



The
EXcellent
Traveling Volume

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ISSUE NO. 10

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

INTRODUCTION

Double digits!

I am beyond pleased that *The Excellent Travelling Volume* has reached this milestone after a little over four years. I hoped that my little effort at supporting Tékumel might last this many issues, but I had no expectation that it would. I am grateful to everyone who has contributed to its longevity, most especially Matt Hildebrand, who has tirelessly laid out every single issue. I'd also like to thank the players in my *Empire of the Petal Throne* campaigns, who have, either directly or indirectly, inspired so much of the content that's appeared in these pages. And of course thanks are owed to the fans of Professor Barker's world, who have dutifully purchased each issue as it's been released (not to mention putting up with all the errors, oversights, and slip-ups I've made in sending them through the mail). Thank you, all.

As I look forward to the future, there will almost certainly be changes. Postal rates here in Canada have increased, especially to the world beyond North America. To combat that, I've made arrangements with the Melsonian Arts Council to handle international sales. I hope this will keep prices down for Tékumel fans in Australia, Europe, and farther parts, as well as shortening the time it takes to receive a new issue. I have also decided, contrary to my original plans, to sell back issues of the *The Excellent Travelling Volume* in PDF form through DriveThruRPG. Issues 1–9 are already available, but issue 10 will not be released until after issue 11 is printed, whenever that might be. I still very much wish to emphasize physical sales, which is why electronic versions will not be released simultaneously. I have received regular and persistent pleas for PDF versions since I started publication of the fanzine. In consultation with the Tékumel Foundation, the decision was made to hear these pleas. I hope no one will be too disappointed by my about-face on this matter; it was done largely in an effort to extend the reach of the 'zine.

On that topic, I remain interested in submissions from Tékumel fans who would like to share their creations. The outside submissions I have received have, in my opinion, made *The Excellent Travelling Volume* a better 'zine, allowing voices other than my own to speak to readers. I think that's vitally important in a setting as large and diverse as Tékumel. Much as I continue to enjoy offering you slices of *my* Tékumel, please consider offering *your* Tékumel as well. If you have an article to submit or even an idea for one you'd like to discuss, drop me a note at jdmaliszewski@gmail.com.

Finally, let me say that I enjoy producing *The Excellent Travelling Volume* and intend to keep releasing it for as long as I continue to do so. There's no question that it's sometimes a difficult, even frustrating, endeavour, as I struggle with commissioning art, choosing and writing articles, printing, and especially mailing them across the globe. Sometimes, the weight of all this seems overwhelming and I wonder what I've gotten myself into. But once an issue is completed and in the hands of Tékumel fans, all of those anxieties melt away and I can't wait to dive into the next issue. That's how I'm feeling right now. I hope you enjoy this milestone issue of the fanzine.

— James Maliszewski
April 2019

The EXcellent Travelling Volume



ISSUE TEN — TETVZINE.COM

| | |
|--|----|
| Finding Tékumel | 2 |
| Tinalíya and Urunén Characters <i>(Additions and Changes)</i> | 4 |
| The Urunén - The Cold Dwellers | 8 |
| Ureshyésa, the Tiered City | 11 |
| Magic Shields | 21 |
| The Treasure Vault | 27 |

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Finding Tékumel

I have a story I like to tell about my earliest experiences with Tékumel, one that I think is worth sharing with others. Though I had known about the setting for a long time beforehand, I only decided to take a serious look at it in the early 1990s, thanks to the Internet. I happily subscribed to the Blue Room mailing list and read the posts at rec.games.frp.tekumel. It was through these that I first began to exchange emails with Professor Barker. I've talked about some of these exchanges in the introductions to previous issues because they did much to establish my enduring fondness for the setting he created. Just as importantly: they proved foundational in developing my *approach* to the setting.

Like so many fans before me, I pored over volume 1 of *Swords & Glory* like a holy text, seeking out answers to all my questions about Tékumel. A topic of particular interest to me was the smaller nations existing at the edges of the Five Empires like Pijéna and Ghatón. The *Source Book* was disappointingly — to me, anyway — sparse in providing me with information on these states to the northwest of Tsolyánu. Fortunately there was an invaluable resource of Tékumel knowledge readily available to me. All I had to do was fire off an email to Phil (as he insisted I address him) asking for the vital details I craved.

That's exactly what I did, penning a missive in which I asked him all sorts of questions about Pijéna and Ghatón. I then eagerly awaited his response, figuring that he would quickly — and exhaustively — reveal more about this setting I had grown to love. Professor Barker did reply quickly but he didn't answer my questions as I had hoped. Rather, he wrote something to the effect of "I am afraid I cannot answer your questions about these matters as I have not spent much time in either Pijéna or Ghatón. Why don't you go there and report back what you find?"

I was flabbergasted. What did this reply even mean? How could I *go* to Pijéna or Ghatón, let alone "find" things there? Professor Barker was the creator of Tékumel, after all, and he had proven to me, in previous email exchanges, that he was fully capable of giving me all sorts of useful information about the setting, information that had never appeared elsewhere. Why wasn't he able to do so in this case and, equally significantly, why had he couched his reply to me in this seemingly ridiculous way?

At the time I was preparing to start my first Tékumel campaign and I was spending a lot of time doing research into the setting to be sure I got everything "right." As detailed as the *Source Book* is, there are plenty of lacunae, and these frustrated me, hence my regular emails to Phil looking

for additional information. He had kindly humoured me most of the time, so, when he hadn't, I was greatly disappointed. Perhaps because I felt so letdown, I continued to ponder the email, hoping to figure out what Professor Barker was saying to me.

I eventually hit upon the answer, one that's stuck with me all these years later and colours the way I look at Tékumel. What I believe Phil meant by "going" to Pijéna and Ghatón was visiting them in the context of *gaming* in the setting. He regularly told me that Tékumel was meant to be used as a vehicle for roleplaying and that he hoped others would "make it their own." His point, I came to see, was that the only way to learn the secrets of Tékumel was to *play* in the setting and explore its nooks and crannies in that way. If I wanted to know what Ghatón was really like all I had to do was send the player characters in my campaign there and see what would happen.

I am extremely grateful to Professor Barker for that email because it freed me from looking to him or to previously published material as the final word on Tékumel. Even if he had spent every waking hour creating new treatises on every conceivable aspect of the setting there still would have been "missing" sections. Thus, it falls to everyone who plays in Tékumel to find their own answers and never to shy away from doing that. The pages of this and past issues of *The Excellent Travelling Volume* are full of my "reporting back" on what I found in strange corners of Tékumel.

The Achgé Peninsula, presented in issue #8, for example, grew out of the actions of the player characters in my House of Worms campaign — and new information about that region is discovered every week through play. Likewise, the Nixkámi people of issue #9 and the city of Ureshyésa in this issue were discovered in my Dust of Gold campaign. None of this new material is an official addition to the canon of Tékumel, which is to say, no one who reads these articles is bound to accept them as-is and add them to his own Tékumel campaign. Indeed, some readers might find their contents not to their tastes or otherwise conflicting with *their* vision of Tékumel — and that's fine. Professor Barker invited us, in his introduction to the *Source Book* to "introduce other characters, different animals, [and] further races," in addition to reminding us that there is no need that one's own Tékumel need be identical to his. Take what you like from my offerings and leave the rest.

Rest assured that future issues of *The Excellent Travelling Volume* will contain articles focusing on the people and cultures of the more familiar Five Empires. But I think it is just as vital to explore beyond the borders of the familiar. Tékumel is a big place, after all, with lots of mysterious corners that have yet to be visited. Long ago, Phil encouraged me visit them through play and to share what I found. I continue to take his exhortation seriously and would like to suggest that others take it up as well.

Tinalíya & Urunén Characters

(Additions and Changes)

In my current *Empire of the Petal Throne* campaigns, intelligent nonhumans other than the Inimical Races have played very small roles to date. Nevertheless, I consider Tékumel’s nonhuman species to be integral parts of the setting and hope that, at some point, one of my players might choose to play one. To that end, this issue looks at rules modifications to *Empire of the Petal Throne* to facilitate the playing of either Tinalíya or Urunén characters (more about the latter on pages 8–10).

Though much of what follows is derived from information in *Swords & Glory, Volume 1: Tékumel Sourcebook* and other writings by Professor Barker, some of it is my own invention and should not be considered an “official” addition or expansion of the Tékumel setting. It is nevertheless hoped that it will not only prove useful to *EPT* players and referees with an interest in generating Tinalíya and Urunén characters but also as a reminder that creating new material for one’s personal Tékumel is not “wrong,” but, rather, to be encouraged.

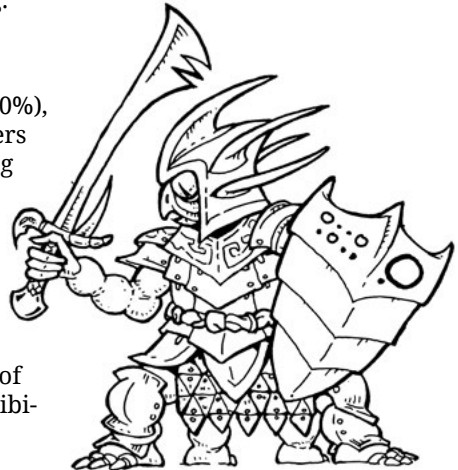
310. ALIGNMENT

The philosophical concepts of Stability and Change mean little to either the Tinalíya or the Urunén, owing in large part to their own native religious outlooks (see Sec. 2100 below). However, the Tinalíya have learned to make use of these concepts when dealing with humans while the Urunén continue to find them somewhat baffling.

320. CHOICE OF SEX

The Tinalíya have three sexes: male (10%), female (5%), and neuter (85%). Outsiders have an extremely difficult time telling the sexes apart. Most Tinalíya warriors are neuters though males and (less frequently) females can be found in this profession.

The Urunén have two sexes: male (35%) and female (65%). The profession of warrior is largely the purview of females though there is no societal prohibition against males undertaking it.



330. PROFESSION

Tinalíya can join all three professions though among their own people comparatively few become priests as it is not considered a worthy vocation. Priests are more common for Tinalíya living among humans, though it is still far from favoured. Those with an aptitude for sorcery are much more likely to become magic-users. Urunén can join any of the three professions though warriors enjoy little prestige in their culture.



710. HIT DICE

Tinalíya and Urunén characters are treated just like humans with regard to hit dice. That is, they use the hit dice of whatever profession they have chosen without modification. Thus, if a Tinalíya opts to be a warrior, at Level I he has 1+1 hit dice, at Level II 2 Hit Dice, and so on. The same is true of an Urunén.

900. STARTING THE GAME

Despite not being human, Tinalíya and Urunén generally do not start the game any differently than human characters.

1127. DESCRIPTIONS OF NONHUMAN RACES ENCOUNTERED

Tinalíya characters possess unique racial abilities that separate them from human beings. Urunén, on the other hand, are very much on par with mankind and require no special rules modifications.

Tinalíya: Owing to their remarkable native intelligence and affinity for magic, magic-users and priests begin the campaign with one additional professional skill while warriors may choose one of the following original skills (in addition to any others they may receive as a result of the roll on the table in Sec. 420): astronomer-navigator, engineer-architect, geologist, mathematician, scholar.

2100. THE GODS, COHORTS, AND DIVINE INTERVENTION

The Tinalíya acknowledge the existence of a single deity, generally referred to as Tés or Tís, who they say has no interest whatsoever in this world, including in themselves! The Tinalíya do not worship Tés as humans understand worship; instead, they recognise the god's vast but nevertheless limited intellect as worthy of emulation. Consequently, Tinalíya priests have few formal religious duties. However, Tinalíya are well aware of the powers of the beings humans call gods and thus sometimes join human sects for purely cynical and pragmatic reasons.



On the other hand, the Urunén worship three deities. The first and most widely worshiped is a male-female creator, named Diulé, whom the Tsolyáni say corresponds to Avánthe-Dlamelish. The second is called Almúò and (from the Tsolyáni perspective) seems to be the counterpart of all of the other Lords of Stability. The third is Wasúro, who encompasses all of the attributes of the remaining Lords of Change. The Urunén also have a variety of “small gods,” such as house spirits, nature spirits, and the like, whom they invoke at appropriate moments.

Tinalíya and Urunén Names

The native language of the Tinalíya is tonal with rising, falling, high, low, mid, and other contours difficult to describe. One Tinalíya “tone” consists of a mid-level register accompanied by strong nasalisation. Nevertheless, some humans have learned to speak and transliterate Tinalíya words and names in their own tongues. Such names usual-

ly consist of at least two — and sometimes three or more — syllables that designate the Tinalíya’s sex, function, place of residence, and, if necessary, some distinguishing trait. For example, the name of the Tinalíya general, Tí Sà Qó, literally means “Neuter-Warrior-Dark-Speckled-One-of-the-Place-of-Qó.” By comparison Urunén names are quite simple, consisting of only a single personal name such as Aiché, Kúlel, or Osuná. Such names are traditional, having been passed down through the centuries, but they seemingly have no meaning in themselves.

Tinalíya and Urunén Clans

The Tinalíya place little emphasis on lineage or family at all, with most societal activities being communal. Members of the race form short-term connections for reproduction but little importance is placed on them. For this reason there are no foundations on which anything resembling clans could be built. Tinalíya living in human lands such as Livyánu generally see little point in joining a clan unless doing so is absolutely necessary to attaining some goal.

The conjugal family is an important element of Urunén culture consisting of a senior female householder, her male mate and his other mates, and any offspring of the adults dwelling there. Sometimes older directly-related relatives may also be present. More information on Urunén social groupings can be found on page 9.

Homelands

The Tinalíya have one known enclave located south of the Tlášhte Mountains in northern Livyánu. This enclave is not far from the Livyáni cities of Hráis and Súnuz. For that reason both cities boast a sizable population of these nonhumans, almost to the point of parity. Meanwhile, the Urunén dwell upon an island-continent in the south polar seas, far from the lands of humanity, its allies, and enemies. They have dwelled here in isolation for a very long time and seemingly have no other presence elsewhere on Tékumel.

Tinalíya and Urunén Legions

Despite their diminutive stature the Tinalíya are doughty fighters. In Livyánu they can be found serving in many military units, the most significant of which is no doubt the Chároneb (Army) of Hráis, whose senior general (or Qáqqodaz) is a Tinalíya named Tí Sà Qó. The Chároneb includes the 12,000-strong Llúneb (Legion) of the Standing Rock which consists entirely of Tinalíya as well as a potent magical contingent also made up of these non-humans. They have seen action against the Mu'ugalavyáni in the past and have acquitted themselves honourably.

Soldiering is not highly regarded among the Urunén, perhaps in part because the race has no natural enemies on its island-continent. Soldiers are grouped in units based on fours, with the equivalent of a legion called a *Vaimé'ù* and consisting of 4096 Urunén. Most are competent in their profession, which largely consists of dealing with minor internal strife.



The Urunén

The Cold Dwellers

This race is a little taller than mankind (from 5' to 6'2") and is quite humanoid in appearance with an erect, muscular body, two rear legs, and two forearms ending in four-fingered hands with an opposable thumb. The Urunén are covered with brownish fur as short as the nap of velvet and possess a long tail which is not used in combat. The head is quite alien, being long-snouted, triangular (rather like a cross between a serpent and some bovine animal) and has the brain-case at the back.

Their eyes are set wide apart on each side of the head. The Urunén have a life expectancy similar to that of mankind (43–45 years).

The Urunén wear a variety of garments. Everyday costume consists of little more than a brightly coloured loincloth for males and a waist-to-knee skirt held by a drawstring knotted at the right hip for females. On special occasions both sexes don neck-to-knee over-tunics with wide, puffed sleeves. Males add short capes, harnesses of crossed straps, laced leggings or boots, and metal helmets that lie flat along the snout and sweep back to cover the skull. These helmets frequently have combs, crests, and fans of colourful necklaces and pendants to which mantles are attached, such as the *Évuyu*, an overcape of gauzy white cloth fastened to each arm just above the elbow by a golden armet and allowed to trail along the floor behind the wearer. Soldiers wear helmets, vambraces of metal bands, and plate greaves. These are mostly made of bronze or, rarely, steel. Chlén hide is known but not preferred.

The Urunén make their home in the subpolar regions of Tékumel around the south pole. They have only recently come once more into contact with the inhabitants of the Five Empires through the tubeways and interdimensional nexus points. Consequently, not much is generally known about them, though human diplomats, scholars, and even merchants have been attempting learn more. They seem to be intelligent, proud, jealous, and suspicious of other species. They knew of mankind and its allies from artifacts and inscriptions but had never encountered them and indeed believed them to be extinct if not entirely mythical.

The Urunén are alone upon their great southern island-continent (which they call Ilínen) and have no significant natural enemies. Therefore, they have little experience of organised warfare. With no external natural enemies the only significant strife they have experienced in the past millennium are two mild civil wars, five or six regional rebellions, and a handful of lesser actions. Still, the

THE URUNÉN

Number Appearing: 10–60

Hit Dice: 1+1

Armour Class: 7

Treasure: A: 40

Movement: 12"

Lair: 30: 60–360 (near own territory)

Treasure in Lair: C: 40

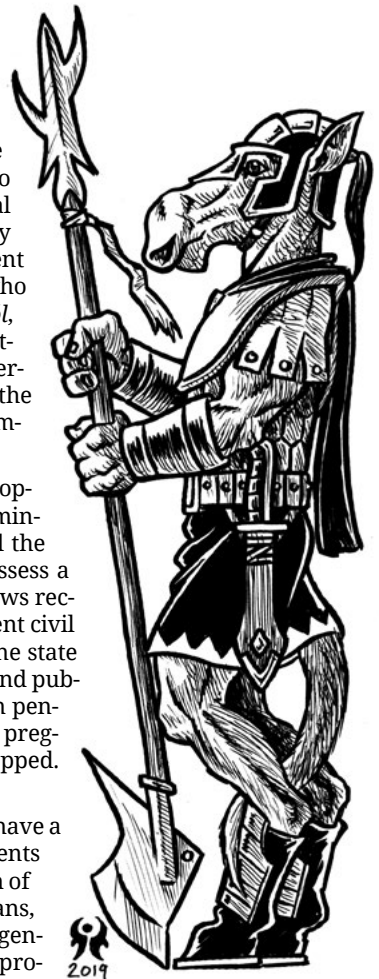
Urunén fight with great tenacity and courage, but once a battle is won they treat prisoners with courtesy and frequently free them upon a promise to engage in no further violence.

Broadly speaking, their society is homogeneous, complex, and inward-looking. They know nothing of clans as the peoples of the Five Empires understand them, being much more focused on conjugal families. Because of the disproportionate ratio of females to males polygamy is the norm, though Urunén society could nevertheless be called female-oriented, if not necessarily matriarchal. A family generally consists of a senior female, her mate, all his junior mates, and any offspring produced from these unions. Relations between the mates are complex as are the negotiations between families before any marriages take place.

Urunén society recognises several occupational classes. Farmers, artisans, and merchants are highly esteemed while priests are considered weaklings or too lazy to do a good day's work. Soldiers likewise have no prestige, owing no doubt to the small role they have played in the race's history. The Urunén believe the military to be at best a necessary evil and treat professional soldiers with disdain bordering on contempt. They govern themselves by means of a sort of parliament consisting of a body of elected leaders. Its head, who is often female, serves for life and is called the *Alól*, a word that also signifies "parent." Like the priesthood and soldiering, politics and government service are considered somewhat distasteful and the brightest individuals specialise in agriculture, commerce, and the crafts, as noted previously.

The Urunén have a strong concept of private property which is why temple and state holdings are minimal. The local currency is a small gold piece call the *Eché*, worth about two *Tsolyáni Káitars*. They possess a very mild and reasonable judicial system. Their laws recognise the categories of personal crimes, non-violent civil offences, and transgressions against the good of the state and the race. Punishments range from ostracism and public obloquy to fining and imprisonment. The death penalty is imposed only for the killing or injuring of pregnant females, children, the aged, or the handicapped. All Urunén judges are females and serve for life.

Like *Engsvanyáli* descended cultures, the Urunén have a tradition of urban planning. Each of their settlements has a central square in which stand shrines to each of the three principal deities (see page 6). Like humans, they build great stone tombs to house their dead, generally of pyramidal shape. Temples are staffed by pro-



fessional priests and priestesses called *Allába*, who choose one of their number to serve as High Priest (*Allábe Nyé*). There are no further ranks or titles in the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Temples are painted with murals and floors and decorated with brilliant mosaics. There are no internal images or furniture and religious rituals involve only the recitations of litanies before a single square-cut stone altar block in the geometrical centre of the temple's inner chamber. The use of other-planar power is taught in secular schools as sorcery plays almost no part in their religion.

Urunén schools are entirely secular in keeping with the race's distrust of temples having too much influence. Every individual is expected to be literate and Urunén schools primarily teach practical subjects like agronomy, business, a complicated form of accounting, medicine, and law as well as some fields that would seem odd to humans (e.g. tooth-sharpening, since Urunén females sharpen their incisors as a mark of beauty). Teaching is considered a form of entrepreneurship and is a very praiseworthy and potentially lucrative vocation.

Ordinary buildings are generally constructed of stone with pitched wooden-shingled roofs, square windows, and doors. If possible, even the meanest building is surrounded by functional gardens and the homes of the wealthy also include orchards. Houses are usually whitewashed or painted in pastel colours. Houses contain oddly-proportioned chairs, tables, divans, stands, utensils, and ornamental objects made of diverse materials. The Urunén sleep upon wooden beds spread with quilted mattresses and blankets woven of the fibres of a plant related to that which produces *Firyá* cloth. Tapestries and drapes are employed as wall decorations. Mats and small carpets inscribed in red and black calligraphy are hung from the ceiling. Nearly every room contains tall urns of painted porcelain, statuary, and elaborate constructions of wood and coloured glass. It is thought that these last may be orreries depicting the motions of the planets and the moons since they contain moving parts.

The Urunén eat standing up, taking their food from a serving table in the household dining area and strolling about in groups of two or three while consuming the meal. This, they say, aids in digestion. They use curiously wrought knives, spoons, and skewer-like single-pronged forks. Unlike the cultures of the Five Empires the Urunén have public restaurants. These consist of little kiosks surrounded by gardens. Customers buy food from the proprietors and stroll about while consuming the food. The proprietors of the little kiosk restaurants also offer bitter-salty black beer (called *Fashmún*) and odd-tasting (to human palates, anyway) liqueurs.

They are good scholars and, as noted elsewhere, exhibit psychic talents about on par with those of mankind. The Urunén show an ability to dissemble and play at diplomacy and it is likely that their cleverness will make them difficult allies and dangerous foes. Although they are not exceptional sailors they have travelled the southern seas surrounding *Ilínen* in search of new sources of trade. Since contact with mankind they have demonstrated a willingness to engage in mutually beneficial exploration. It is therefore likely that, in the years to come, the Urunén may finally abandon their millennia of relative isolation and take their place as an influential species on *Tékumel*.

Ureshyésha, the Tiered City

Ureshyésha, “the Tiered City,” is a large, ancient city found beyond the Plain of Towers to the west of Mu’ugalavyá. Nestled in a mountain pass within the Qelqái Range, it occupies a choke point for people seeking the northern passage into the land of the Tané. The city gets its colloquial name from the two great escarpments upon which its walled sections are constructed. These escarpments tower over both the Outer City and the village of Chikét and also provide protection against unwelcome visitors. In its long history Ureshyésha has never been conquered from without, though it has known at least one significant period of internal strife and may be on the verge of a second.

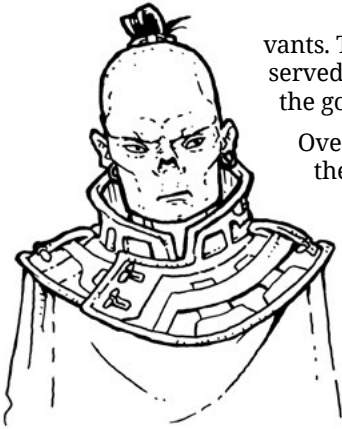
The local climate is mild, with temperatures ranging between 15 and 30 degrees Celsius and rainfall being sufficient to water the *Gáin* fields that surround the city. Lead and silver are mined at several nearby locations. The area surrounding Ureshyésha is largely bereft of wood which is why it is an important trade good imported from both the west and the south.

HISTORY

The history of Ureshyésha is shrouded in mystery, even to its own inhabitants. The Shúr Ésh claim that one of the Lords of the Latter Times, known as Avtúmàr (or simply Túmàr) Trantukái, established a settlement on this spot. As he left Tékumel to explore the Planes Beyond he instructed his servants to act as stewards of his great storehouse of magic until he returned. These servants are the *Váml*, or “Old Ones,” who ruled Ureshyésha prior to the coming of Shé Jó (see below).

According to these tales the Old Ones governed Ureshyésha well, if selfishly, and the city prospered, becoming a centre of commerce and magical research. Because of the city’s location travellers had few choices but to pass through its gates if they wished to travel farther westward into the lands of the Tané. Many of these travellers settled down and made Ureshyésha their home. Over time these newcomers formed the basis of the city’s lower and middle classes, leaving the Old Ones time to devote themselves more fully to understanding the artifacts Avtúmàr left behind.

It was during this time, or so the Shúr Ésh say, that the Old Ones mastered the techniques of creating – or at least altering – living things. Like Avtúmàr and the other Lords of the Latter Times, they used sorcery and science in equal measures to produce androids, monsters, and mutants. Some were mere curiosities, created solely to slake the Old Ones’ growing desire to surpass the achievements of their benefactor, while others were created as ser-



vants. The Shúr Ésh were among this class of beings; they served the Old Ones in all things and soon proved vital to the governance of Ureshyésa.

Over time the Old Ones depended more and more on the Shúr Ésh, to the point that their creations ruled the city in all but name. Into this environment came new travellers from somewhere further away. Exactly where no one can remember, though many Shúr Ésh insist that these travellers came from the jungles to the south. True or not, these travellers brought with them an immense metal container that they insisted was the sanctuary of ‘The God,’ the deity they served.

Trák Tán Todá (see p. 20)

The Shúr Ésh welcomed the travellers (who called themselves the Ktanán), who were grateful to have a place to rest after having borne The God across great distances. The Ktanán spoke at length about their deity and the tenets of their peculiar faith (see page 14). According to legend The God then left his sanctuary and bid the Shúr Ésh to worship him. Accounts of this event vary, forming the basis of several notable works of art within the city, but what is certain is that afterwards the Shúr Ésh decided to banish the Old Ones and install The God, whom they henceforth called Shé Jó in the Chérit language, as the tutelary deity of Ureshyésa.

To call the foregoing “history” is to be charitable, as these events happened long, long ago, during the time when the Empire of Llyán of Tsámra was still in its formative period, and verifiable records of them are scant. Regardless, by the time of the coming of the Dragon Warriors no trace of the Old Ones remained in Ureshyésa. Instead, the priesthood of Shé Jó held sway over the city, with the Shúr Ésh having displaced the Ktanán in the role of The God’s most devoted servants and guardians. Because of the city’s remote location it was never conquered or incorporated into any empire, even that of the Engsvanyáli, whose armies roamed widely across the continent. Even today Ureshyésa remains largely unknown and isolated to the peoples of the Five Empires.

THE SHÚR ÉSH

According to their own tales the Shúr Ésh were created by the Old Ones as their servants. True or not, it is quite clear, upon seeing one, that these people are likely a mutant strain of mankind. Firstly, they are taller than the typical inhabitant of the Five Empires by about six inches and are considerably thinner. Secondly, most Shúr Ésh possess sallow complexions and grey or even blue eyes, the latter of which will undoubtedly appal visitors

from Engsvanyáli-descended cultures, which view that colouration as ill-favoured if not outright cursed. Hair is uniformly black in colour and straight. Most male Shúr Ésh shave their heads, leaving at most a top-knot, while females wear their hair long and braided. Eyebrows are light and often shaved as well. Finally, the Shúr Ésh possess strongly angular features and flat noses that immediately set them apart from other human beings.

Shúr Ésh attire for all classes consists primarily of full, floor-length *Firyá*-cloth robes in a variety of colours, lighter shades being an indication of higher social status, though the priests of Shé Jó don red robes. These robes are accented with jewellery such as rings, necklaces, and especially earrings (popular with both sexes). High status Shúr Ésh, known as *zángl* (“lords”), almost always wear starched, lacquered, and inscribed *Chlén*-hide collars as visual symbols of their status. Shúr Ésh of more modest means imitate their fashion though with less ornamentation.



Dmí Rú Na'á (see p. 20)

The Shúr Ésh speak a language they call Chérit, which shows some similarities to the tongues of the Khishan family, but which also shows influences from other modes of speech. Mu'ugalavyáni linguists, such as Ka'uléggish Mrízish of Gashchné, who has spent considerable time studying Chérit, sees many Llyáni loan words in its vocabulary, though his position is controversial.

Shúr Ésh society does not follow the Engsvanyáli model but is instead founded on nested series of patron-client relationships called *hikóa*. The patron (or *masíg*) grants protection and privileges to his client (or *gamúkh*) in exchange for a pledge of loyalty and service. The Shúr Ésh view all relationships, including familial and religious ones, through the lens of *hikóa*. Though outsiders might reasonably see *hikóa* as mercenary, there can be little doubt that it has served the Shúr Ésh well, particularly as their numbers have dwindled in Ureshyésa.

Status depends on cultivating *hikóa* relationships with a large number of clients. Those with the most clients (the aforementioned *zángl*) can have dozens, even hundreds of clients, working on their behalf. There is a danger in this, however, as a *masíg* has obligations to his *gamúkh* and failure to live up to those obligations not only brings dishonour but is also considered contrary to the teachings of Shé Jó. It should be noted that outright slavery is unknown in Ureshyésa except in the case of religious criminals (see below).

The Shúr Ésh seem to be more psychically gifted than other humans. This talent extends not only to sorcery but also to the operation of technological devices. Unsurprisingly, another way that Shúr Ésh demonstrate their high

status is by the possession of such devices, many of which are obtained illicitly from the City of the Old Ones or the Tsuru’úm beneath it. Indeed, the acquisition of items of this sort borders on an obsession among the greatest *zángl* of Ureshyésa.

SHÉ JÓ

Equally important to understanding Ureshyésa is The God, known locally as Shé Jó. This foreign deity was brought – literally, according to the Shúr Ésh – into the city millennia ago by the Ktanán. After The God manifested his power to them, the Shúr Ésh instinctively understood that he was now their divine *másig* and they his *gamúkhl*. This new understanding led not only to the enshrinement of Shé Jó within what is now the City of The God but also the overthrow of the Old Ones, who were slain in vast numbers by their former servants. Since then The God and his priests occupied the summit of the social hierarchy within Ureshyésa.

Shé Jó is said to live within the Temple of The God (43). For that reason no one but the most senior priests are allowed to enter under penalty of death. From time to time, though, The God is said to select those outside the priesthood to enter the Temple. His reasons are never explained but what cannot be denied is that anyone who is so selected, including non-Shúr Ésh, return from the experience utterly *changed*, which usually takes the form of zealous devotion to Shé Jó. Whether or not The God is actually present within the Temple, the Shúr Ésh believe he is and act accordingly.

The priesthood of The God tolerates the practice of no other religion within Ureshyésa, including the Outer City. Heavy fines in the local currency (a large silver coin called a *jáo*, which is worth about 10 Tsolyáni Hlásh) or temporary enslavement are levied against anyone caught violating this rule. At the same time, the priesthood does not proselytise; only those who seek out The God are instructed in his teachings.

DESCRIPTION

Ureshyésa is divided into four sections, each of which is called a *vanáb* (“abode,” “dwelling,” “home,” or even “city”) in Chérit. A brief description of each *vanáb* follows, under the name by which it is commonly known to travellers.

Outer City

The Outer City is the largest and most sprawling of the four *vanábl* (the plural of *vanáb*). It is also the only one located completely outside the walls of the city. Situated at the base of the escarpment upon which Ureshyésa proper rests, the Outer City is inhabited by *garqál*, meaning “foreigners,” though the word also has the implication of “servant” or “slave”. Close to 70% of Ureshyésa’s inhabitants dwell in the Outer City, which operates

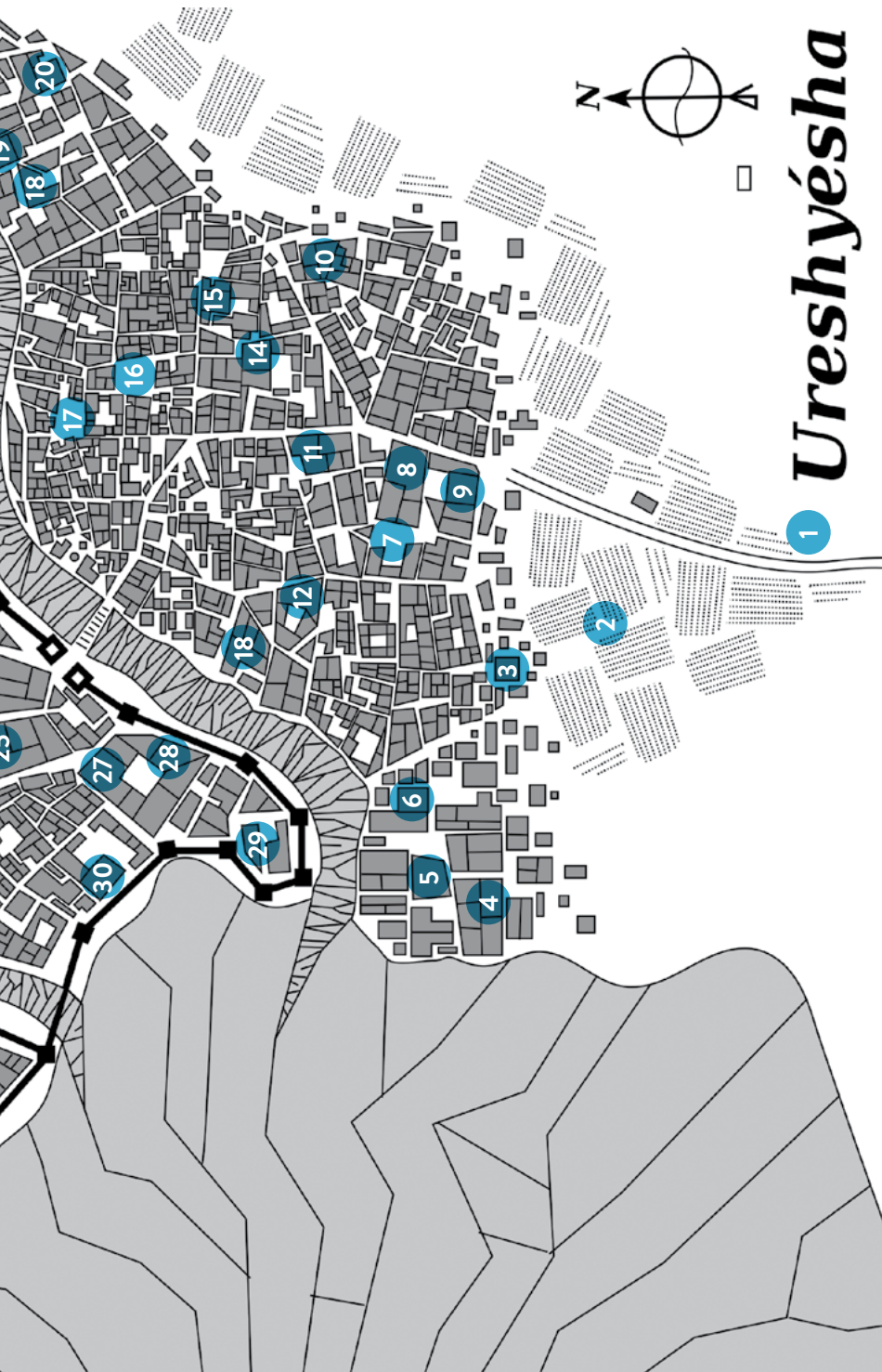
more or less independently of the other *vanábl* and could almost be called a separate settlement were it not for the fact that so much of its activity is driven, either directly or indirectly, by the Shúr Ésh *zángl* and the priesthood of Shé Jó.

The people of the Outer City are a mixed lot, consisting primarily of those whose ancestors came to Ureshyésa from places as disparate as the Great Desert of Galái, the Plain of Towers, M'mórcha, and the lands of the Tané, in addition to Livyánu, Mu'ugalavyá, and N'lúss. Over the centuries there has been a fair degree of admixture between these groups, creating a unique people who have adopted the Chérit language of the Shúr Ésh and worship of Shé Jó as their own.

KEY TO MAP OF URESHYÉSHA (see center spread)

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Road South | 30. House of Shú Nár Kén |
| 2. Gáin Fields | 31. Halls of Sagacity |
| 3. Customs House | 32. Plaza of Tengá |
| 4. Shop of Jál Lá Míro | 33. Everlasting Gate |
| 5. Resthouse of Arkhúaz | 34. Fountain of Chúrad Mí |
| 6. House of Kí Rú'u Lé | 35. Gallery of Yore |
| 7. Market of Chavá Re'él | 36. Visitors' Commorancy |
| 8. House of Arjuggósh the Salarvyáni | 37. Osó's Seat |
| 9. Barracks of Outer City Guard | 38. Hén Gó Ta'á Treasury |
| 10. Hostel of the Southern Road | 39. House of Téo Qú |
| 11. Company of the Dust of Gold | 40. Dró Nesh Bál Barracks |
| 12. Sojourners' Hospice | 41. Ascent to the God |
| 13. Shop of Mirígo the Armourer | 42. Resplendent Way |
| 14. Sanctum of the God | 43. Temple of the God |
| 15. Currency Exchange | 44. Priestly Dormitories |
| 16. Market of Lóro Dár | 45. Temple Guardhouse |
| 17. Market of Areshúr | 46. Sacred Archives |
| 18. Municipal Granary | 47. Atrium of the Sú Nár Kín |
| 19. Hall of Far Seers | 48. Gánchlu's Manse |
| 20. Retinue in Silver | 49. Orúta Gate |
| 21. Great Steps | 50. Descent into Darkness |
| 22. Supplicants' Gate | 51. Village of Chikét |
| 23. Archives of Zú Atár | 52. Road West |
| 24. Efflorescent Enclosure | 53. House of Avtúmàr |
| 25. Court of Trák Tân Todá | 54. Exalted Fane of Nalják |
| 26. Mantúk's Well | 55. House of Chárun Tenghá |
| 27. House of Tíla Tí Ká | 56. Workshop of Zhá Nár Já'a |
| 28. Kír Rú's Edifice | 57. Irrefrangible Fasthold of Asúrtsò |
| 29. Recondite Domicile | |





Ureshyésa

1

Inner City

The Inner City is home to the bulk of the Shúr Ésh population of Ureshyésha. Compared to the crowded Outer City, the Inner City is practically a ghost town, its many large and impressive buildings empty of all but a handful of people. This is especially true of the palaces of the Shúr Ésh *zángl*. A visitor to this *vanáb* would reasonably surmise that it housed a much larger population at one time, a fact the Shúr Ésh themselves will reluctantly acknowledge if pressed. They will then launch into a lament for the “lost glory” of Ureshyésha, with bolder ones intimating that it is because of the priesthood of Shé Jó that things have fallen into such a sorry state. Of course, if pressed for specifics, few have any to offer.

Entrance to the Inner City is restricted to the Shúr Ésh and their *garqál* servants. Unlike the City of The God (see below), this restriction is light, as the *zángl* employ large numbers of outsiders to perform a wide variety of tasks for them. Likewise, favoured merchants are given temporary access to the Inner City every week for an open air bazaar centred around Mantúk’s Well (26). Furthermore, anyone who wishes to enter (or merely pass through) the City of the God must first pass through the Inner City. Some of these travellers remain in this *vanáb* for a time, often as guests of Shúr Ésh, some of whom delight in learning more of the world outside the city.

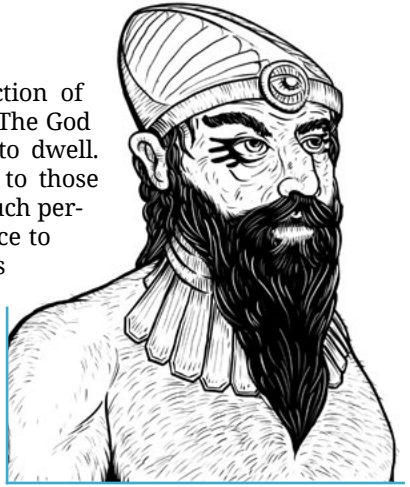
City of the Old Ones

The City of the Old Ones is a ruined section of the city, walled off from the Inner City, legal access to it being barred by the Everlasting Gate (33). The Gate is always manned by soldiers of the *Dró Nésh Bál*, an elite force of soldiers employed by the priesthood of Shé Jó for the express purpose of keeping this *vanáb* off-limits to everyone. In truth, many soldiers of the *Dró Nésh Bál* are incredibly corrupt and can be bribed to allow treasure hunters and other ne’er-do-wells to enter the City of the Old Ones. The practice is increasingly so commonplace and indiscreet that some of the Shúr Ésh have begun to wonder whether it is secretly condoned by the priesthood, though why they would do so is a mystery.

The ruins beyond the Gate consist of sections of the city from before the coming of Shé Jó that were never rebuilt, in large part because they allowed access to the extensive Tsuru’úm that exists beneath Ureshyésha. There are unsubstantiated rumours that this underworld is home to some remnant of the Old Ones. This area includes well-known landmarks such as House of Avtúmàr (53) and Exalted Fane of Najják (54), that have importance for the history of the city. Consequently, some Shúr Ésh *zángl* retain an interest in these places and surreptitiously sponsor *garqál* to “explore” the *vanáb*, looking for treasures of the Old Ones by which they might advance themselves within the city.

City of The God

The City of The God is the smallest section of Ureshyésa, dominated by the Temple of The God (43), where Shé Jó is currently reputed to dwell. Passage through this *vanáb* is restricted to those who have obtained permission to do so, such permission being granted only through service to the priesthood of Shé Jó. Service, in this case, can come in many forms, from a formalised *hikóá* relationship to temporary duties to outright bribery. Despite this, travellers and merchant caravans are not uncommon sights along the Resplendent Way (42). Ureshyésa continues to maintain itself through the wealth generated by such traffic and the priesthood knows it, however much it might wish to prevent infidels from passing through the *vanáb*'s gates.



Arjuggósh the Salarvyáni
(see p. 20)

Even with permission, passage through the City of The God is limited to the hours between sunset and sunrise. This permission is rescinded on nights when both Gayél and Káshi are full, as these days are sacred to Shé Jó and the presence of outsiders in the *vanáb* is said to defile it. Punishment for transgressing these restrictions is believed to be death, though few can say for certain as the perpetrators simply disappear once caught, never to be seen again.

NOTEWORTHY FEATURES

The buildings of the Outer City are generally one-storey affairs, made of a local variety of *Tíu*-wood, with thatched, tile, or slate roofs. Those of the Inner City are almost universally of stone, with wooden reinforcements in some cases. These more impressive buildings typically stand two to three storeys tall. The buildings of the City of The God are much the same but even more elaborate and beautiful in construction. Most stand between two and four storeys tall, with the Temple of The God itself rising to six storeys, making it the tallest structure in all of Ureshyésa.

The Tsuru'úm beneath the City of the Old Ones is extensive and is said to have many levels, the deepest of which extend in all directions. The origin of this underworld is a matter of conjecture as the Shúr Ésh have no legends of a settlement in this location before the establishment of Ureshyésa by Avtúmàr in the Latter Times. Furthermore, the custom of *Ditlána* is unknown here, so that cannot explain the existence of the Tsuru'úm. Those who have explored it report signs of habitation by intelligent creatures,

which comports with tales that some relict population of the Old Ones remains. There are also stories of a tubeway car station on one of the deeper levels.

NOTABLE NPCS

Arjuggósh Tukkúshshmrü: Known locally simply as Arjuggósh the Sal-
arvyáni, this wealthy merchant hails originally from Koylúga, where his
Black Pyramid clan dwells. He arrived in Ureshyésa more than two de-
cades ago after an arduous journey that left him near death. Nursed back
to health by priests of Shé Jó, he embraced The God in gratitude, though some
doubt his sincerity. Arjuggósh has since become a respected *garqá* and the
unofficial “mayor” of the Outer City. He takes great interest in travellers
from the Five Empires and tries to provide them with any assistance they
require – for a price.

Dmí Rú Na’á: Dmí Rú comes from a mid-ranked Shúr Ésh household; her fa-
ther is an importer of goods from Tané beyond the mountains. In her youth,
she spent much time listening to the stories her father’s *khamúkhl* told of
lands beyond Ureshyésa. She longed to visit them herself one day, but this
is frowned upon in Shúr Ésh society, especially for women, who are gen-
erally kept close to home to be used in the establishment of marital *hikóá*
arrangements with other families. Nevertheless, Dmí Rú hopes to one day
leave the city of her birth and see more of Tékumel.

Oródr GriNhúgr: Oródr is a N’lúss who hires himself out as a bodyguard in
the Outer City. He has no love of the Shúr Ésh, whom he considers “pathetic
weaklings,” but they pay well and he came to Ureshyésa almost five years
ago in search of wealth to take back to his homeland, where he had few
prospects. His services come highly recommended, especially by merchants
who have travelled through the mountain pass into the wild lands beyond
the Orúta Gate (49).

Thú Sér Éha: Thú Sér is captain of the guard at the Supplicants’ Gate (22),
where he oversees the passage of *garqál* into the Inner City. He takes his
duties seriously and treats bribery among his men as a grave offence. He is
also deeply concerned about the precarious situation of the Shúr Ésh. Thú
Sér is daily reminded that outsiders outnumber his people by more than
two-to-one and he fears the day when the precarious web of *hikóá* ceases
to function. On that day, he believes, the Shúr Ésh will go the way of the Old
Ones.

Trák Tán Todá: A Shúr Ésh lord, Trák Tán is ambitious. He envies the power
of the priesthood of Shé Jó and secretly plots with like-minded Shúr Ésh and,
more scandalously, *garqál*, to undermine, if not overthrow them. To that
end he has sponsored multiple expeditions into the underworld beneath
the City of the Old Ones in search of magic and devices that might help
advance his goals.

Magic Shields

Section 1820 of the *Empire of the Petal Throne* rulebook provides a short table for “the determination of magical arms and armour,” including shields. The results of this table are straightforward bonuses ranging from +1 to +3. Unlike magical weapons, there are no other possible special characteristics for magical armour, which I consider to be a missed opportunity. Surely, in a world as ancient and wondrous as Tékumel, there must be magical armour every bit as unusual as the swords and other weapons described in the rulebook!

To that end, I offer two tables of my own to go part way in correcting this omission. These tables are intended for the generation only of magic shields, though they could easily be used to generate other types of magical armour (including helmets), if the referee so desires. Future issues of *The Excellent Travelling Volume* may provide tables tailored for those types of armour.

In addition to the tables I have also described four unique magical shields. All possess additional abilities beyond a mere bonus as well as individual histories that note their origins, famous users, and other details that might serve to inspire referees in their Tékumel adventures and campaigns.

Table 1 is very similar to the table for magical swords in Sec. 1820 of the *EPT* rulebook in that it uses a shield’s magical power as a determinant in how many special abilities it could conceivably possess. The referee makes a percentile dice roll and must score a number within the appropriate range for the magical shield to have one or more special abilities. Thus, a score of 74 for a *shield* +1 results in one special ability while the same score would result in two special abilities for a *shield* +2 and three special abilities for a *shield* +3.

| Shield's Magical Power | Percentile Dice Score to Determine Number of Special Abilities Possessed by Shield | | |
|---------------------------|---|----------------------|------------------------|
| | <i>One Ability</i> | <i>Two Abilities</i> | <i>Three Abilities</i> |
| +1 | 70 | 80 | 90 |
| +2 | 60 | 70 | 80 |
| +3 | 50 | 60 | 70 |

Table 2 provides a list of possible special abilities. For each ability a magical shield possesses the referee should roll percentile dice once and note the result. Special abilities listed in italics are identical in effect to the bonuses spells described in Sec. 500 of the *Empire of the Petal Throne* rulebook and are usable once per day. However, if the referee’s rolls result in the same

special ability more than once it may be used a number of times per day equal to the number of times it was rolled. Other special abilities (e.g. damage reduction) are described below and cannot be gained multiple times. If the referee rolls any of them more than once he must re-roll until he gets a different special ability.

As with all random tables, Table 2 is not intended to be exhaustive but rather a spur to the referee's imagination and creativity. Referees are encouraged to come up with their own special abilities for magical shields rather than simply using those listed below.

| Percentile Score | Special Ability |
|------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1-8 | <i>Damage Reduction</i> |
| 9-16 | <i>Fear</i> |
| 17-24 | <i>Invisibility</i> |
| 25-32 | <i>Invulnerability</i> |
| 33-40 | <i>Levitate</i> |
| 41-48 | <i>Light</i> |
| 49-56 | <i>Protection from Evil/Good</i> |
| 57-64 | <i>Shield of Defense</i> |
| 65-72 | <i>Spell Reflection</i> |
| 73-80 | <i>Spell Resistance</i> |
| 81-88 | <i>Teleportation</i> |
| 89-96 | <i>Walls</i> |
| 97-100 | <i>Roll Twice</i> |

Damage Reduction: If the defender is able to use his shield to parry a blow (see Sec. 1800), it also reduces the amount of damage dealt by an amount equal to double its magical strength. Therefore, a *shield +1* reduces damage dealt to the defender by two points while a *shield +3* reduces it by six points. Damage reduction is always active, though the rules in Sec. 1800 always apply.

Spell Reflection: If the defender successfully makes a saving throw against a spell (or spell-like effect, such as that produced by an eye) of which he is the target, the spell is reflected back at the caster (who may make a saving throw to avoid its effects). This special ability can only be used a number of times per day equal to the magical strength of the shield. Spells that do not provide a saving throw cannot be reflected.

Spell Resistance: The defender gains a bonus to his saving throws versus spells (and certain eyes, at the referee's discretion) equal to the magical strength of the shield. Spell resistance is always active.

DHIMITLÁR'S BULWARK

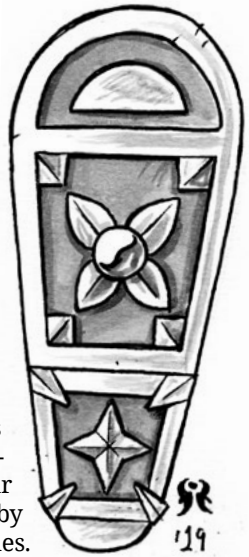
Dhimitlár's Bulwark is a tall *shield* +2 made from highly polished enchanted steel, reinforced with Chlén hide. Otherwise its appearance is quite unremarkable, looking little different than shields favoured by Tsolyáni legionnaires across the Empire. The only truly noteworthy physical feature of the shield is a series of hash marks – thirty-eight in all – carved into the back of the shield. These hash marks are not regular in size or shape, suggesting that a single individual did not carve them but rather that they were carved by several people over the course of many years. Regardless, their meaning, if any, remains a mystery.

The Bulwark possesses only one special ability, which is unique to it. So long as the shield is held its user is completely immune to all non-magical ranged attacks, whatever their source or potency. In this way the user cannot be harmed by arrows, crossbow bolts, even catapult and ballista projectiles. This effect has no duration and is usable at will so long as the shield is held. Mere possession of the Bulwark is insufficient, however; if slung, the shield no longer provides this protection. Likewise, the protection extends only to the user of the shield. Even those mere inches away from the user gain no benefit from its presence.

The shield was enchanted by the Tsolyáni sorcerer Dhimitlár hiChánkolum, a lay priest of Thúmis who lived in the city of Sokátis during the reign of Gyésmu “the Iron Fist.” The Bulwark was enchanted according to a method Dhimitlár had reputedly discovered during his many archaeological expeditions into western Salarvyá. He then presented it as a gift to Zhána hiJantúsa, an Aridáni warrior to whom he had proposed marriage. Though she accepted his proposal, Zhána was slain during the War of 2020 and the Bulwark was returned to him. Despondent, he placed the shield in the armory of his temple where it remained until 2340, when it was discovered by Chukún hiLügéth, a soldier being sent with his legion to deal with the Vriddi uprising in Fasíltum. Chukún survived his service there – thanks in no small part to the Bulwark's magic – but it was stolen from him while he slept and has not been seen since.

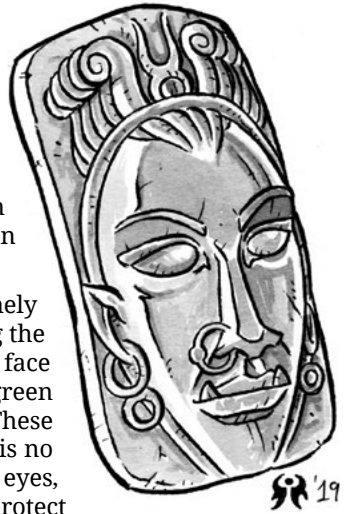
MYÉTL (“SWEETHEART”)

The shield nicknamed Myétl (“beloved girl” or “sweetheart” in Engsvanyáli) is a large shield made of metal-reinforced Tíu wood. Carved into the wood is a monstrous but feminine face surmounted with a tiara. Precisely whose face the shield depicts is an open question, with various theories having been advanced over the centuries. The most common one is that



the face is that of the thirty-fourth aspect of Lady Dlamélish, Mrikáya, known as “She Who Takes Pleasure in Battle.” Support for this theory is scant, though Sayál hiTlekéng, a scholar priestess of the Temple of Dlamélish in Béy Sú, sees similarities between the carving of Myétl and Engsvanyáli-era representations of Mrikáya from eastern Mu’ugalavyá. The truth, as with so much on Tékumel, is lost to history.

Myétl possesses only one potent special ability, namely the breathing of fire. Twice per day, upon speaking the shield’s name, the user can cause the mouth of the face on the shield’s front to open, spewing a gout of green flames in a cone that is 3” long and 1” at its base. These flames deal five 6-sided dice of damage and there is no saving throw against them (though certain spells, eyes, and other devices may, at the referee’s discretion, protect targets from the damage). These flames, though hot like normal fires, are magical in nature. They can kill living things yet do not leave behind scorch marks or burns.



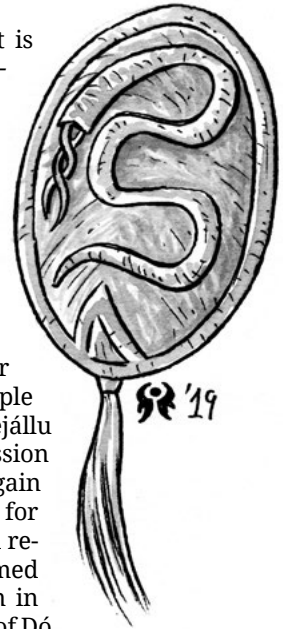
Myétl is old, having first been mentioned in a late Engsvanyáli military chronicle as the property of Ningúor Asháida, a warrior who participated in the priestking Kazhilo’ób IV’s campaign against the Mu’ugalavyáni rebel Hagháktish Lélo. Ningúor passed the shield on to his son, Chursú, another warrior of note, who in turn passed it on to his son. Myétl remained an heirloom of the High Pinnacle clan after the Fall of Gánga into the Time of No Kings. However, one of its owners, Hadesái khyTsorésh, esteemed it less than his ancestors and sold it for a sizable sum to a travelling Salarvyáni noble whose name is lost to history. Presumably this noble took it back east with him, but, if so, no record of it has survived and the current disposition of Myétl is unknown.

RIYÚLKOI

Riyúlkoi is a small oval shield +2 and is made of copper enchanted to the hardness of steel by means of a process known only to the Temple of Sárku. On its front is a stylised representation of a monstrous worm. Naturally, there is debate among scholars as to whether said worm depicts an aspect of the Master of the Undead himself or one of the many demon lords who serve him. Hanging from the bottom of the shield is a clump of brownish hair from an unknown creature. When last seen Riyúlkoi was in good shape, perhaps due to the unusual material of its manufacture. Compared even to magical shields of steel, it shows few signs of either its age or having sustained much damage in combat.

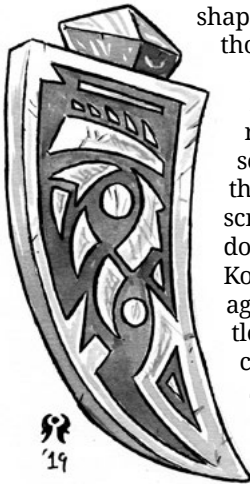
The shield possesses three special abilities. The first is *fear*, which is usable once per day. The second is *invisibility*, also usable once per day. Finally, *Riyúlkoí* enables its user to summon and command a *Mrúr* or *Shédra* for a period of three turns during which the undead creature will do everything within its power to ensure that no harm comes to the user of the shield, even to the point of its own destruction. After three turns have elapsed the summoned undead, if it has not been destroyed, returns whence it came. This special ability is usable once per day.

Riyúlkoí was created for *Arutlán hiKerúsa*, a member of the *Domed Tomb* clan and commander of the temple guard in the *City of Sáрку* during the reign of *Hehejállu* “the Dark Moon.” The shield was in *Arutlán*’s possession when a disguised fanatic of *Vimúhla* attempted to gain access to the sacred temple precincts in retaliation for the emperor’s persecution of his own faith. The shield remained in the hands of the *Kerúsa* lineage of the *Domed Tomb* clan for many generations before being taken in battle during the *Pé Chói* rebellion in the protectorate of *Dó Cháka*. Given these *Pé Chói*’s hatred of the *Lord of Worms* it is unlikely that the shield remained in their possession. More than likely it was either hidden away or sold for funds to continue their fight against imperial forces. In any case, *Riyúlkoí* has not been seen in centuries.



THE WARD OF MKÉL

The *Ward of Mkél* is a shield +1 made from enchanted steel. Its shape is typical of many northwestern *Yán Koryáni* shields, though it is unusual in that it is surmounted by a “crown” made from an unknown greyish metal that does not reflect light, no matter what its source or intensity. Decorating the front of shield is a glyph that bears some resemblance to one associated with the *Silver Worm* clan of the city-state of *Aqésha* (hex 4908). Written in *Yán Koryáni* script on the inside of the shield is the word *vrika*, which does not seem to derive from either modern or ancient *Yán Koryáni*; its meaning is, therefore, unknown. Despite its age (see below), the shield is in good repair and shows little evidence of having suffered any serious damage in the centuries since its first appearance on *Tékumel*.



The *Ward of Mkél* possesses two special abilities. The first is *damage reduction*, which protects its user from two points of damage per successful hit against him.

The second is a unique ability activated when the Ward is placed on the ground and the word *vrika* is spoken aloud. In such a case the shield expands to a size large enough to carry its user and up to three comrades (provided they are of human size or smaller). Under the user's telepathic direction, the Ward will hover a few inches above the ground and travel at 9" per combat round. In this form, the shield provides a stable platform from which the user and his comrades can fight or cast spells. However, the shield cannot cross chasms, bodies of water, or other similar obstacles; when these are encountered it instead comes to a gentle stop. This second special ability is usable once per day and the effect lasts until the user is no longer standing upon it.

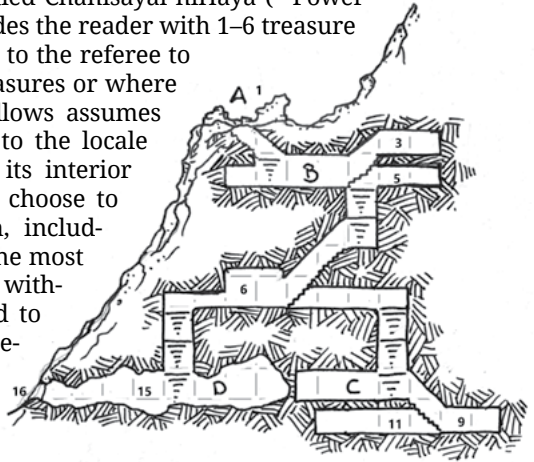
The first historical appearance of the Ward of Mkél was in 330 A.S., when the Tsolyáni launched forays into western Yán Kór, in an attempt to annex that region militarily after diplomacy had failed. The inhabitants of the city of Aqésha (or Ashékka, as it is known locally) fielded a large army to defend against the invaders, led by a general named Mkél Ssá Churrínga. Mkél was a fine strategist and a courageous warrior who had been gifted with the shield that now bears his name by the priests of the Sea-God, a local variant of Karakán. Though he was successful in routing the Tsolyáni, Mkél fell in battle and the Ward was taken as a spoil of war back to Khirgár. There, it came into the hands of Mekán hiZaréllu, a soldier of the Red Sword clan, who bore it in battle in Milumanayá. Mekán never returned and the Ward was assumed lost until recently, when reports began to circulate that a shield matching its description was being offered for sale in a market in Sunráya. The truth of these reports has yet to be ascertained.

ON SHIELDS

On Tékumel, most shields are constructed of Chlén hide, the wood of the tough Tiu tree (sometimes rimmed or banded with metal), or bronze. Steel shields are found but are rather rare since such a large piece of metal would normally be broken up to make edge weapons. The exceptions, of course, are enchanted shields, most of which are made of steel and are considered too valuable to re-purpose. Shield sizes range from little round bucklers to huge pavises borne by one man as protection for himself and a comrade. Large shields average about 20 inches in height, while medium varieties may be 12–16 inches. Round and oval shapes are the most popular, but many other forms are found, depending upon one's legion and local tradition: square, rectangular, diamond-shaped, hexagonal, or octagonal, and more — nearly every form one can logically imagine. There is no system of heraldry on Tékumel. However, warriors who are not members of a military unit sometimes adorn their shields with clan symbols, depictions of their deities, "good luck" runes, frightening faces, and the like. Once again, there is endless variety.

The Treasure Vault

Section 1700 of the *Empire of the Petal Throne* rulebook describes a book written in Tsolyáni entitled Chánisayal hiHayá (“Powerful Maps of Glory”) which provides the reader with 1–6 treasure maps. The rulebook leaves it up to the referee to determine the nature of the treasures or where the maps might lead. What follows assumes that the treasure map leading to the locale specifies only its location, not its interior details. Individual referees can choose to provide additional information, including its history or the nature of the most valuable treasures contained within. Indeed, they are encouraged to change anything presented hereafter to suit the nature of their own campaigns.

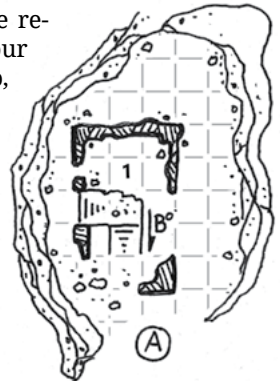


Built into the side of a small mountain, the treasure vault was once the lair of a disgraced Tsolyáni sorcerer named Mnésun hiKúrodu, who turned to banditry and plagued this region a generation ago. Inhabited now by vermin and his magical servitors, his lair is small but should nevertheless be an amusing challenge. After clearing it of threats they might even wish to refurbish it for use as a base of operations in the wilderness.

A. PLATEAU

1. Surface Ruins

Perched atop a plateau on the mountainside are the remains of a small stone structure. All but one of its four walls have crumbled and its roof collapsed long ago, leaving only piles of rubble. A set of stone stairs descend beneath the surface of the plateau, leading to Room 2 in Area B. The stairs are partially blocked by fallen debris which can be removed after 180 minutes of work minus one minute for every point of combined Strength brought to the task (e.g. Character #1 has Strength 54 and Character #2 has Strength 75. Working together they have a combined Strength of 129; clearing the rubble will take 51 minutes).



B. THE UPPER VAULT

2. Landing

At the bottom of the stairs from the surface is a bare room. The walls are decorated with faded frescoes depicting martial scenes. Each wall has two empty sconces for torches. On the east wall there is an intact unlocked bronze door while on the south wall a similar door has been removed from its hinges and lies on the ground nearby. The bronze of both doors is tarnished with a brownish-green patina.

3. Storage Room

Accessible by means of a flight of stone stairs, this chamber once held supplies, though only few now remain. There are thirteen small casks and barrels stored here whose contents have long since either evaporated, rotted, or been taken by others.

3a. Supply Room

This area contains a small collection of equipment: 200' of rope, 25 Chlén-hide spikes, a clay pot containing dried glue, and a leather bag, inside of which is a hammer and a handful of Chlén-hide nails.

4. The Treasure Vault

This large, ornately decorated chamber contains most of the treasure described on the map.

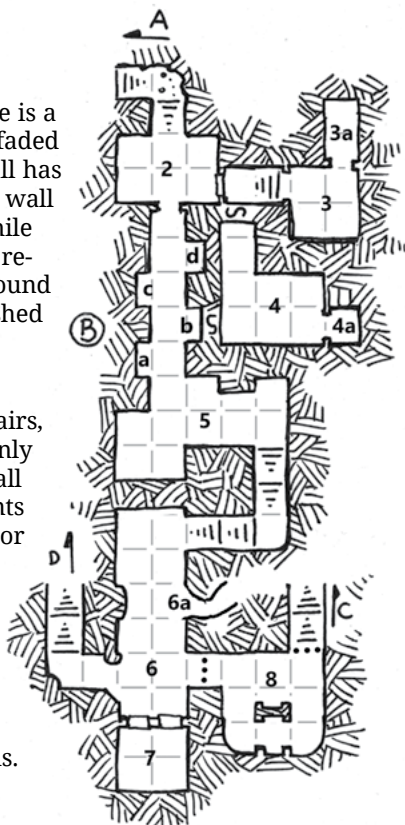
The treasure is stored in several containers: a wooden chest (3163 Qirgáls), a reptile-leather bag (1416 Hlášh), a metal coffer (131 Káitars), and a large ceramic urn containing 30 gems with a total value of 2940 Káitars (consisting mostly of azurite, tiger eye agates, and turquoise). None of these containers are trapped or otherwise dangerous.

Guarding the treasure is a Yéleth which attacks as soon as anyone enters the room from either secret door.

Yéleth (1) (AC 3 MV 9" HD 3 HP 14)

4a. Trophy Display

This alcove contains two more pieces of treasure: a Stability-aligned sword +1, +2 versus Change-aligned magic-users (Int 53, Ego 64; *dispel evil/good, light, protection from evil/good*) and an *ineluctable eye of healing* (56 charges, no inscription). Mnésun stole these items from noble adventurers during his lifetime and considered them prize possessions.



5. Hall of Portraits

Faded murals of subterranean realms filled with treasure and ferocious guardian monsters cover the walls of this area. The dust on the floor has been noticeably disturbed by a large number of footprints going in all directions with the bulk of them heading southward toward Room 6. There are four prominent niches in the wall, inside of which are Engsvanyáli-style frescoes.

5a. Fresco 1

This fresco depicts a young man with beady eyes and an obvious overbite wearing ostentatious clothing.

5b. Fresco 2

The fresco in this niche shows a man wearing military armour and staring imperiously at the viewer. Anyone who looks at the portrait for more than a short period of time (referee's discretion) must make a saving throw versus spells or fall under the effects of *fear* for 6 rounds, after which they gain a +1 bonus to hit on their next attack (and +1 damage if the attack is successful).

5c. Fresco 3

The visage of an old man with unruly whiskers smiles from the fresco in this niche.

5d. Fresco 4

Unlike the other frescoes in this room, this one shows a pretty young girl with long, dark hair, wearing deep blue attire.

6. Hallway

At any given time 8 Kúrgha can be found in this area. The Kúrgha are protective of this area and attack anyone who enters it. If they break morale the Kúrgha will flee into the tunnels at 6a.

Kúrgha (8) (AC 6 MV 12" HD 1 HP 6, 5, 4×2, 2, 1×3)

6a. Kúrgha Tunnels

A hole gapes in the stone wall at this location, leading to a warren of twisting passages. The passages are a tight fit for human-sized or larger creatures, who suffer a -2 penalty to all attacks, armour class, and saving throws while moving through them. They eventually lead outside the mountain but the path is much too narrow for most creatures to use.

Any Kúrgha who fled Room 6 will hide in here, avoiding intruders, unless they have no other option. Hidden in a nest within one passage are four gems (a turquoise worth 50K, a sardonyx worth 250K, an obsidian worth 50K, and a rhodochrosite worth 10K).

7. Workroom

Two magically locked, heavy metal doors prevent entrance into this room. The enchantment can only be broken by means of spells like door control or

dispel magic or by the use of the *eye of advancing through portals*, though the referee is the final arbiter of what constitutes an appropriate means of overcoming it. However, dispelling the enchantment on either door detonates a magical trap that deals 3–12+3 points of damage in a 10' radius, half-damage on a successful saving throw. The explosion also destroys the door.

Beyond the doors is Mnésun's workroom, which holds two wooden tables, upon which rest two Yéleth that spring to life and attack anyone entering the room.

Yéleth (1) (AC 3 MV 9" HD 3 HP 12, 11)

Also in the room is a small chest containing 814K and an amulet of perceiving the scintillation of metals.

8. Altar to Bázh Akhár

A stone altar depicting shrivelled corpses dominates the centre of this room. The walls are decorated in a similar fashion. Characters with the Scholar skill might recognize this as a chantry to Bázh Akhár, an ancient aspect of Lord Durritlámish with jurisdiction over vermin. There is nothing special about the altar itself unless touched by someone who does not revere Durritlámish. In that case, two portcullises (marked on the map) fall from the ceiling, blocking exit from the room.

There are two ways to lift the portcullises. The first is by brute force, with a chance equal to one-fourth the character's Strength score on percentile dice. The second is to make an offering to Bázh Akhár by placing at least 2000 Qirgáls in the niche in the southern wall. Doing so will cause the portcullises to reset, provided the copper coins are left in the niche. Should they be removed the portcullises fall again. Other means of escape are possible if the referee concurs.

C. THE MIDDLE VAULT

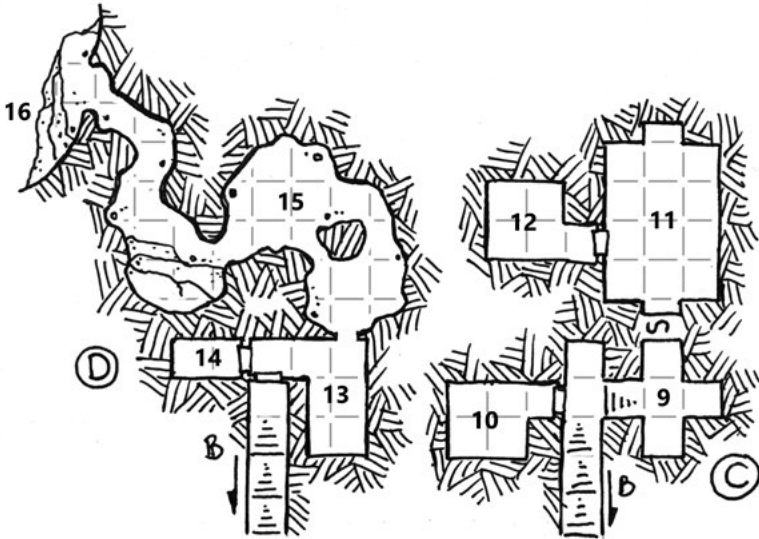
9. Mouldy Room

Whatever its original purpose, this chamber is now damp and mouldy thanks to a large crack in the easternmost wall that has allowed water to seep in slowly. Patches of brown and grey mold now grow here, one each in the northern and eastern alcoves and another in the centre of the room. Despite their unpleasant appearance the patches of mould are harmless.

10. Kitchen

Like Room 9 above this room is damp due a crack in the south wall that allows water to trickle in. Long wooden tables line each wall. Scattered, overturned containers, their contents long since gone, can be seen as well, along with a variety of eating utensils. Hidden underneath one of the containers is a silk bag containing 52 Qirgál. Clinging to the ceiling above the entrance to the room is a Mu'ágh.

Mu'ágh (1) (AC 8 MV 2" HD 3 HP 10)



11. Mnésun’s Chambers

Mnésun lived here when alive and now his spirit lingers in death – a blessing of Lord Sárku. Despite the room’s large size its furnishings are sparse, consisting only of two tables. There are also plain but tattered tapestries covering the walls.

Mnésun is now a powerful Shédra. He lurks in the shadows of the room, not attacking until someone attempts to open the door to Room 12. However, his dark presence can be felt beforehand.

Shédra (1) (AC 6 MV 9” HD 3+3 HP 15)

In addition to his abilities as a Shédra, Mnésun retains the ability to cast the following spells: *clairaudience*, *clairvoyance*, *cold*, *control of self*, *fear*, *illusion*, *paralysis*, *shadows*, *telekinesis*.

12. False Treasure Vault

Mnésun intended this room to trick would-be treasure hunters by providing enough treasure to make them think they have discovered an already-looted vault. The door to the vault is made of bronze, like most of the others, and stands slightly ajar. Beyond the door, in a large metal chest, is 1466 Hlášh. Nearby is a coffer containing 421K. There are also a half-dozen other smashed or broken containers and handfuls of coins (1-8 Qirgál, Hlášh, and Káitars each should anyone collect them all).

D. THE LOWER VAULT

13. Guardroom

The door to this former guardroom is shattered as is part of the wall surrounding it. The chamber holds only the skeletal remains of three explorers who fell victim to the Zrné in Room 15 below. Searching their bodies reveals the following: a bag containing exactly 2000 Qirgál, a small lacquered box (worth 1700K), a gold headband (worth 1100K), and a silver necklace (worth 400K). This is in addition to two suits of chain armour, one shield, a hand axe, a two-handed sword, and a dagger, along with three backpacks filled with miscellaneous gear.

The door leading to the stairs to Area B has been wedged open with a piece of wood. The gap is large enough that a short human being could easily pass through it without having to open the door completely.

14. Armoury

Wooden pegs cover the stone walls of this room. Hanging from them are several battered and/or broken shields, pieces of armour, and weapons in ill repair. Searching through them reveals that the only items of use and value are a dagger, a mace, and a short sword; the rest are all worthless. Also present in the room are two large, locked chests. Despite their locks, they are both empty.

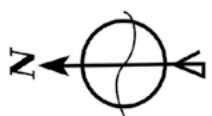
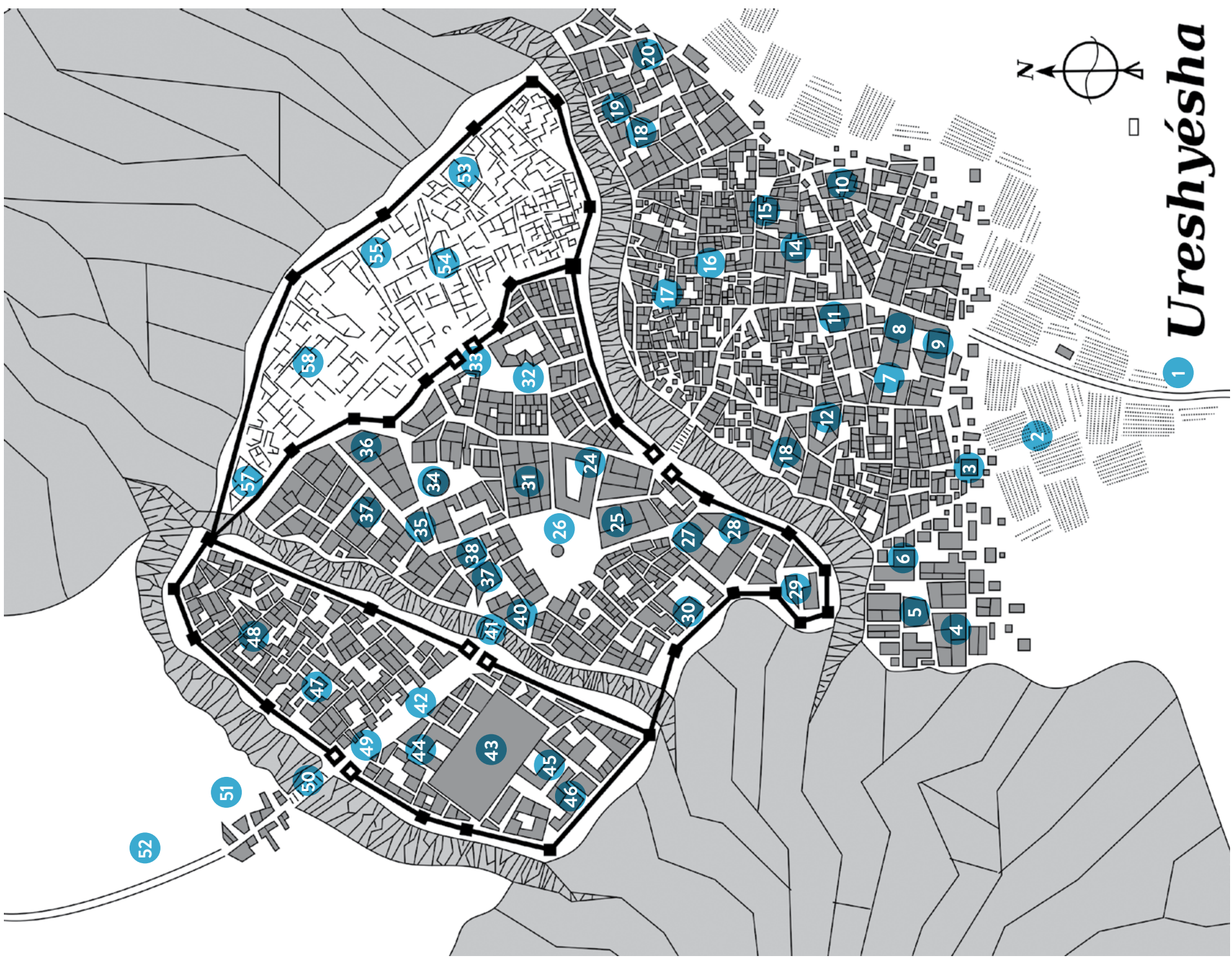
15. Zrné Lair

Three Zrné have recently moved into this cave and use it as their lair. There is a 70% chance that one or more of them will be hunting in the surrounding countryside when the characters enter. Also present in the cave are the half-eaten corpses of a pair of travellers who had the misfortune of stumbling upon this place while all three Zrné were present. The two corpses have nothing of value.

Zrné (3) (AC 5 MV 15" HD 6 HP 28, 27, 17)

16. Cave Entrance

A large cleft yawns in the mountainside, partially obscured by overgrown vegetation. Characters who take the time to examine the area carefully will discern evidence of recent passage into the cave by at least one (and possibly several) large creatures. Further examination will also reveal a trail of blood leading into the cave.



Ureshyésa

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Béthorm™

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Foundation



"Béthorm" is a complete Tékumel RPG in one book. The game system requires 2d10, which is somewhat similar to a d20 game, except that there's a curve to the results that curb the "wildness" of plain random rolls. Damage and Initiative are similarly "tempered". There are fumbles, critical successes, and tables for generating dramatic and unexpected results. These mechanics are designed by Jeff Dee, co-creator of the award-winning "Cavemaster" and the super-heroes game "Mighty Protectors".

Character generation is point-construction. There are stats and skills. There's also a system of advantages/disadvantages. Features such as Higher Lineage, a Talent for archery, Phobia of heights, being a Psychic Dampener, having a Follower or Pet, having a Nemesis or Rival, having a Dark Secret, being especially Physically Attractive, having Excellent Night Vision, and much more, are covered.

Players can be humans or non-humans; those rules are included. The magic system is detailed, yet graceful. There are Universal, Generic, and Temple spells. It follows Professor Barker's spell corpus faithfully. Here you will find classics such as 'the Web of Kriyág', and "Doomkill".

A number of Scrolls, Eyes, Tomes, and other magic items are described, along with their statistical implications.

The history of Tékumel is summarized in several pages. Basic information about the setting such as living in a clanhouse, the use of Chlén-hide, and the absence of riding animals are covered. (This is not a complete sourcebook; for that, we ecstatically recommend "The Tékumel Sourcebook", which is the canon we have assiduously followed.) A map of the Empire of Tsolyánu, a map of a small portion of the Kúrt Hills region, and a detailed map of the city of Katalál are also included.

This book contains many of the "fightable" creatures of the Tékumel Source Book and the Tékumel Bestiary.

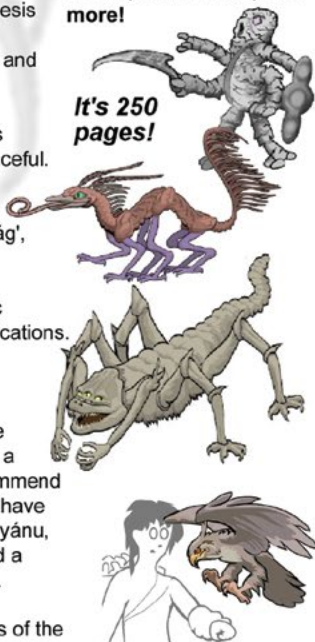
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