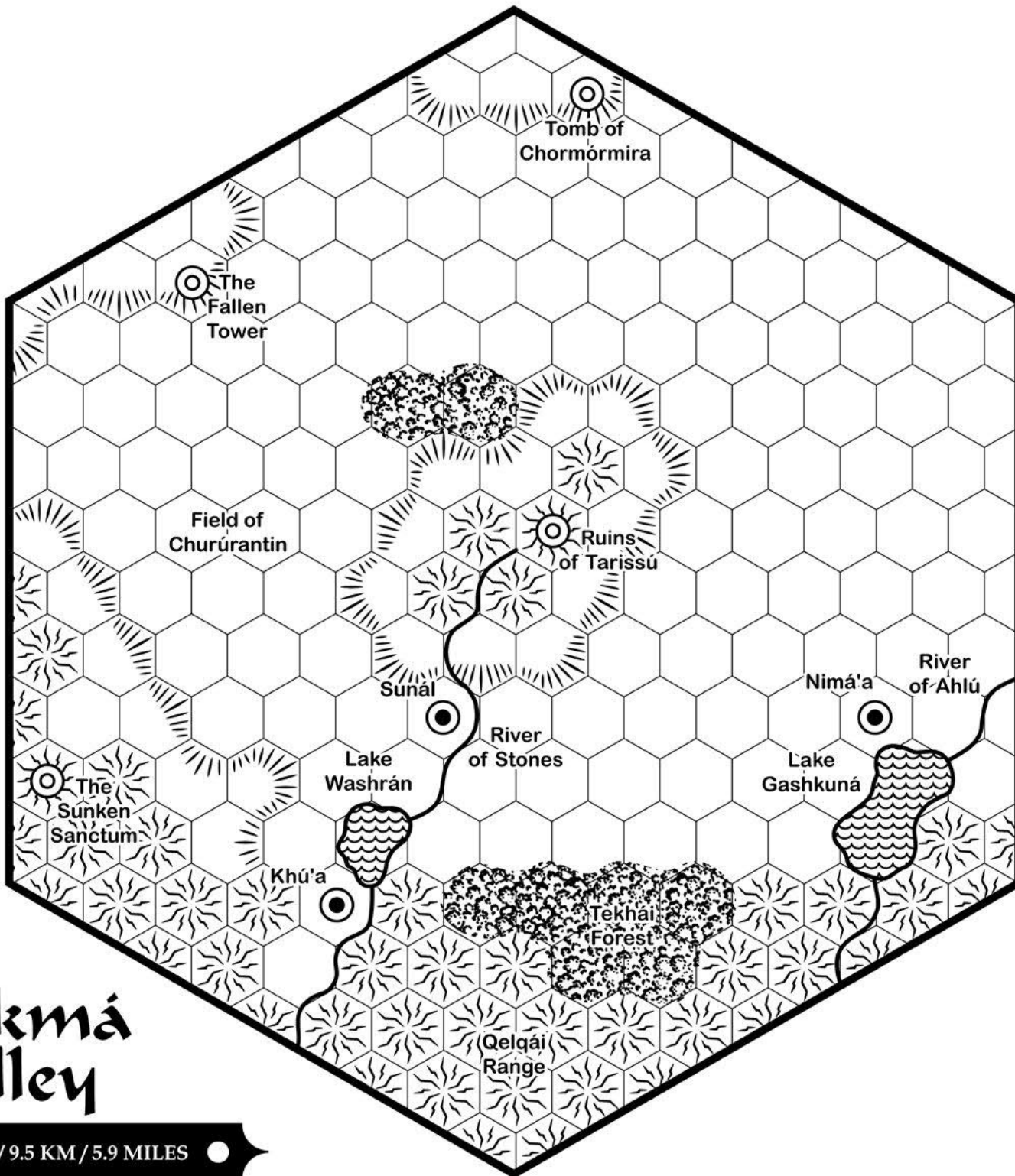
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