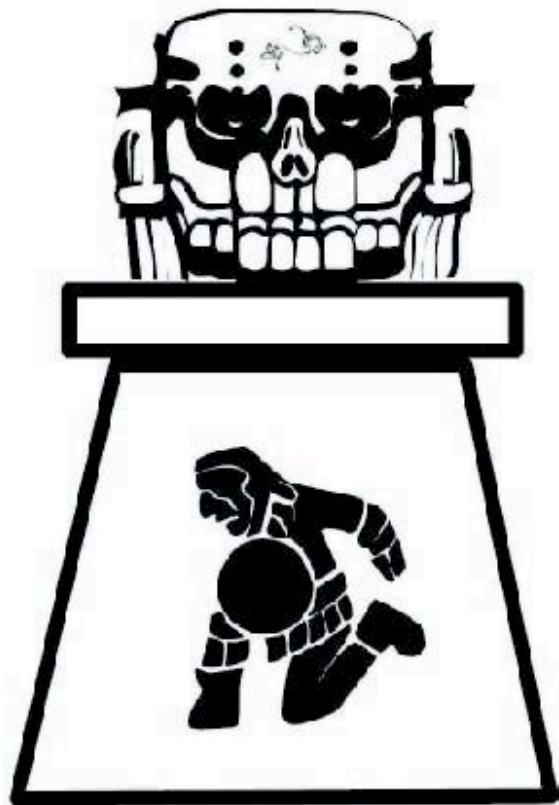


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# Book of Visitations of Glory

Issue 2



Visitations of Glory, Issue 2, Winter 2001

This issue's contributions:

Brad Johnson - A Letter Home  
Krista Donnelly - A Little Knowledge  
Malcolm Heath - Future Project  
Robert Dushay - Unwelcoming Party  
Robert Svard - Illuminating Depictions  
First Issue Comments

**From: Su'umélkoi Hágesh hiTkétl, Flat Peak Clan, Temple of Chiténg, Attached to the Legion of Kétl, Gánga Isle Imperial Prison**

**To: Dlántukoi Gáyan hiTkétl, Flat Peak Clan, Fasiltúm**

**Subject: Monthly Report on the Environs Near the Ruins of Gánga**

**Ngángmuru brujutlé dlántukoi,**

**I have arrived safely and look forward to my duties.**

**The clan here in Petrís Layóda sends their greetings. Dlántukoi Harésh hiKalakán has been most kind to me. He enjoys the stories of life in Fasiltúm. He once visited our fair city when he was young and remembers it fondly. He asks about a clan aunt by the name of Alána. Forgive my ignorance, but I am too young to remember all of the elders. I promised to ask of her when I wrote you.**

**The clan has assigned me fine quarters when I am in the area supervising the repair of the Imperial prison. I am pleased that I can offer my healing skills to our cousins in return for their generosity. Many of the men working on the construction site are the same faces that surround me at evening mealtime in the eating hall. They do our clan proud by setting such a fine example in their skillful labor. The Prefect has noticed their attention to detail and has mentioned other work that will be needed in the near future. I have relayed this information to the dlántukoi and he is quite pleased.**

**The temple has set up a temporary camp near the quarries for my use when I am there to choose the stones. It is near a large village called Saléng. These visits give me an excellent opportunity to explore the ancient Éngsvan Hlá Gánga ruins nearby.**

**I have noticed that this ancient land has been reduced to a vague shape. The hills have softened with time with the help of the stonecutter's tools. The dales remain swampy so as to be easily flooded during storms. It is difficult to picture the olden capital during its time of glory when the gentle slopes that surround my position were once mighty cliffs.**

**The geological formations are of great interest. They greatly influenced how the islands cities were constructed. The limestone is mined just south of the urban areas from a great hill named Zaúl, which seems to be a local aspect of Lord Vimúhla, probably due to the appearance of the mount as a flame arising out of the ground. The rock is red near its base and slowly turns to yellow near the top with many imbedded creatures forever frozen in the stone. The locals refer to these as the "minions of the flame" that await release during the Final Conflagration. This ominous moniker does not seem to stop the Glass Spear Clan from gathering the material and making lime, which is crushed and mixed with powdered volcanic rock to make mortar in a process that is held secret by their clan.**



The volcanic rock is cut from a valley that slowly rises to the west of the ruined city. The colors range from a dark red to gray to black. The active quarry presently covers a space of approximately two tsán long by one tsán wide. The quarrymen of the Black Hand Clan cut one dháiba to two dháiba cubes of the stone from galleries that are three dháiba to six dháiba in size. When a quarry gives out the previous galleries are filled with the refuse of the new one. Some of these abandoned quarries have been converted into great tombs with carved steps that lead down into underground passageways. I have not yet visited these places of the dead.

Bricks are manufactured near the clay hills downriver from the village. The Glass Spear Clan has a kiln working here that has been lighted for many centuries, according to local tales. The operation is quite impressive. As I have examined the old ruins I have noted their clan's local seals imprinted in the bricks of collapsed walls from before the fall of the nearby city. Their clan works closely with our own. The clan cousins here buy many wagons full of brick and tile from the kiln master. The pieces come in many shapes, square, triangular, round and a unique crescent shape. At this time many of the pieces are being used in repairing the damage the Temple of Chiténg in Petrís Layóda suffered in the last mild quake. I have also been put in charge of this operation since my arrival from the builder's school in Béy Sü. Fortunately, the prison and temple are near each other.

I feel honored to serve The Emperor by helping to repair His Prison.

The village has some interesting sites. In times of peace the village drinks from the springs that rush up out of the ground near the foot of the hill. During times of war, there are large cisterns under the shelter of the local fortification. Upon further investigation, one of the wells that are still in use is 40 dháiba deep and the cistern it feeds is covered by a triangular roof and holds 200 nmécha of water.

Near the northern shore is an altar to an unknown god. This deity is famous for alerting the local guardsmen, in a mysterious voice of the night, of impending Hlutrgú attacks. This has saved the local population numerous times. The priests in this region do not know which god to attribute this to (a subject of much debate), so they have erected an altar with no mention of which divinity it is to honor.

There also exists a famous relic of the Temple of Vimúhla. It is a small stone of lava-like texture, brown in color and conical in shape. It is said to have fallen from the sky in a great bath of flames. So great is the worship of this object that a shrine was raised for its veneration. It is now set in a silver frame as the representation of the aspect Methqázh, the ruler of the moon Káshi, from which it is told the stone came from. Children of the follower's of that temple are often brought here for their khatunjálim to be doused in sacrificial blood and paraded around the village in a special silver palanquin. Many of our cousins have participated in this particularly gory ceremony.

Many of the nobility have small palaces here near the ruins. It gives them a sense of attachment with their glorious past. I was honored when the local precept of the temple of Vimúhla invited all the local priesthoods of the God and his Cohort to his personal temple residence for a theological discussion on "The Sacrifice of the Stone

Flame". Even from my lowly post I witnessed many fabulous scenes. Entering the building we first came into the atrium. This space was surrounded by a colonnade of 12 columns of red lava having bases and capitals exquisitely cut in orange marble. These gave access to apartments of elaborate shape and design. As I continued along the marked pathway I came into the courtyard of honor. This space then opened up onto other apartments. The one that I could see into had six vaults supported by finely carved supports.

The courtyard itself was paved with marble inlayed with semiprecious stone. Even the basins were made from marble with the water pipes lined with lead. Here, from the lowest dais, I listened to the some of the finest minds debate the intricacies of ancient postulates. It was more interesting to my scholarly brothers, but still fascinating to me.

During breaks we were allowed out into the verdant gardens. They were laid out in the ancient Engsvanyáli fashion. The largest section was dedicated to plant life with huge pots of clay, brass and even silver holding varieties of flowers and herbs that I have never seen. One of the junior priests of Vimúhla explained to me the significance of each plant and how it is used in the various rites of The Burning Foretold. It was a very enlightening day.

Petrís Layóda is a place of wonders. The custom has always been to place small shrines at the intersections of the main streets. This has resulted in a total of 526 shrines placed about the city. Although most of them carry inscriptions, many cannot not be read because of the passage of time. Many are not even recognizable as to what temple they belong. I shall make a pilgrimage to map out those belonging to Vimúhla and Chiténg.

I am learning much here and hope to see my beloved home clan soon after this assignment is complete.

Your loving son,  
Hágesh

## **A Little Knowledge** by Krista Donnelly

### *Author's Introduction*

I've taken some liberties with canon information, particularly in allowing a non-spell-caster to summon Qu'ú. If anyone objects, remind them that they should know better than to be misled by the textual corruptions of lazy scribes!

### *Referee's Introduction*

This scenario takes place in a small Thúmis monastery, set in a rural locale in northwestern Tsolyánu. The player characters are divided into two groups: the Thúmis priests and the villagers. For a smaller group of players, all the PCs should be priests. To accommodate larger groups, you can simply add more villagers with different concerns.

The gist of the set-up is this: a priest, Omél hiSayúncha, has had a vision. He is convinced that a new, hither-to unknown Aspect of Thúmis has visited him. He's carved a statue to represent this Aspect and wants to start its worship in the monastery. Another priest, Bálesh hiTukkolén, also desires to have a vision and has been harmonizing on "Th." Unfortunately, due to his poor technique, he is reaching out instead to the demon Qu'ú. And Qu'ú, unbeknownst to him, has been happily engaging in manipulations. Things come to a boil at the annual Festival of the Illumination of the Mind.

### *Players' Introduction*

The Well of Knowledge is a small monastery set in the breadbasket plains of northwestern Tsolyánu. Like many Tsolyáni monasteries, its members perform a mixture of duties, ranging from scholarly studies to manual labor. In addition, the Well runs a school for the most promising children from the surrounding villages. Due to the poverty and low status of Flat Rock and Open Hand, the clans inhabiting the villages, most attendees stay just long enough to learn to read and cipher before returning to work for the clans. All the priests at the Well take turns serving as teachers.

Each year as summer nears its zenith and the calm between planting and harvest descends upon the countryside, the Well of Knowledge holds its annual Festival of the Illumination of the Mind. The highlight of the summer, many villagers flock to the monastery to give offerings, participate in the Following of the God ritual, and enjoy the carnival-like atmosphere of The Sublime Edification of the Populace.

Anticipation is running high this year for the Festival. Curious rumors have been leaking from the monastery, rumors that a priest has been visited with visions, that Pavár lives again, here, so many tsán from even Si'is. Could this be true? Is it a miracle? Or is it blasphemy?

**G.M. Note:** To help everyone understand what should happen during the day, give a copy of the following description of the Festival to each of the players.

## **The Festival of the Illumination of the Mind**

This festival occurs every year in mid-summer.

### The Opening of the Eyes of Radiance

The day begins as usual with the Opening of the Eyes of Radiance ritual. As the villagers will still be on their way to the monastery, this will be a private ritual for the priests and the resident students. Mottán, the head ritual priest, will lead it. You expect him to ask what you will do during the Sublime Edification of the Populace this afternoon.

When the ritual ends, you traditionally choose which Aspect's statue you will carry in the processional known as the Following of the Gods. You stand by that Aspect's statue. When the villagers arrive, Mottán dramatically throws open the main doors (The Doors of Enlightenment), you lift your Aspect's statue to your shoulder, and follow Mottán out.

### The Following of the Gods

The villagers traditionally approach the monastery and the Doors of Enlightenment are flung open to them. As the priests file out behind Mottán with the Aspects, the villagers fall in step behind them. Mottán will lead the procession around the main building counter-clockwise. He will stop at each corner, summon a priest/Aspect forward and offer up prayers in praise of the Aspect. (See the map for the traditional route). At the sixth stop he will offer up prayers to Lord Thúmis as a whole. Then the procession enters the main hall and the Aspects are returned to their places.

A table has been set up outside the main hall, manned by Hóru, where the villagers can buy tetél flowers to offer to the Aspects. There is a lull in the activities here as the villagers purchase offerings, give offerings to the Aspects, and beseech prayers from the priests. This also gives the servants time to bring all the food and drink out from the kitchens. Traditionally, the tables of food are set up in front of the Main Hall.

### The Sublime Edification of the Populace

The rest of the afternoon has a semi-carnival atmosphere. As the villagers wander around stuffing their faces, the priests settle down on their mats and produce their offerings of knowledge. Sometimes they have recited from the sages, sung songs, explicated doctrines, answered questions, told fortunes, expounded on their academic specialty. The priests have wide latitude on what they choose to do. They will be expected to justify their selection after the Festival. This is an opportunity to shine or fail badly. Adults tend to stay for a while with one priest before rising to check out another priests; the children often run wild, changing groups every few minutes.

## The Well of Knowledge

This monastery is really quite humble. Due to the small school it runs, no attempt has been made to hide it from the surrounding villagers. It consists of one main building with several side halls branching off from it. (See map). Currently, 6 priests staff it, and 11 children attend the school more-or-less regularly. The Well of Knowledge was set up in one of those consummately quixotic Thúmis crusades to spread learning to all the people. The Well is not self-supporting. The priests receive a salary from the temple in Chéne Hó, which is kept on the books, rather than paid out in coins to them. Basic foodstuffs are brought in from the nearby lands owned by the temple, supplemented by the monastery's dlél orchard, vegetable garden, káika birds and hmá flock. The monastery also grows a magnificent garden of tetél flowers that are used for offerings. There are only two servants: the cook (a woman) and a handyman (a man) – both from Flat Rock.

The Aspects that have shrines in the main hall are as follows:

1. Armésh "The Jewelled Serpent". This is a gigantic coiling serpent with iridescent, many-hued scales. He is a legendary Aspect who appears only in the myths and exhibits a protective nature. He protected Hrúgga from the Demon Qu'ú and restored life to Lord Qón's hero Jajél.
2. Muór "The Sage of Sages". He is aged man standing in a long robe and black skullcap. He represents scholarship and wisdom. Students often pray to him.
3. Majér the Maiden. She is a sweet-faced, pretty girl wearing a simple grey tunic and sandals. She symbolizes youthful wisdom and the coming of age. Young girls pray to her for success and wise decisions.
4. Meshmúr "The Molder of Flesh; the Healer of Entrails". He looks like a snake with a large monocular head. With his single great eye, he heals internal injuries, such as ulcers, cancers and hemorrhages.
5. Chuharém the Diviner. He is a stern man, seated, with a walking staff across his knees, wearing a hooded cloak thrown back to reveal a black skullcap. He stands for divination and the casting of fortunes. However, he may not decide to convey his knowledge.



## Priest Characters

### 1. **Omél hiSayúncha**, Grey Wand, Thúmis

#### 5<sup>th</sup> Circle Priest

Strength 3	High Pedhétl 6	Melee Attack 3
Dexterity 3	High Status	Melee Defense 1
Intelligence 7	Older (25 years)	Missile Attack 3
Psyche 7	Hard Luck	Missile Defense 1
Willpower 7		
Charisma 6		

Health Points 50

Initiative 4

#### Calligraphy 1

Language (Tsolyani, speak) 2

Language (Tsolyani, read) 1

Etiquette (High Clan) 1

Etiquette (Temple) 3

Ritual (Thúmis) 3

Scholar (History of Tsolyánu) 2

Subculture (High Clan) 1

Subculture (Priesthood) 3

Theology (Thúmis) 3

You were born and raised in Béy Sü and began your career serving in the Temple of Eternal Knowing in that city. You are here at this monastery because several years ago your patron had the misfortune to fall out of favor, and you fell with him. You accepted this unexpected turn of events with good grace, and have made a home for yourself here. Every day you earnestly teach the villagers' children in the monastery school. They learn little and never stay for long, but you take heart that you are planting the seeds of knowledge in their little minds.

Then, one day, several weeks ago, all your noble actions were noticed. You were sitting quietly in your cell, gazing into a small grey mirror, harmonizing on "F," when you received a vision from Thúmis himself. (See separate sheet for the vision). From your time in Béy Sü, you had written out fragments from Kháriyelyal hiHáyasa (Appearances in Mighty Glory) by Cha'ánya hiNáshomai, which described all the known Aspects of Thúmis. You reviewed these writings and realized you had seen a previously unknown Aspect. You were so moved that you went out and labored carefully sculpting a figure of this Aspect. Though you never sculpted before, Thúmis himself guided your hand.

You know that you were given this vision to encourage the worship of Thúmis. Immediately after receiving it, you stood up at the appointed time in the daily morning Opening of the Eyes of Radiance ceremony and shared your experience. Reaction to your announcement has been subdued, save from your fellow priest Bálesh, who seems very moved and excited. You are not even sure if Mottán and Shémek, the head ritual and head administrative priests, have sent word up the temple hierarchy of this glorious occurrence. Never the less, your enthusiasm has not dimmed, and you tell of your experiences to everyone you meet. Your sole desire is to see the sculpture of this new Aspect enshrined along with all the other Aspects, and worshipped by the priests and villagers alike.

### Additional Information

1. Like all other Tsolyáni, you were given a secret name by your elders at your coming-of-age Name Day ceremony. This name is said to reflect your inner being. It is rarely shared as knowledge of it can give others power over you. Your secret name is Túplanin. It means, "loved."
2. Your star pupil in the school is 9-year-old Sánjesh hiNezár. He has real potential to go on to become a Thúmis scholar himself, if only his clan could spend the káitars on him.
3. Your statue resembles the boulder you saw in your vision, carefully replicating all its curves and bulges.

### Goals

1. Get your statue installed in the main hall with the other Aspects.
2. Persuade the villagers to pray and give offerings to it.
3. Preach to as many of the villagers as possible.

### **Omél's Vision**

"As I meditated, darkness fell upon me. Then gradually, it lightens, as if the dawn is approaching. I can feel something watching me, observing me. It feels cool, remote, but vastly intelligent. I feel like if I could reach it, I would know everything. I cry out to it but all I can see is a grey mist swirling around me, suffused with light. Then I see something darker up ahead. I approach it, and it's a mountainside. I start to climb, and it gets colder and darker. I can feel the cold piercing my bones, and enlightenment floods over me. I know so many things; I understand so much. I'm closer to it; I can feel it. But I can't go any further – it's too cold and dark. Then, before me, softly glowing in a pale grey light is a huge boulder, blocking my way. I realize that I am not meant to go further, that my Lord has given me all I can receive. And then I awaken. In my mind is the word pasqáikh. I know that it is the name of this Aspect."

**GM Note:** Omél has seized on his interpretation of this rather ambiguous vision due to his prior devotion to Thúmis. You will need to decide if this is, in fact, an Aspect of Thúmis only if Chashána achieves a major success in her fortune-telling based on Omél's secret name.

"Pasqáikh" is the Tsolyáni word for boundary, end, limit. Anyone who chooses to go to the library will discover this in a matter of minutes. This can be interpreted as either an acknowledge of humanity's limitations as compared to the power of the beings who are called gods, or a blasphemy which denies Thúmis' ability to spread knowledge to all.

## Balesh's glyph



### 2. **Báles** hi**Tukkolén**, Victorious Globe, Thúmis

5<sup>th</sup> Circle Priest

Strength 3  
Dexterity 3  
Intelligence 7  
Psyche 7  
Willpower 6  
Charisma 6

High Pedhétl 9  
Attractive

Melee Attack 3  
Melee Defense 1  
Missile Attack 3  
Missile Defense 1

Health Points 45  
Initiative 4

Calligraphy 1  
Language (Tsolyani, speak) 2  
Language (Tsolyani, read) 1  
Etiquette (Medium Clan) 1  
Etiquette (Temple) 3  
Ritual (Thúmis) 3  
Scholar (Geology) 4  
Subculture (Medium Clan) 1  
Subculture (Priesthood) 3  
Theology (Thúmis) 3

You came to the monastery to get as far away from the strictures of family and clan as you could get. Here you would not be overshadowed by arrogant clan-cousins or sneered at by those of higher clan. At first, you were satisfied with the quiet pace, dividing your *kirén* between teaching the children, caring for the *hmá* and studying the ancient scholars. But little by little, discontent began to creep into your mind, disturbing the peace of your meditations as you went about your daily routines. Was this it? This foolish, degrading, boring drudgery carried out among your inferiors? Was there no glory in serving Thúmis? Were the *Ksárul* scoffers right after all? You always pushed such thoughts away, refusing to entertain them for long. Yet they always returned.

And then it happened. Omél stood up one morning in the Opening of the Eyes of Radiance ceremony and shared a vision that he had experienced the night before. A vision of Lord Thúmis himself. And if that were not enough, it was a vision of a previously unknown Aspect of Thúmis, Pasqáikh. Your heart burned with an emotion you couldn't quite identify (Zeal? Envy? Anger? You refused to examine it closely.) Omél is a quiet, ordinary, dull colleague. If Thúmis has visited him, as he did Pavár long ago, then surely he would visit you as well. You began to spend all your waking hours in your cell meditating on "Th", harmonizing with Thúmis, gazing into your small silver mirror. You fasted and went without sleep. Finally, last night, after several weeks, when you were weak from hunger and dizzy from lack of sleep, you experienced the most glorious moment of your life. A great trembling seized you, and then the vision was upon you (see separate sheet).

When you recovered from the vision, you found a small pile of gifts before you: a scroll case cleverly worked with emeralds; three simple bracelets made of heavy gold with an abstract design of black obsidian and emeralds; and three necklaces with medallions intricately worked with small chips of black obsidian and emeralds. You reached out for your personal scroll and carefully inscribed the glyph you saw in your vision. You have never seen it before. That word, "tirrigáschè," continues to echo in your mind.

#### Additional Information

1. Like all other Tsolyáni, you were given a secret name by your elders at your coming-of-age Name Day ceremony. This name is said to reflect your inner being. It is rarely shared as knowledge of it can give others power over you. Your secret name is Siyuzhárin. It means "intelligent."

#### Goals

1. Gain the glory and respect that is rightfully yours.
2. During the Festival, lead a public harmonization session so that everyone will have the chance to experience your vision.
3. Support Omél in his endeavors to achieve widespread acceptance for the Aspect that appeared to the two of you.

### **Báles's Vision**

"I cannot explain it well; it's not as clear as Omél's experience. There is something in the distance, large and dark – about the size of Omél's boulder. I feel that I am small, nothing, before this great being. I fall on my knees and beg for enlightenment. I hear a sound, the distant roar of many voices. They are repeating "tirrigáschè, tirrigáschè." It is repeated five times. At the same time, before me in the air I see a glyph being written, and I know it's important. And then I awaken. When I awaken, I see the gifts from my Lord."

**GM Note:** If Bálesh is honest with himself (at least a marginal success in Chashána's fortune-telling on his secret name), he's not sure this is Thúmis, but he has no other explanation for his vision. This is not an Aspect of Thúmis. This is Thúmis's enemy, the demon Qu'ú. Be sure to keep track of who carries the gifts given to Bálesh.



### 3. **Shémek hiZhnáyu**, Grey Wand, Thúmis

#### 6<sup>th</sup> Circle Administrative Priest

Strength 3  
Dexterity 5  
Intelligence 9  
Psyche 5  
Willpower 8  
Charisma 4

High Status  
Older (25 years)

Melee Attack 4  
Melee Defense 2  
Missile Attack 4  
Missile Defense 2

Health Points 55  
Initiative 7

Administration (Temple) 1  
Calligraphy 1  
Language (Tsolyani, speak) 2  
Language (Tsolyani, read) 2  
Etiquette (High Clan) 1  
Etiquette (Temple) 3  
Negotiation (Social) 1  
Ritual (Thúmis) 3  
Subculture (High Clan) 1  
Subculture (Priesthood) 4  
Theology (Thúmis) 3

You have always prided yourself on your pragmatism and your ability to see straight to the heart of matters. Born into a low lineage within a high status clan famed for its commitment to the Lord Thúmis, you quickly realized that the easiest avenue of advancement lay within the temple. Though others around you seem to have come to this monastery by chance or propelled by some vague notions of spiritual enrichment, you carefully maneuvered your way here. In a city, even a smaller one like Si'is, you would be competing against those of higher status before you even had a chance to prove your worth. Here, though the monastery is small, you are the head administrative priest and can display your abilities through your efficient and profitable running of it.

Lately, though, you have been presented with a puzzling dilemma, one which you believe can either weave the golden thread through your skein or unravel it completely. Several weeks ago, one of the priests, Omél hiSayúncha, stood up at the morning Opening of the Eye ritual and shared with the monastery a vision he had experienced. He claimed it was from a previously unknown Aspect of Thúmis, Pasqáikh. You are aware that all of the Aspects are not known. In fact, some are only known to those in the highest Circles. But it seems unlikely that such a lowly priest as Omél could have contacted the Lord of Wisdom himself. His foolish bleating could draw scorn and reprimands down upon all your heads. But . . . if he indeed had a true vision, it could bring great prestige (and many

káitars) to the monastery, providing a tremendous boost for your career. In fact, it needn't even be a true vision, just one that everyone accepts as true. But do you want to stick your neck out first?

### Additional Information

1. Like all other Tsolyáni, you were given a secret name by your elders at your coming-of-age Name Day ceremony. This name is said to reflect your inner being. It is rarely shared as knowledge of it can give others power over you. Your secret name is Khotláng. It means, "to be honest."

2. You usually recite a tale or explicate doctrine at the Sublime Edification.

### Goals

1. Run a profitable Festival of the Illumination of the Mind

2. Either silence Omél's talk about his Aspect, or gain support for it from both the monastery and villagers.

3. See that nothing effects the smooth operation of the monastery.

#### 4. **Chashána hiKúrodu**, Moon of Evening, Thúmis

##### 2nd Circle Ritual Priestess

Strength 6	Combat Limitation (weak attack)	Melee Attack 4
Dexterity 5	Attractive	Melee Defense 2
Intelligence 4	Good with Animals	Missile Attack 5
Psyche 9		Missile Defense 3
Willpower 7		
Charisma 4		

Health Points 55

Initiative 9

Calligraphy 1

Fortune-telling 3

Language (Tsolyani, speak) 2

Language (Tsolyani, read) 1

Etiquette (Medium Clan) 1

Etiquette (Temple) 2

Ritual (Thúmis) 3

Subculture (Medium Clan) 1

Subculture (Priesthood) 2

Theology (Thúmis) 3

You have always been undistinguished, easily overlooked. You never excelled in school and were found to be utterly lacking in sorcerous capacity. You were married young as the third wife to a much older Moon of Evening man as part of a small ploy to increase the prestige of your lineage within the clan. After swiftly bearing him several children, you were overwhelmed by the emptiness of your life. Though you lived surrounded by your clan sisters and brothers, you found no solace in life. Frequenting the temples seemed to bring you some measure of relief, and finally you sought out the clan elders to see how opposed they were to you declaring Aridani status and joining the priesthood. To your surprise, no one protested your planned change in status, not even your husband. With little fanfare, you declared Aridani status and soon afterwards left the clan house to come live at the Well of Knowledge.

You are now only Second Circle, and doubt you will ever rise very high. Life at the Well has not been as you expected. You still find yourself performing onerous chores, just as you did at the clan house. You still find yourself teaching uninterested children, just as you did at the clan house. You still find yourself virtually ignored by everyone, just as at the clan house. Only now, you do not even have your clan sisters or fellow wives to complain to or your children to visit with you during the day. You are seriously contemplating leaving the Well and returning home.

The only talent that has ever brought you any attention is your ability to tell fortunes. You have learned the inner meanings of numbers and dates, and if people open themselves up to you, you can tell them much about themselves. Unfortunately, few people are willing to reveal their secret names to an unknown such as you, so many of the fortunes you tell are only for entertainment, lacking in real power. But still, it's fun and is the only thing that really lifts your spirits. (See separate sheet on fortune telling)

### Additional Information

1. Like all other Tsolyáni, you were given a secret name by your elders at your coming-of-age Name Day ceremony. This name is said to reflect your inner being. It is rarely shared as knowledge of it can give others power over you. Your secret name is Zu'árakh. It means, "flower."

2. You normally charge 1 qirgál for a fortune. You have a supply of scrap pieces of vellum on which you write out the fortune and hand to the customer.

### Goals

1. Lift your spirits by telling as many fortunes as possible.
2. Try to have a spiritual experience through having a vision too.
3. Increase your future opportunities by trying to find out the other's secret names.



### **Fortune-Telling Through Numerology**

You do not actually need to know the mechanics of telling fortunes to play Chashána, but it's provided in case you're interested. If you do get a chance to tell a fortune based on someone's secret name, consult with the G.M. The G.M. will let you know the modifier for the roll and help interpret its result.

From "Tsolyani Numerology" by Korumtai hiMettuken, Translated by Firu ba Yeker

There are three levels of divining the meaning of names: To Know, To Aver and To Harmonize. You have not yet reached the level of Harmonizing. Divining a fortune requires knowing the being's secret name, not their ordinary name. A secret name is confided to a child upon reaching maturity and is carefully guarded. Only those who are truly serious about seeking their fortunes will give you their secret name to work with. You'll do fortunes on ordinary names if people ask (as they often do), but, if asked, you will also tell them of the limited value of such an endeavor.

Fortunes are told by drawing out the glyph you learned from your grandmother, and writing down the numbers, which correspond to the letters in the name. In a complex fashion, you add the numbers together until you arrive at the one true number which reveals which god's influence is cast over your life. Your sessions have varying levels of success (you're not sure why), but sometimes the patterns of the numbers interwoven into the glyph reveal the future to you as well.

#### Meanings of the Numbers:

- 1 is unity, power, coming together
- 2 is female, loving, secretive, cherishing, and sincere
- 3 is male, mighty, vainglorious, brave and adventuresome

4 is transcendent, mysterious, beyond this plane, Godlike and abstract  
5 is related to death, earth, filth, sorrow and decay  
6 is thoughtful, bright, clever and wise  
7 is dark, malignant, cold and turgid  
8 is devious, calculating, powerful in knowledge, selfish and unknown  
9 is fiery flaming, destructive, transitory, violent and final  
10 is lascivious, female, wild, carefree, duplicitous and free  
100 stands for elderly persons, priests, kings, captains, and warriors  
1,000 stands for ships, palaces, goods, trade and daily matters  
10,000 stands for children, youth, enjoyment, pleasures of this life and the love of one's heart's desire

Additionally,

1 is white and of Lord Hnálla  
2 is sapphire blue and of Lady Avánthe  
3 is scarlet and of Lord Karakán  
4 is golden yellow and of Lord Belkhánu  
5 is dark brown and of Lord Sárku  
6 is grey and of Lord Thúmis  
7 is purple and of Lord Hrü'ü  
8 is deep azure and of Lord Ksárul  
9 is red-orange and of Lord Vimúhla  
10 is emerald green and of Lady Dlamélish

**Meanings of Names**

The Schoolchildren

Since the children are too young to have secret names, no true fortune can be told for them yet. These fortunes are for entertainment only and only to keep the children from pestering you too long.

Balané hiArusá = 2, Avánthe  
Dzái hiChánkálu = 2, Avánthe  
Rayána hiChánkálu = 4, Belkhánu  
Nélel hiKúrodu = 10, Dlamélish  
Shánü hiKúrodu = 3, Karakán  
Gayán hiNáshomai = 5, Sárku  
Sáyi hiNáshomai = 7, Hrü'ü  
Sánjesh hiNezár = 8, Ksárul [a PC]  
Senértha hiNezár = 3, Karakán  
No'ómu hiTuplángte = 5, Sárku  
Tsodlán hiTuplángte = 2, Avánthe

The Priests and the Villagers



Again, this is the list based on known names and will not give a true fortune. If a player tells you the character's true name, write it down and ask the G.M. for the associated god.

Bálesh = 4, Belkhánu  
Omél = 6, Thúmis  
Shémek = 8, Ksáru

Achán = 9, Vimúhla  
Fíru = 7, Hrü'ü  
Layéth = 9, Vimúhla  
Zagár = Avánthe

**G.M. Note:**

The relevant stat for the Fortune-telling skill is Psyche. Reading Omél is going to be Extremely Difficult (+4), Bálesh is Quite Difficult (+3), and everyone else is Average (+0). Roll for Chashána so the player can't tell if it's a success or failure.

Interpret Chashána's level of success as follows (use the same list for failures, but give the wrong information):

**Marginal:** She will get a vague feeling that all will go well/all will go badly/ all is murky, there are many possibilities. She's not certain of the accuracy of her feelings though. Pick the feeling based on how you think the character in question is proceeding toward his or her goals.

**Minor:** She gets the same vague feeling as above, but this time she's certain her prediction is on the right track

**Major:** Not only does she have a sense of if things are going well or badly, she can tell an action that needs to be taken to shift the course of events.

**Extreme:** She sees specific events that could happen as a result of specific actions taken.

**Critical:** She can divine which future the character prefers and tell two actions the character should take to obtain this future.

Naturally, this will be a bit tricky for the G.M. to achieve, but give fortunes to Chashána based on the character's goals and what it looks like the character will need to achieve them. For instance, if she gets an extreme success for Bálesh's player, have her see a vision of children dying during a meeting in the Festival that Bálesh is leading. Try to help what she sees come about actually happen.

Words Chashána might ask about:

Pasqáikh = 10 or 1, Dlamélish or Hnálla  
Qu'ú = 6, Thúmis

Tirrigáschè = 2, Avánthe

Secret Names:

Hlássukh "Bird" = 2, Avánthe

Hrúdlakh "Well [water source]" = 3, Karakán

Khotláng "To be honest" = 10, Dlamélish

Siyuzhárin "Intelligent" = 4, Belkhánu

Ssángon "Crazy" = 10, Dlamélish

Tlángten "Flashy, Resplendent" = 9, Vimúhla

Túplanin "Loved" = 6, Thúmis

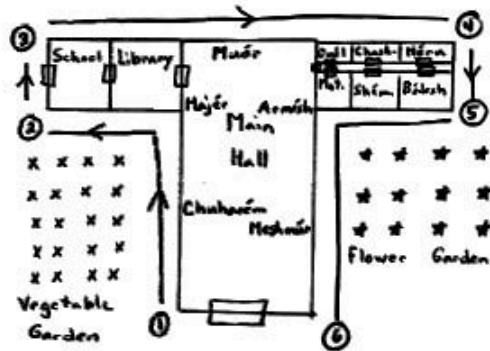
Zu'árahk "Flower" = 6, Thúmis

# The Well of Knowledge

Coop for  
Kaika  
birds



Orchard



## *Villager Characters*

### 1. **Achán hiNezár**, Open Hand, Thúmis

Farmer

Strength 5  
Dexterity 3  
Intelligence 6  
Psyche 3  
Willpower 7  
Charisma 5

Highly Skilled  
Older (30 years)  
Decisive

Melee Attack 4  
Melee Defense 2  
Missile Attack 4  
Missile Defense 2

Health Points 60  
Initiative 3

Knowledge (Central Tsolyánu) 2  
Language (Tsolyani, speak) 2  
Etiquette (Low Clan) 1  
Merchant (Foodstuffs) 5  
Negotiation (Business) 3  
Occupation (Farmer) 5  
Planning (Clan) 2  
Subculture (Low Clan) 1

You are a tenant farmer from a small village a half day's walk from the monastery Well of Knowledge. You have only one wife, but she's successfully borne six children (four sons, two daughters), and you have two brothers who have sired three children and two children respectively, plus your wife has a sister who has had four children so you have 15 children in all. Though you're not an elder yet, your wise advice and careful planning has steadily increased your stock within your lineage and the clan as a whole. Careful deployment of your resources (the children's labor) is also continuously increasing your family's modest wealth.

Unfortunately, you do have one problem son, Sánjesh. He's nine years old, but has spent the last two years idling his time away at the monastery's school. You wanted to pull him out last year after you found out he could read, write and calculate sums already. To your surprise, when he protested vehemently and broke down in tears, his other fathers and mothers supported him and you were overruled. Since then, he has been distant toward you, spending many hours outside of class time at the monastery. You are beginning to suspect that he may somehow be under the influence of his favorite teacher, Omél hiSayuncha.

The whole family has come to the Festival of the Illumination of the Mind. Normally, you are only concerned with spending as little money on offerings as possible and avoiding the priests as much as you are able, but this year you are determined to

withdraw Sánjesh from the school as well. You have no time for the foolishness of these priests. You have a family to run, and you will not lose the money an intelligent son could be bringing in to a minging priest-scholar.

#### Additional Information

1. Like all other Tsolyáni, you were given a secret name by your elders at your coming-of-age Name Day ceremony. This name is said to reflect your inner being. It is rarely shared as knowledge of it can give others power over you. Your secret name is Tlángten, which means, "flashing, resplendent."

2. You brought 10 qirgáls with you. You could have brought more, but why?

3. You don't care about the controversy surrounding the vision that the priest Omél had. You'll echo whatever opinion your clan elder, Fíru, expresses.

#### Goals

1. Withdraw Sánjesh from the temple school.

2. Contribute as little to the monastery as you can without losing face

3. Enjoy the free entertainment of the festival.

## 2. **Layéth hiArusá**, Flat Rock, Thúmis

Farmer

Strength 8  
Dexterity 6  
Intelligence 3  
Psyche 5  
Willpower 6  
Charisma 4

Uneducated  
Older (40 years)  
Tough

Melee Attack 7  
Melee Defense 5  
Missile Attack 7  
Missile Defense 5

Health Points 75  
Initiative 6

Artisan (Potter) 2  
Cooking 1  
Knowledge (Central Tsolyánu) 2  
Language (Tsolyani, speak) 2  
Etiquette (Very Low Clan) 3  
Occupation (Farmer) 3  
Subculture (Farming) 3  
Subculture (Very Low Clan) 4

You are a peasant. All your life you've worked hard in the dná fields for the Temple of Thúmis. From your early childhood years of following around your mothers in the clan house you grew enough to be assigned chores in the clan house, and then, as you grew strong and healthy, you were sent out to the fields to work for the Temple (Flat Rock gets to keep 30% of the harvest) as generations of your clan siblings have before you. It's certainly not an easy life, but it could be much worse. You have a dependable husband, your clan house is generally amicable, your children are healthy and there have been no famines since that one when you were a child.

You have always enjoyed the Festival of the Illumination of the Mind. Since you had no schooling yourself, you love to sit and listen to the priests tell stories of times gone by. Many a year have you listened intently as they talked of ever more obscure things until you understood barely one word in three. But as a Thúmis worshipper, it makes you feel good to learn, and the priests are always so wise. This year you're especially eager since the priest Omél has been blessed by Thúmis himself with a vision of a new Aspect. You're sure this can only mean good things for the village.

You also religiously seek out the fortune-teller. So far, the fortune-tellers have always been right when speaking of your future. It's always so exciting to learn what will happen next.

Additional Information



1. Like all other Tsolyáni, you were given a secret name by your elders at your coming-of-age Name Day ceremony. This name is said to reflect your inner being. It is rarely shared as knowledge of it can give others power over you. Your secret name is Hródlakh, which means, "well" [source of water].

2. You have 15 qirgáls to spend at the Festival. You plan to spend most on offerings, but will leave enough for your fortune.

### Goals

1. Be the very first person to give an offering to the new Aspect and pray to it.

2. Have your fortune told.

3. Enjoy yourself at the Festival – try something new.

### 3. Fíru hiNáshomai, Open Hand, Thúmis

#### Clan Elder

Strength 4  
Dexterity 4  
Intelligence 5  
Psyche 3  
Willpower 3  
Charisma 6

Emotional Control  
Older (40 years)  
Highly Skilled

Melee Attack 4  
Melee Defense 2  
Missile Attack 4  
Missile Defense 2

Health Points 35  
Initiative 4

Dagger 1  
Knowledge (Central Tsolyánu) 5  
Language (Tsolyani, speak) 2  
Etiquette (Low Clan) 4  
Merchant (Foodstuffs) 5  
Negotiation 4  
Observation 3  
Occupation (Farmer) 4  
Planning (Clan) 5  
Subculture (Farming) 5  
Subculture (Low Clan) 5

You are an elder in the Open Hand clan, living in a village about a half-day's walk from the Well of Knowledge monastery. Though your clan is low status, and most of you are tenant farmers for the Temple of Thúmis, you are content. You know that the gods have provided well for you. The harvests have gone well for the last several years, and the weather has been excellent (praise Avánthe!). You are even able to begin building a new wing onto the main clan house in the village. It is only right and proper that you attend the Festival of the Illumination of the Mind to show your gratitude to the gods.

However, the rumors coming from the Well of Knowledge are troubling. Some of the other elders believe that Open Hand's offerings should only be given to priests who are certain to be seen in the Eye of Thúmis. If these priests are following something else now, the clan's few káitars should not be wasted. You have remained carefully neutral, promising to seek out the truth of the matter the best you can.

But, in truth, you are not neutral, for buried deep within your heart is a great fear. Over the last year, your wife Halé has been growing weaker and weaker. Sometimes when she is walking, a leg will suddenly stop working and she'll fall to the ground. You've taken her several times to the priests of Keténgku, but their prayers and spells seem to have no lasting effect. You're not sure if it's because you can't afford the more powerful healing spells or if her illness is simply beyond them. You know very little of theology but you

reason that Keténgku is only a Cohort. Maybe that's why his priests can't heal Halé. Maybe a more powerful god like Thúmis could help. Maybe that's why a new Aspect of Thúmis has appeared. You hope against hope that this may be the answer to your problem.

### Additional Information

1. Like all other Tsolyáni, you were given a secret name by your elders at your coming-of-age Name Day ceremony. This name is said to reflect your inner being. It is rarely shared as knowledge of it can give others power over you. Your secret name is Hlássukh, which means, "bird."
2. Traditionally, the village clan house sponsors the two brightest children to remain in school. Achán hiNezár's son Sánjesh is the most promising child Open Hand has seen in quite a while. It would be good to check up with his teachers to see what they think of his progress.
3. You brought 5 hlásh: 4 hlásh and 10 qirgáls to spend on offerings on behalf of the clan, and 10 qirgáls of your own.

### Goals

1. Speak to the priest who has had the vision since he seems to be the closest to Thúmis and get him to pray to the new Aspect on behalf of Halé. You are willing to promise all 5 hlásh to the new Aspect for this service.
2. Persuade as many villagers as you can that they should give their offerings to Meshmúr, the traditional healing Aspect (you want to cover all the bases).
3. Make sure the good name of Open Hand is upheld in this public celebration.

#### 4. **Zagár hiChánkolu**, Flat Rock, Thúmis

Elderly Clan Member

Strength 1	Very Uneducated	Melee Attack 3
Dexterity 4	Older (70 years)	Melee Defense 1
Intelligence 3		Missile Attack 3
Psyche 4		Missile Defense 1
Willpower 4		
Charisma 4		

Health Points 25

Initiative 4

Animal Handling (Hmá) 4

Animal Handling (Chlén) 4

Animal Handling (Káika bird) 4

Brawling 6

Climbing 1

Knowledge (Central Tsolyánu) 6

Language (Tsolyani, speak) 2

Etiquette (Very Low Clan) 5

Occupation (Farmer) 5

Subculture (Farming) 4

Subculture (Very Low Clan) 6

You have achieved the rare feat of reaching the old age of 70! In your younger days in Flat Rock, you put in many backbreaking kiréns of labor in the fields, but now you spend your days in front of the cooking fires, reminiscing and scolding the youngsters. You don't usually leave the clan house anymore, but the promise of the Festival of the Illumination of the Mind has drawn you forth. You forced yourself to painfully hobble the entire distance (often leaning for support on the arms of younger clan-cousins) because of your deeply rooted devotion to Lord Thúmis. Now that you have the time, you often spend the quiet evening hours in meditation on the Ever-Present Eye. You learned your devotion at the knees of several of your mothers and grandfathers. Your own father's death impressed you greatly as he peacefully and calmly looked forward to his journey to the Blessed Isles where he would sit for all eternity at the feet of the Teacher of the Gods, the True Sage of Wisdom.

In truth, though, you are glad of the timing of the Festival. Not long ago, at dinner you overheard the chattering of children as they speculated on whether or not they might see a vision of Thúmis at the monastery just as that priest Omél had. Just the sound of their impudent tones caused anger to rise in your breast. Meeting Lord Thúmis, indeed! As if they were the blessed Pavár himself. You whacked the closest one behind her ears and resolved to give those priests a piece of your mind. You're so old, what can they do to you anyway?

### Additional Information

1. Like all other Tsolyáni, you were given a secret name by your elders at your coming-of-age Name Day ceremony. This name is said to reflect your inner being. It is rarely shared as knowledge of it can give others power over you. Your secret name is Ssángo, which means "crazy."
2. Your granddaughter Dzái is currently attending the monastery school. You'd like to have a few words with her to make sure the priests aren't teaching her any heresies.
3. You've spent several months carving a smooth grey stone into the shape of an eye. You intend to offer to one of the Aspects of Thúmis at the monastery (you haven't made up your mind which one yet).
4. You have 4 qirgáls to spend.

### Goals

1. Stop the foolish chatter about a new Aspect, whether it comes from children or even the priests.
2. Give a proper offering of tetél flowers (which you can buy at the monastery) to each of the Aspects.
3. Help preserve the proper reverent atmosphere at the Festival.

## 5. Sánjesh hiNezár, Open Hand, Thúmis

### Student

Strength 4	Younger	Melee Attack 6
Dexterity 8		Melee Defense 4
Intelligence 10		Missile Attack 7
Psyche 3		Missile Defense 5
Willpower 9		
Charisma 8		

Health Points 65

Initiative 10

Calligraphy 1

Language (Tsolyani, speak) 2

Language (Tsolyáni, read) 1

Etiquette (Low Clan) 1

Ritual (Thúmis) 1

Scholar (Tsolyáni history) 2

Subculture (Low Clan) 1

Theology (Thúmis) 1

You are a 9-year-old son of Achán hiNezár. You have 14 siblings among all your fathers and mothers, and somehow you feel this should grant you more anonymity than it does. Unfortunately, Achán has never let anything or anyone who might profit him slip below his field of vision, and he almost always overrides the wishes of any of your other fathers and mothers. You dislike him for many things: when you were younger, he alienated all your friends by yelling at them for playing with you when you should have been working. When you came home from school last year, bearing a glowing letter of praise from your favorite teacher Omél, he tore it to shreds in front of you, stating that since you'd learned the basics, you didn't need to waste any further time with the priests. You'd expected him to be angry since you'd never slipped away from school to come home and helped out in the fields occasionally (as many of the other children did), but you never expected that. You are smart, and you have a future, even if you're from a low status clan. You know this because Omél has repeatedly told you so. You threw a tantrum and for once in your life, Achán was overridden by your other fathers and mothers. You were allowed to stay for another year.

Now the year is up. You have dreaded the Festival for weeks since it heralds Achán's coming visit. Your best friend at school, Dzái hiChánkolu, has tried her best to cheer you up but she can't solve your problems. You've decided to go straight to your clan elder, Fíru hiNáshomai, to argue why the clan would benefit by allowing you to stay in school. In the meantime, you've spent much time in prayer to Pasqáikh, the Aspect Omél contacted. Omél seems confident that prayers to it will be efficacious.

### Additional Information

1. Through doing extra chores at the monastery, you have managed to earn 2 qirgáls.

### Goals

1. Convince Fíru to allow you to stay in school.
2. Avoid Achán as much as possible.
3. Publicly display your devotion to Pasqáikh.

NPCs

1. **Mottán hiQolyélmú**, Grey Wand, Thúmis

Mottán is the Head Ritual Priest at the monastery, complementing Shémek the Head Administrative Priest. He is here so that the GM can guide the various ceremonies of the day: the Opening of the Eyes of Radiance ceremony, the Following of the Gods ritual and the Sublime Edification of the Populace. He should announce what's happening next and give guidance (i.e. move the players along when they seem ready for the next stage). Mottán should not be involved in any of the various power plays over the new Aspect. To this end, he should be portrayed as being officious, fussy, exacting in details, but impossible to pin down on any real decisions. He will equivocate, beg for more time, intone on the need for consensus or change the subject, if necessary. He is a master at this art; it's how he has risen this far.

Though he's from the same clan as Shémek, he's from a different city and never met him before they began serving together at the Well of Knowledge. He will skillfully resist all pleas of clan solidarity.

2. **Qu'ú**, He Who Would End Wisdom, Master of the Forty-fifth Circle, He Who Roars

Qu'ú is the hidden villain of the scenario. He will be behind the scenes until the very end when Bálesh will potentially unwittingly perform the summoning ceremony.

From the Book of Ebon Bindings, p. 65:

The most common form for this demon is a great, shambling beast similar to the Sró-dragon, but much larger and possessing several more limbs, tails and heads. He is often pictured in temples devoted to Thúmis, since he figures in the epic poem cycle dealing with the hero Hrúgga. His powers include Numbing (stupefying a victim so that he can remember nothing, making no decisions, and cannot resist whatever the evocator proposes), Gifting (bestowing valued treasures upon the evocator) and Imperceptibility (making the evocator invisible for a time). Lord Qu'ú will include in his bequests certain green-hued gems of great beauty. These are invariably false and must be rejected; else they will become noxious vermin who will later slay the evocator or those to whom he entrusts this wealth. He may be invoked through the preparation of an eight-sided star in which his glyph is inscribed; then he must be offered five female sacrifices (human or sapient) each below the age of puberty. Thereafter one shall recite his Secret Name, Tirrigáschè, five times. He will accept further souls in exchange for his benefactions, and he can be dismissed by drawing the Glyph of Present Defence over his name-glyph, followed by the making of the Pattern of the Primordial Nexus in the air before him. He is ever true to his agreements and will not return to harm the evocator at a later time.



Qu'ú is irritated by Bálesh. Bálesh, unwittingly, has been improperly calling him. Since the Summoning ritual has not been performed, Qu'ú need not respond, and indeed, he has a hard time locating Bálesh among the Many Planes without the proper ceremony. It's like Bálesh is a child who keeps knocking at his door and then running off before Qu'ú has time to answer. Qu'ú would just like to catch him and give him a good talking to. To this end, he's reaching out the best he can to manipulate Bálesh into performing the proper Summoning Ceremony. If Qu'ú is successfully summoned, his surprise at seeing that Bálesh is a Thúmis priest, and not one of Grugánu or Hriháyal, will lead him to try and entice Bálesh into the paths of Change by giving him his heart's desire.

The gifts that are left for Bálesh are one of Qu'ú's little jokes. Try to unobtrusively keep track of where each "gift" is. If you can provide play aids to represent the gifts to Bálesh's player, so much the better! On each item, one of the "emeralds" will actually transform into an insect (see picture) that will attack the nearest living body. Each hour, each fake "emerald" will have a 20% chance of transforming. These insects are deadly, but also unknown on Tékumel. Anyone who successfully captures one (particularly alive) can expect recognition and a reward from the Thúmis temple in Chéne Hó. This will be a task, however. An insect will burrow under clothing, trying to get to the torso or the inner thigh. It will then bite down hard, chewing out an opening, and proceed to burrow into the flesh, trying to find its way to the heart. The character will need to act quickly against this threat or he/she will face a very real chance of dying.



**Insect of Qu'ú:** Melee Combat Value of 5, Damage modifier of x4.

If the insect was near the throat (someone was wearing a necklace), the characters will have one free round to try and grab the insect as it's scurrying around, trying to find a place to enter. If it's further away, allow two free chances. Roll against Dexterity with a +3 modifier due to its speed and small size. Once the insect is away from the body, it's easy to kill, crushing it underfoot will work. If it manages to burrow in, the characters will have to be creative to stop it: i.e. if it enters the thigh, the round after they can still apply pressure (a tourniquet) and work the flesh to force it out. If they're desperate

enough, they can take a chance and stab the victim where they think the insect is located (+4 modifier). The character will, of course, also take damage from the stab wound.

### 3. **Hóru hiGurúma**, Blue Kirtle, Thúmis

Hóru is a 16-year-old acolyte from the Blue Kirtle clan house in Chéne Hó. He's here because the temple finds him promising, and they wish to test him by immersing him in the most humble ways of serving Lord Thúmis. He is hard working, conscientious and eager to please. He's been cheerfully working himself to the bone. He has no answer for the odd occurrences that have been happening on his watch, and will lower his eyes, cheeks burning, when he's questioned about them (the tetél flowers, the water clock, the fruit or anything else). He will never speak disrespectfully to anyone, and, if asked, will not take sides in the Aspect debate.

### 4. The Schoolchildren

One child, Sánjesh, is a PC. The other 10 are NPCs. Remind the players from time to time of their presence by interjecting comments on the children's reactions. Depending on the situation, make them fidgety, giggling, running around, crying out in surprise, bugging the players for candy, a fortune or a qirgál. You don't need to go overboard, but keep them in the running flow of background description.

Each of the children has a favorite teacher. Unless rebuffed by that teacher, they will tend to hang around their favorite. This will be very important if Bálesh tries his harmonization session. Since Bálesh is handsome, he's the favorite of many of the girls. Unless rebuffed by him or persuaded otherwise by Sánjesh, they will attend the session (and thus, may end up dying). Sánjesh has great influence among the children. Anything his player attempts with the children will be successful.

#### The Boys:

Gayán hiNáshomai, 12, Open Hand, Chashána  
No'ómu hiTuplángte, 8, Open Hand, Chashána  
Tsodlán hiTuplángte, 8, Open Hand, Omél

#### The Girls:

Balané hiArusá, 11, Flat Rock, Bálesh  
Dzái hiChánkolu, 9, Flat Rock, Bálesh [Granddaughter of Zagár, best friend of Sánjesh]  
Rayána hiChánkolu, 7, Flat Rock, Omél  
Nélel hiKúrodu, 9, Open Hand, Chashána  
Shánü hiKúrodu, 12, Open Hand, Chashána  
Sáyi hiNáshomai, 10, Open Hand, Bálesh  
Senértha hiNezár, 11, Open Hand, Bálesh

## The Timeline

**G.M. Background:** Last night, Bálesh, through his presumptuous harmonization on "th", blindly reached out to the demon Qu'ú. Because his summoning was unwitting, he did not perform the correct ritual and while Qu'ú felt the call, he could not fully locate Bálesh and pierce the Skin of reality. However, the demon's efforts to get through managed to suck a lot of the life energy out of the surroundings (Bálesh was meditating in his room). Qu'ú's efforts did Numb Bálesh and Hóru, the only other person awake in the middle of the night, for an hour, and he managed to deposit the gifts for Bálesh. Hóru was awake because he was watching the water clock. The Numbing has left him an hour behind in his calculation of the time.

Additionally, the loss of life energy has destroyed the tetél garden outside of the main building. The rows closest to the priests' quarters are black and brittle. As you move further away from Bálesh's room, their condition improves until they are only bent over and wilted at the far side. The flowers that will be sold as offerings tomorrow were harvested yesterday by Hóru and are being kept in a cool, clay container in the storeroom. They were close enough to the drain to be wilted, but not blackened. The near side of the orchard, the vegetable garden and the dná crops are all wilted.

The priests were all close enough to the drain that they will begin the day with headaches and a general feeling of lethargy.

The scenario will begin with the villagers arriving at the monastery for the Following of the Gods processional. Unfortunately, the main doors are closed as the priests, Sánjesh and the other children are just now assembling for the morning ceremony of the Opening of the Eyes of Radiance since unbeknownst to them, they are running an hour late. Stress to the villagers how empty the monastery seems, how unusual it is that the doors were not flung open as usual when you approached.

Observation for the villagers: "As you come within sight of the cluster of buildings which mark the monastery, you notice a gradual wilting of the plants around you. The closer you draw to the buildings, the more pronounced the wilting. In one spot, they have completely shriveled and died."

If they investigate, the pattern will be plain to see. They will find no evidence of insects, nor will the farmers remember seeing something like this before.

### *Opening of the Eyes of Radiance Ceremony*

If the villagers are content to wait, this is how the ceremony will proceed. There is nothing stopping them (save reticence) if they wish to open the doors and enter in.

A. Start with scene with Mottán officiously rushing around, reminding everyone it's time for the ritual. Mention their headaches and general fatigue. As everyone is entering the worship hall, Bálesh will unconsciously and unobtrusively turn the Armésh statue around to face the wall. This action is a residual Numbing effect from his contact with Qu'ú last night. Have each player roll against Intelligence (modified by Observation if they have that skill) to see if they notice the new position. If the roll is a success, roll again to see if they were watching when he actually turned it.

If the new position is noticed, Mottán will be upset and blame a servant (unless Bálesh was observed). If Bálesh was observed, Mottán will not let any accusations continue for long, as that will disrupt the ceremony.

B. Mottán will lead the opening prayers: "Otuléngba, Lord Thúmis! Otuléngba, Teacher of the Gods, True Sage of Wisdom! All praise to Armésh who protected Hrúgga and restored life to Jajél. All praise to Muór who reads eternally from the scroll of wisdom. All praise to Majér who guides the young girls. All praise to Meshmúr, may he see all and heal all. All praise to Chuharém who divines all Skeins. "

After the prayers, Hóru will approach down the aisle with a double-handful of tetél petals to scatter before the statues. He will approach slowly and tentatively as the petals he is carrying are wilted. This is immediately obvious to the audience and the children will begin whispering. Mottán will be visibly disturbed and frown at the acolyte. After the ceremony is over, he will order Shémek to find out why inferior flowers were selected on this day of all days.

If Shémek questions Hóru, he will reply, "I don't know. Last night I selected only the finest from our garden and laid them in the cool cellar for today, as always. Only this morning, when I went to retrieve them for the ceremony, they were wilted."

Investigations of the flower garden will reveal the devastation wrought by Qu'ú's aborted entry to this Plane.

C. After the prayers and the offering, Mottán will speak: "In lieu of offering up our usual philosophical discussions this morning, let us hear what each will do this afternoon during the Sublime Edification of the Populace."

This is the chance for the PCs to propose their plans: harmonization session, fortune-telling, reciting of tales, preaching, etc. Omél can also seize this opportunity to advocate adding his statue to the Following of the Gods that will soon take place.

If the villagers have not entered by this point, the handyman Mikúnu will notice them, scurry around to the school entrance and go through until he's at the library entrance to the main hall. He will appear at the door and signal frantically. Mottán will frown and shake his head, but the servant won't go away. Finally, Mottán will signal Shémek to see what the problem is.

Most likely a hasty plunge into the Following of the Gods will result, but follow the players' lead. Mottán will continue to try to force all the decisions on Shémek.

If Shémek investigates to find out how this fiasco happened, he will discover that the clepsydra (water clock) is off. The monastery relies on this clock to tell time. It works as follows: a large bronze bowl is filled with water. The water is kept constantly heated and on it is placed a small empty copper dish with a very small hole in the bottom. The hot water percolates through the hole in the bottom of the copper dish and gradually fills it so that the dish eventually sinks to the bottom. When this happens, 15 minutes (10 yóm) will have passed by. An observer must watch the clock at all times and note the passing of time. It was Hóru's turn to watch the clock last night. If questioned, he will swear that he did not fall asleep (He didn't. He was an innocent bystander: Numbed for an hour with no memory of that time when Qu'ú almost reached through to this plane during Bálesh's vision.)

If Shémek cares to share what he's learned, Mottán will regard it as a bad omen since it means the timing of the Opening of the Eyes of Radiance was off.

### *Following of the Gods*

The arrival of the villagers kicks off the Festival proper, which means The Following of the Gods ritual. Mottán will direct each priest to pick up one of the Aspect statues. Normally Hóru would not participate since he's only an acolyte, but if Omél has been successful in adding his statue to the line-up there will be one extra statue. Mottán will be irritated but will add Hóru in. Be sure to ask which statue each person picks up.

At this time, hand a note to Bálesh's player, which reads, "You feel a strange reluctance to carry the Armésh statue. The more you look at it, the more sinuous and sinister it seems. Catching a glimpse of it out of the corner of your eye, it seems to slowly writhe. You feel a strong compulsion to suggest just leaving it out of the ceremony."

Once everyone has a statue, Mottán will lead the procession. It will wind around all the buildings, making a complete circuit, stopping at each corner to lift one of the Aspects and pray. Stress how heavy the statues are for the priests to carry, how long-winded Mottán is in his prayers. (This will make the contract with stop #5 all the greater.)

Seeing the condition of the gardens, Mottán will alter the course of the procession. Rather than walking next to the building (the route shown on the map), he will make a wide loop around the vegetable garden and then come back in at the second corner of the building. He will repeat the wide loop when he comes to the tetél garden. In fact, since stop #5 is right next to the worst of the damage, he will make his prayers very short here and hasten the procession onward. The villagers will follow behind. The Following ends by entering the worship hall and returning the statues to their place.

### *The Sublime Edification of the Populace*

After the procession is a general milling around period. Poor Hóru will dash off (he'll be following the procession if he's not part of it) to attend a table that the servants set up earlier where offerings of tetél flowers will be sold.

In the meantime, the servants will have laid out great tables filled with food: roast hmá, great tankards of Héngrka (dná-grain beer), másh and dlél fruit, warm dná-grain bread, and plenty of dmí-sugar candy for the children

This is the time the villagers eat, buy and make offerings, talk with the priests, check out the monastery and socialize. Any villager who gives an offering to Majér the Maiden will see tears slip from her eyes and fall down her face. (This is Thúmis's warning of the potential slaughter to come.)

After a while, the priests will go and retrieve the proper number of mats to lie on the ground to form the daises from which they will conduct their presentations. When all is in readiness, Mottán will lift his hands and proclaim, "Let the scales of ignorance fall from our eyes. Let the shining radiance of knowledge bedazzle us. We gather together to sit anew at the feet of our Glorious Sage, He Whose Eye Sees All the World. Otulénga, Lord Thúmis! Let our Edification begin!"

Unless the players have been creative, Chashána will tell fortunes, Shémek will recite a tale or explicate doctrine, Bálesh will lead a harmonization session and Omél will preach about his Aspect. If Bálesh and Omél decide they want to combine their presentations, Mottán will not object. Mottán will simply hover about anxiously, hoping all goes well.

Unfortunately, all may very well not go well.

### Summoning Qu'ú

Much will depend on how Bálesh conducts his ceremony. If he displays his scroll or traces out the glyph again in any way, this will suffice for the glyph portion. If Bálesh either meditates in the presence of the glyph or if Qu'ú's Secret Name Tirrigáschè is chanted, and if at least five girls attend his session, Qu'ú will reach out and take them as sacrifices. They will start to shiver and then go into seizures. If they are not removed from Bálesh's presence, they will die within 5 minutes. Make a stat check against Psyche for each of the boys to see if they also get claimed as a victim. If Sánjesh is affected, he will still have the power to run away and save himself, if he thinks of it. After that, if both the chanting and the glyph have been present, Qu'ú will manifest. The air will ripple as a nexus point forms and he emerges. Qu'ú will pace before Bálesh and roar: "What do you want?"

At this point, have everyone make a skill check versus Theology (Thúmis). Qu'ú is pictured often on the walls of Thúmis temples and may easily be recognized by the priests. Have the villagers roll against Intelligence with a +3 modifier (there are no murals at the monastery, but he's often described in the tales).

Any material thing that Bálesh asks for will appear before him. If he refuses to ask for anything, or asks for anything immaterial (i.e. "Leave us alone"), Qu'ú will roar loudly enough to momentarily deafen everyone. Then he will render Bálesh Imperceptible to all watchers (he will disappear) and begin communicating telepathically with him. He will begin trying to entice the Thúmis priest, offering him fortunes, aid in advancing through the Temple hierarchy, anything he wants. And whenever Bálesh wants anything else, all he need do is summon him again, just as was done here. If Bálesh continues to refuse his advances, he will lash out with a claw to wound him. The attack is automatically successful. Roll the 10-sider and treat the result as the Degree of Success (ignoring critical successes or failures) and apply a damage modifier of x2. Thus, Bálesh will take 2-20 Health points in damage. Qu'ú will then leave and render Bálesh perceptible again.

### Potential Defenses

1. The best defense is not to allow the preaching/harmonization session in the first place. If Shémek, Chashána and three of the villagers speak out against the new Aspect, Mottán will disallow it. (Of course, Bálesh is free to try and sneak away and perform it elsewhere. Mottán won't follow him or try to force him to participate further in the Edification.)
2. If Chashána draws her fortune-telling glyph (which is actually the Glyph of Present Defense, though she doesn't know this) – tracing it in the air, drawing it in the dirt, on a scrap piece of vellum – while the girls are having seizures, she will save them and close the way to Qu'ú. If she does so while Qu'ú is present, he will turn, roar and then suddenly vanish in the shimmer of a nexus point.

## Conclusion

If any children die, it will be a great blow to the villagers. At a minimum, they will need to get shám tla to recover the cost of the now useless education. The Grey Wand characters, Mottán, Omél and Shémek, are high enough status that they can get by with just paying a light shám tla and receiving a reprimand from the Temple. If Chashána lays low, she has a good chance of escaping everyone's notice and avoiding any blame due to her low position and talent for anonymity.

Bálesh, as the perpetrator and a member of the medium status Victorious Globe, will have his prospects for advancement ruined due to his embarrassment of the Temple. Unless, of course, he realizes he's now the proud possessor the knowledge of how to summon a Change demon. If he plays his cards right, he can parlay this knowledge into a much higher position within the Temple. And, of course, if Qu'ú has been successful in tempting him, he can also summon him in the future and advance even faster!

Anyone who can give the Temple an Insect of Qu'ú will avoid a black mark on their record. Or, in the case of the villagers, will gain substantial goodwill from the temple. (For instance, the Temple would pay for the powerful healing spells need to cure Fíru's wife Halé.)





## A Letter from a Friend in Tumíssa

I'm not at all sure what my next project will be; I've been writing some fiction, but it's not quite ready yet, and I'm not sure if I'm up for a serial. But, just as a teaser, here is an excerpt:

+++++

Náshko hiTyélmú awoke on his sleeping mat, very aware that something had just slithered across his leg. While this was a normal enough occurrence for him, it was made even more annoying since he was sweaty, uncomfortable and sore. He waited a while, in case the creature was going to try to snuggle up closer to him, but it apparently went it's own way, and Náshko stood up, and picked up the small oil lamp from the floor of his sleeping chamber.

Yawning, he managed to get his sticky tongue around the words of power needed to spark the lamp to life, and he stretched his lanky frame as the lamps flickering flame cast more shadow than light across the small room. Various small insects either ran towards or away from the light, following their destinies as best they might in the muggy Jakállan night.

Náshko sighed. It was nights like this that made him miss Tumíssa most of all. In his hometown, out in the mountainous forests of the Chákan Range, one could at least count on a light breeze to cool one off. But here in this great southern metropolis, in the summer, only by burrowing deep in the ground could one escape the heat, down deep in the sub-sub basements of the temples and clan houses. He was not yet high enough to warrant such luxury.

He looked at himself, standing rather stupidly in the small chamber. Lean and tall, with broad shoulders and narrow hips, he was clearly from the Chákas. His muscles corded under reddish brown skin, the hair hanging down straight from his head, jet-black. He felt sticky and in need of a bath. "Behold the mighty sorcerer" he thought to himself, sighed again, and decided to pass the rest of the night reading. No use waking any of the servants up, they would only be unable to get back to sleep themselves.

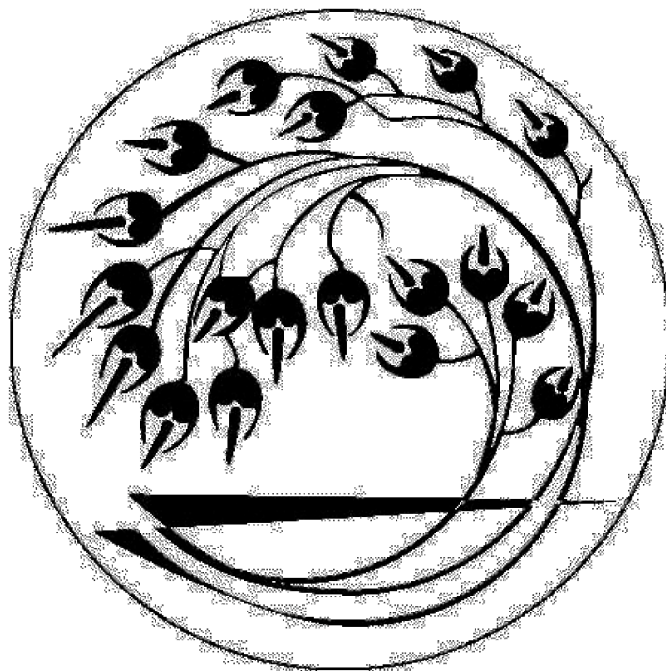
Náshko was indeed a sorcerer, and not one of small power, if one were to listen to the savants of the Temple of Ksárul. They had spoken amongst themselves, although none know who they were, or where they met, they had decided that the young lay-priest Náshko, of the Clan of Black Mountain should be offered employment in Jakállá. There were reasons cited. He had talent, and the right character. It was so offered. He could not have refused.

But as the hot Jakállan night continued to press down on the young scholar, and he sat leaning against the wall re-reading a scroll he had already memorized, he wondered if it was really the best thing that he could have done, and wondered again if perhaps his masters had made a rare mistake. Surely, for one of his talents, modest though they may

be, a more active role might have been found? He had simply been told to come to Jakálla, lodge with his clan, and wait for instructions. Yes, it was true that writs of credit were issued to him regularly. He was paid amply, generously even considering his lack of activity.

But it was boring, and he was running out of things to entertain himself with quickly. More or less consistently devoted to his studies, he wasn't even interested in the exotic pleasures of this infamously sybaritic city by the sea.

Malcolm



## **Unwelcoming Party**

By Robert A. Dushay

I wrote this for Dexcon/Dreamation (a pair of conventions in New Jersey) and played it once, in 1997. After my successes with *A Matter of Honor* and *Against the Grain*, I wanted to write something that used a bit more background material and character interaction. I tried a few experiments with this scenario. First, the characters are mostly middle-aged and older men, with absolutely no traditional adventuring skills. No sorcery, and no combat skills. Second, there is no map. I didn't think one was needed. Third, a lot of this scenario depends on "winging it". There are a lot of random events that players have to deal with, and how the plot works out depends heavily on what the players do.

I think I tried to run it at U-Con, but if it was scheduled, it wasn't played there, for whatever reason. I can't run it at future U-Cons, because it bears a strong resemblance to the LARP that was put together in 1999 by Bob Alberti, Joe Saul, and possibly others. Great minds think alike? Or is this just a common situation?

The characters were generated using Gardasiyal, but I'm not going to include them here. From the descriptions included below, suitable scores can be generated for any system fairly easily. I'd think this scenario would work very well for *Tékumel Over The Edge* (TOTE).

So, for your enjoyment, I present...

## **Unwelcoming Party**

(1997 Tékumel convention scenario)

**Teaser:** Your years of service to the Petal Throne are over. Now you must help host this final party, while simultaneously keeping an eye on the new Worm-boys so they don't loot your chambers. Luckily you'll be heading back to Tsolyánu with the former Legate very soon, because this new Legate looks like an unpleasant supervisor. This is a diplomatic adventure, where etiquette and conversation may be your deadliest weapons.

[I also wrote a second teaser if I was going to present this scenario at a non-Tékumel oriented convention.] You have spent many years in service to the Petal Throne, working for the Legate to Tsatsayagga. He is being replaced, and the new legate seems rather nasty for the job. Good thing you're leaving. Tonight is your farewell party, and hopefully all you'll have to do is be diplomatic, and keep the new legate's worm-boys from looting your chambers. This is a diplomatic adventure, where etiquette and conversation may be your deadliest weapons.

**The party.** You are all residents of the Tsolyani legate in Tsatsayagga, the capital of the Ebon Empire of Salarvya. Most of you are members of the legate's staff. When you heard of the ascension of Emperor Dhich'uné, you knew that the legate, Dlekku hiTankolel, was going to be replaced eventually, and that would mean the end of your job unless you could convince the new legate to appoint you to some position. The God-Emperor did not appear to be in a hurry to appoint a new legate, so you began to hope you would keep this cushy post after all...until last week.

The new legate to the Ebon Palace arrived last week. Of course, one would expect some tension between the new arrivals and the present staff, but the tension is thicker than raw Chlén-hide. Oludún hiSayúncha is a worshipper of Durritlámish of the Rotting Face, and Legate Dlekku has a strong dislike of this temple. To make matters worse, Oludún has gone out of his way to be rude and abrupt, and his personal guard are barely civil. Further, the squinting, yellow-skinned, bandy-legged house sorcerer of the new legate is both repulsive and frightening. Strange noises and weird smells emanate from his chamber...ah, so you've heard.

At first, it appeared that all of the current staff were to be evicted immediately. This is an unwise and hasty move for a new administrator from Tsolyánu, who must expect to spend four to six weeks within easy reach of a latrine as he becomes acclimated to Salarvyáni cuisine. Although the immediate eviction was not carried out, Legate Oludún has shown ignoble haste by permitting Legate Dlekku only one week to prepare his final farewell celebration. The past week has been spent in a flurry of preparation (and packing). Happily, the day after the party, most of the former residents will be boarding the ship "The Roseate Eye of Tuléng after the Storm" to return to Jakálla. All of the important members of Salarvyáni society will be at the party, to show their respect to

Legate Dlekku and to welcome Legate Oludún. There may be a war going on between the two empires, but the forms must be observed, lest we be no better than beasts.

This hasty departure has been a strain on the former Legate, who has been looking haggard and wistful. Perhaps the stress of uprooting his family of Salarvyáni mistresses and children is what's bothering him. Perhaps it is simply the knowledge that these half-breed children, despised by Tsolyani and Salarvyáni alike, will never be accepted in either empire, and have only been barely tolerated here because of the power of their father. Whatever the cause of Dlekku's anxiety, it will be good to leave this place.

**Note to the referee:** The situation is far tenser than the players realize. Dlekku had the habit of selling people into slavery when they especially irritated him. The victim was invited to stay in the purple bedchamber. That unfortunate would be drugged, carried out by a secret door, and sold into slavery, usually to Haida Pakalla or Tsa'avtulgu. Dlekku does indeed bear a grudge against all worshippers of Durritlámish, and those who approached him in the past found his temper much shorter than worshippers of other gods. Oludún hiSayúncha had business with Legate Dlekku long ago and apparently fell victim to Dlekku's short temper. Oludún was sold to Tsa'avtulgu, and was unbelievably fortunate enough to escape with his life—and a new companion, the odious sorcerer Zlengnubb. He spent years waiting for the opportunity to take his revenge, and with the ascension of a Sárku-worshipper emperor, now it is his: the fate of Legate Dlekku rests in his hands. He is going to make sure that Dlekku pays the price for his arrogance. Dlekku is going to depart, yes, but not to Tsolyánu: he's going to the slave-pens of Tsa'avtulgu.

To make his plan work, Oludún is going to abduct Dlekku during the party. Dlekku's loyal guards will be kept disarmed and far away from anywhere they can interfere. Oludún's own guards will be posted around the house to ensure that Dlekku cannot escape. Zlengnubb has made connections with the slavers, and they will pick up Dlekku at dawn, the morning right after the party.

The players are oblivious to all of this when the party begins. The new legate has no interest in them, but he will be wary, nonetheless. If they begin to make trouble, they may go to Tsa'avtulgu themselves.

The outline of the adventure is that the players will gradually become aware of trouble as the party goes on, and one of them will become a witness to Dlekku's capture and harsh treatment at the hands of the new guards. This player should realize he or she is a marked person who cannot be permitted to escape, and draw the other players into the plot. The players have to figure out how to save their skins without the benefit of combat skills, warriors, or sorcery to aid them. Oh, yes: this being Tékumel, after all, some of the PCs have been engaged in peccadilloes that would disgrace them if they were discovered. Keeping their secrets quiet may make them look more suspicious and untrustworthy to each other.

After reading the introduction, introduce the PCs to each other (most of them have lived together for some time, after all), and let the party begin. Each PC should be run

separately, unless they specifically say they are staying together and working as a group. Randomly select events from the list provided, and let PCs attempt to solve these problems. Events marked with an \* are important, and should definitely happen at some point. Players who aren't involved in a party encounter can play the part of the NPCs or simply watch and make comments. Let the PCs have some fun, and let the role-playing get thick. Keep in mind that Salarvyáni are quarrelsome, mercenary, fat, hairy, greasy, over-perfumed, and for the most part physically unappealing to Tsolyani eyes.

The evening is split into early, middle, and late evening events. Smoothly proceed from one period to the next: do not indicate to the players that the tone of the party has changed. Let them figure it out.

### **Early Evening Events**

The beginning of the party (can be hastily sketched over): the guests arrive, meet with both Dlekku and Oludún, and wander off in search of food. This procedure normally takes most of the evening, but the gluttonous Salarvyáni are more interested in getting to the food and entertainment, and they don't have to show as much etiquette to a country that they're currently beating in a war. During this early phase of the party, use the Early Evening Event list to keep the players busy. Be *sure* that the asterisked events are used.

1. Fight with weapons between a chancellor of the Salarvyáni court and a member of the royal family.
- \*2. A slave reports there's somebody snooping in Dlekku's quarters. The party will be unable to catch this person—he slips away like a shadow. (May only be used once.)
3. A conjurer hired to entertain the guests isn't very good, and the Salarvyáni guests are being insulting about it. (Probably should only be used once.)
4. One of the guests is cheating at one of the games. He will deny it vehemently, and his opponents will threaten him. A fight could break out. (Probably should only be used once or twice.)
5. Some guests have a loud squabble over nothing in particular. (False alarm. Repeat often.)
6. The player is complimented on the entertainment. The guest wants details on how the entertainers were found.
7. Guests at a recitation of poetry insist on an obscure piece that the poet doesn't know.
8. Older Salarvyáni gentlemen want to run a race, and they need a referee. (Note: they may hurt themselves. This will probably only happen once.)
9. A Salarvyáni man takes a liking to you: a very intimate liking. (This will probably happen once.)
10. There is a loud debate on an athletic exhibition of the previous day. An argument may erupt.
11. An Ahoggya has wandered into the kitchen and is gobbling down the food. (If the players are sharp, this should only happen once.)
12. A high Salarvyáni guest is very offended (loudly) by the presence of a half-breed son of the Legate.

13. One of the guests wants to tell you a long and pointless story.
- \*14. There is not enough wine at one of the tables. The slave responsible for keeping this table stocked seems a bit drunk, and needs to be supervised. Down in the wine cellar, one of the casks has apparently been left open to drain on the floor. [Note: each time a player has to enter the wine cellar, there will be a barrel draining onto the floor until there is a good number of empty barrels. This could be useful to the players later on.]
- \*15. One of the carter clan members insists on dealing with you to arrange for a pick up of the empty wine casks tomorrow. They will be picked up at dawn, because they need them to ship back tomorrow afternoon. They are very insistent on this point.

### Mid Evening Events

The main part of the party. Both legates have disappeared and are nowhere to be found. Early evening events may also be used here. During this phase of the game, the players should gradually come to realize that Dlekku isn't around, and he should be. When players have figured this out, the mid-evening may be continued to keep the players nervous, or the game can proceed to the late evening.

16. Two guests are squabbling over the sexual favors of a serving slave.
17. The Legate is running low on wine.
18. Drunken guest is convinced you are an old enemy.
19. Drunken VIP guest is going to do something really embarrassing, like slide down the banister.
20. The player is compelled to join in some horrible drunken singing.
- \*21. A drunken provincial noble is insisting on meeting the Legate personally, so that the Legate may have his personal slaves serve him. This is a gross insult to the honor of Tsolyánu (and the Legate is nowhere to be found).
22. A very drunk guest wants to gift you with a steel dagger.
23. Two drunken guests are going to prove their courage with the knife between the fingers game (Mumbly Peg); Zlengnubb is watching from the shadows, with great amusement.
24. A guest wishes to see the Legate personally to congratulate him on his fine party and his retirement, but he's nowhere to be found.
25. A fine Salarvyáni lady has badly ripped her formal wear, and you happen to be walking by. (Note: she may demand that a runner be sent to her home for new clothes, or wailing that the horrible Tsolyani are responsible. The Legate's wives may be able to solve the problem—but they'll ask where Dlekku is, since nobody knows.)
- \*26. You observe another PC involved in one of the more difficult events, with Zlengnubb watching, obviously amused.
27. An Ahoggya is dozing under a table, making a horrible racket and disturbing the epic poetry recitation.
- \*28. Zlengnubb seems to be spying on you.

\*29. A minor member of the Salarvyáni ruling family, the Chruggileshmu, insists on seeing Dlekku personally to wish him good-bye and give a small gift. The legate is nowhere to be found.

*Special events for the end of the mid-evening phase:*

These two events are “specials”: They should absolutely be run, and rather later in the mid-phase of the party. These are clues to the players that something is amiss. If the players have begun to tire of the random events of the party and are looking for a purpose, these events should be sprung to make them suspicious, and the game swings into the late evening phase.

(30). The new guards are obviously searching for something, but won't say what.

(31). Oludún is looking for Dlekku—or merely pretending to.

**Late evening**

The plot should now thicken. Players should begin to think something is wrong because Dlekku has disappeared. If they ask, feel free to give them the information from “clues”, below. Once player paranoia has ripened a bit (or, whenever you're ready to spring the trap), run event (32). Once this has happened, the players should be aware that trouble has found them, and the real meat of the adventure begins: figuring out how to save their skins. Continue to run events from all three time blocks until the players get organized and get out of the party environment.

(32). One of the players sends a slave to retrieve a book from his room so that it may be returned to Lord Thollognarr Chruggilleshmu from whom it was borrowed. The slave returns hurriedly, and out of breath: he saw two of the new guards savagely beating Legate Dlekku in an isolated room! If the player looks, he'll see a guard obviously searching for the slave. The guard sees the player talking to the slave. If the player has any brains at all, they'll realize their life isn't worth a copper Qirgál.

33. An empty storeroom has a puddle of fresh blood on the floor. (The legate? A guest? A side of hmélu?)

34. The guards are looking for something or somebody: it could be you.

**Clues:** If the players catch on quickly from the absence of Dlekku, they may start asking other questions. These are fairly obvious points that they can discover quickly.

1. All of the visible guards seem to be new, either brought to the legate by Oludún, or you've never seen them before.
2. If inquiry is made, all of the original guards have either been discharged, or are outside, guarding the outer walls (or at least, so you're told.)
3. Zlengnubb is poking around. He may be just a sneak, but he seems pretty ubiquitous.



4. None of the players or regular embassy staff are allowed to leave the building. The guards are polite, but firm: Oludún has given strict orders that none of the occupants of the Legate are to be permitted to leave, lest violence befall them. (Very soon after event 31, if the guards see the player characters, they will ask to escort the players to their quarters “as a safety precaution”.)

**The Great Escape.** The conclusion of the adventure depends heavily on player actions. Once Oludún realizes that the beating of Dlekku has been seen, he will see to it that all of the old staff that were at the party will suffer “accidents”, or be sold off to slavery as well. The players must unite to protect themselves. [Note to the referee: although Oludún could capture the unaware players, and it is possible that the player who is involved in event 32 does not share this information with the others, it would be unsporting, and a poor adventure. So, nobody gets caught until they know what’s going on.] Oludún’s plan is simply to put each player out of action, and ship all the survivors out to the slavers tomorrow, who will carry them out in chests, the same way Dlekku used to do it. In fact, Zlengnubb contacted the same rogues that Dlekku used to use.

The adventure was written with two deliberate escape hatches, but it’s up to the players to find them. The first and most obvious route is via the empty wine casks. The trick is getting everybody to hide inside without being detected. Players simply have to make sure they disappear late enough in the evening that the guards have little time to search for them, and there are enough guests to cover for this activity, so guards can’t simply notice everybody is missing. The downside to this ignoble escape is that most valuables would have to be left behind. Too much gold would make the casks noticeably heavy. Those players who have families in the legate will be abandoning them to the tender mercies of Oludún: not a noble act.

A more elegant means to escape is to capture Oludún and turn the tables on him. If he’s handed off to the slavers tomorrow morning, they’ll happily carry him off to Tsa’avtulgu. (They’ve been paid in advance to carry their cargo, and they’re not picky.) Players will have to disable Zlengnubb and the 20 guards in the house, but it’s not impossible, especially if they recruit allies among their guests and perhaps inspire an Ahoggya to wreak some havoc (and disable the guards). Another technique is to use drugs or just food or drink: the newcomers aren’t used to Salarvyáni cuisine yet, and the food will give them horrible cases of diarrhea, while the powerful Drónu will affect all but the most seasoned drinkers.

There is also a way out through the underworlds in the basements. Dlekku’s son Hachetlám knows how to get into the underworld and out again in the slums of Tsatsayagga. He’ll demand quite a payment in exchange for guiding the party, and if they don’t treat him especially nicely, he’s likely to guide them to a deep pit and disappear. Also, there are other, unsavory denizens of the underworld. This would be a dangerous trip, and there will be pursuit. Zlengnubb might be able to track them down there.

Combat should *not* be an option for escape. The players are short on combat skills, and the guards could make chopped meat out of them. Tricking the guards is unlikely to succeed, since there is another batch at the front gate outside who are sober and looking out for tricks. Even a wild Ahoggya battling to escape is likely to hesitate in the face of a dozen guards at the gate.

Notice that Toposh has helped the Legate in his past slaving activities. He may recognize Oludún, but not know why. Start him off with “there’s something about the new Legate that is odd”, and later on, prompt the player that Oludún looks vaguely similar to somebody he used to know, and once things are in a full panic, tell the player that he does remember Oludún, but he doesn’t know from where. Save the full recognition for a moment to maximize panic.

### **Cast of Characters:**

#### Important NPCs

1. Dlekku hiTankolel, of the White Stone clan. The Tsolyani Legate to Tsatsayagga. Old, friendly, and smells horrible, both in body odor and breath. Loathes worshippers of Durrítlámish, and not too fond of the Dark Trinity. Owns a caravan/shipping business, has been known to sell a few Tsolyani into slavery in Salárvyá.
2. Oludún hiSayúncha, of the Dark Water clan. The new Legate: A worshipper of Durrítlámish, he was sold into slavery by Dlekku for his arrogance and obnoxious behavior. In Tsa’avtulgu he survived and made some interesting acquaintances, including a horrid and disreputable sorcerer who has accompanied him ever since. (Few spells, a few devices, mostly a charlatan).
3. Zlengnubb, the disreputable sorcerer/hedge-wizard. This man is quite short, swarthy, sparse hair and yellowish skin. He is balding, and there is a repulsive odor about him. His mouth is very wide, his arms long, and he is somewhat bandy-legged. This sorcerer is from Tsa’avtulgu, worships Black Qarqa, and may well be planning a major sacrifice to his God/dess here in Tsatsayagga with the Tsolyani as the main course! This could also make trouble for the ruling Chruggilleshmu family, or the man could just be a fanatic. Notice that if he escapes, it’s a neat sequel to have the old guy hiding in the underworld near the manor, just raring to make trouble.

#### **Player Characters**

1. Dritlan Hlókku hiKúrodu, of the High Pinnacle clan. Retired from The Legion of Mirkitáni, Hero of Victories, 7th Heavy Infantry (of Venerable status). Worshipper of Karakán. Hlókku is an elderly man. He is somewhat pompous, dismissive of anybody not from the Five Empires, and mainly interested in proper form and creature comforts. He is full of old war stories, most of them from his experience putting down rebellions in the Chákas against the Ito clan and the wild Pé Chói. Hlókku is sinking into his dotage, and is “short a few arrows in his quiver”. Hlókku is a hanger-on to the legate, and Legate

Dlekku is fond of him, although he holds no official responsibilities. Hlókku has a wife and two children back in Tsolyánu, but he has no permanent family here. He detests Takóyan, and believes he's either a deserter or somebody who spent the war in the rear. (Secret information: Hlókku is exactly as he appears to be. He still thinks he's a capable military leader, but no longer pretends to have much fighting ability left. Still, he may have some hidden resources left.)

Best skills: Military tactics and soldiering, war stories.

**2.** Meshshútla Chnéshshu, of the Roaring Black Waters clan. Salarvyáni. Meshshútla is the Legate's Major Domo, in charge of protocol and keeping the household running smoothly. Short, fat, impeccably pomaded and oiled, the smooth-talking Meshshútla can be guaranteed to know precisely the honors to accord Tsolyani or Salarvyáni visitors of quality. He's snippish and short-tempered to those of the lower classes. He is married, with a wife and two children who live with the clan. (Secret information: He's been embezzling for years, and has stolen a lot of money. If his chambers are searched, a deed to his retirement home can be found, and a pile of gold Nzuggesh is hidden. He will be frightened that a review of the books that a new administration may do could reveal his involvement. He believes his best bet is either to retire quickly and get out of the reach of the Tsolyani, or else to become invaluable to the new administration as smoothly as possible. He will *not* abandon his money without an argument.)

Best skills: Etiquette, calligraphy, orator.

**3.** Pilásh hiSénkolum, of the White Stone clan. A personal physician to Dlekku, and rather devoted to him. Pilash is a skilled physician who has been caring for Dlekku and his family for many years. Short, chubby, with a smooth and pleasing voice, he is very popular around the household. Pilash comes from a poorer lineage of the clan, and would have grown up to be a bricklayer. Dlekku's father noticed how dexterous his fingers were, and paid for his education as a physician. Pilash has been devoted to the Tankolel lineage ever since. He has few hobbies beside reading turgid popular poetry and collecting small clay figurines. He is a skilled physician, and knows some apothecary skills as well. Pilash is married to a clan-cousin, who stayed behind in Tsolyánu.

Best skills: Physician, alchemist, amateur botanist (drugs).

**4.** Mizhosh hiTankolel, White Stone clan. Mizhosh is the legate's Second Assistant, the financial advisor and keeper of records. Distantly related to Dlekku, Mizhosh originates from Usenánu, where the Tankolel lineage is not so well off. He is a bureaucrat and administrator, and has seen to it that the Legate runs smoothly. Bottle-shaped (with a thin neck and arms, but a tubby little pot-belly), Mizhosh is a figure of fun to the Salarvyáni for his fussy ways and high-pitched voice, but the Salarvyáni underestimate the keen mind, political instincts, and financial sense of this man. Mizhosh knows that Meshshutla has been embezzling, and has been holding this information for the most profitable moment. Mizhosh and Toposh do not get along well, but Mizhosh is loyal to his clan and other duties. Mizhosh is married, with two full-blooded Tsolyani children here at the legate.

Best skills: Administration, mathematics, politics.

**5. Logásh hiSurollan, Red Mountain clan.** A merchant from Paya Gupa, he has recently arrived in Tsatsayagga with a wallet of fire opals from the Chákas that he is trying to sell. Logásh is tall and skinny, with a prominent Adam's apple and long, delicate fingers. He wants to make valuable connections with the nobles of Salarvyáni to sell his stones, and learn how to do proper business in Salárvyá. He was supposed to speak with Toposh, who has been too busy to spend time with him in the past week (wrapping up Dlekku's business here). He is staying in the Foreigner's Quarter, housing for Tsolyani Vimúhla-worshippers being hard to find these days in Tsatsayagga. Logash is at the party to try to make business connections. He is not acclimated to the diet here yet.  
Best skills: Merchant, bargaining, gems, gossip

**6. Takóyan hiTrélshmu, Weeping Sun clan.** An out and out con man. He claims to have been Kási in the Legion of the Storm of Fire, with experience in fighting in Yán Kór. He's full of stories of sieges and battles with the Yán Koryáni, where he features prominently as a heroic fighting machine. Sadly, a wound to his sword arm ended his fighting career, for although the general's own sorcerer healed him (so that the scar is very small), he never regained the strength he needed in his hand to really fight again. He even claims to speak Yán Koryáni fluently (but the only phrase he really knows is "More wine, boy!"). Takóyan claims to be of high clan status, but his clan is distant and small, so it is unknown outside of the mountainous northwest of the Empire. In reality, he's a poor wanderer from Jakálla, living by his wits. Takóyan has a follower, Mizhósh hiChulátl of the Reed Mat clan, a young teen who is learning how to be a great warrior like his hero. Mizhosh worships Takoyan, and will do whatever he says and will defend his honor to the death. [Mizhosh is a good enough brawler (but no pro) but would die quickly in a sword fight with any real challenge, since Takoyan's attempts at "training" has hampered his ability. Mizhosh's line: "This man is unworthy of you. Let me dispatch him so your blade won't be dishonored." ] Takoyan and Mizhosh have been living the soft life here for nearly three months, and have become acclimated to the food. Takoyan has found a woman to share his bed, and Mizhosh has no such permanent arrangement.  
Best skills: Lying, fast-talk, avoiding work.

**7. Piur hiTankolel, White Stone clan.** The ne'er-do-well. Piur has a carefully cultivated exterior: the bland, useless, chummy fellow. However, he has been running a successful smuggling business under his cousin's nose, because he keeps his ambitions modest, and nobody thinks he has the grey matter to do it. Piur is thought to be a heavy drinker, but many of his forays into the market were to arrange for goods to be moved around without being taxed. Piur's known skills are drinking, eating, gossiping, and spending time with the ladies. His hidden skills include being a shrewd judge of character, an well-oiled ability to lie, a good knowledge of how to get goods in and out of Salárvyá, and a practiced hand at forgery. He has a dutiful wife back in Tsolyánu, and two concubines here in the legate.  
Best skills: Lying, judging character, calligraphy, connections.

**8. Toposh hiTankolel, White Stone clan.** Toposh is tall, thin, and leathery. The Salarvyáni call him "The hatchet", or sometimes "The Vringálu" (a poisonous, winged

snake-creature). Toposh is Dlekku's First Assistant. He is cold, efficient, and reliable. He is a shrewd bargainer, and even the mercantile Salarvyáni admire his skill. Toposh has even assisted Dlekku when obnoxious and difficult guests or customers were kidnapped and sold into slavery. Toposh is married, and his wife and two grown sons remain in Tsolyánu. However, he has a slave concubine here at the legate with him. In his free time, Toposh enjoys reading history and composing long narrative poems. He does not like Mizhosh, finding him fussy and over-precise.  
Best skills: Administration, bargaining.

Postscript: I don't remember much about this game, but it worked fairly well. The random events kept the players amused and hopping. When the two elderly Salarvyáni gentlemen wanted to run a race, two of the Tsolyani PCs wanted to set up a betting pool over which would die first from heat exhaustion! They were dissuaded by the ignobility of having guests drop dead at their party. The Ahoggya in the kitchen was distracted by an offer of a mountain of food in the courtyard. When the PCs discovered their peril, one tried to sell out another, and several were captured. In the end, I think they managed to overpower the new Legate and ship him off to become enslaved again, which is the preferred solution. Two roleplaying notes: I was amused when another PC attempted to flatter Mizhosh by telling him that he really should be the one running the place. Mizhosh's player swallowed it hook, line, and sinker, and was eating out of this other player's hand for most of the game. And the Flame Gem merchant distracted the soldiers by throwing his gems down the stairs while the rest of the group fled.

It was a good game. Maybe I'll find a venue to run it again some day.

**PRAISE FOR THE UNDERWORLDS:** Most of the Tékumel scenarios I've written or played in take place in the outside world. But dungeon exploring had its place. The old-timers must remember dungeons. D&D3 has returned to dungeons as a good way to introduce new players to the hobby. The original Empire of the Petal Throne assumed players would begin their careers exploring the Tsuru'umikh. One of the reasons why I liked EPT over D&D back in the old, old days was that it had a good reason for all these dungeons to be lying around. What role do the tsuru'umikh have for modern Tékumel role playing?

Tsuru'umikh are an important feature of the Five Empires, and should not be edited out by a new rules set. Diltana ensures that they exist under the cities, and the importance of the shrines and tombs excavated to retain access means that they are regularly used and explored. *The Man of Gold* showed some of the uses to which the Tsuru'umikh are put.

What are the reasons to use them, aside from nostalgia? They are dandy adventure hooks, as they are the best places to find ancient artifacts, entrances to the Tubeway car network, and possibly secret paths beneath cities. Tsuru'umikh offer opportunities to battle foes from other temples without violating the Concordat, and what better place to "disappear" political opponents? Tomb robbers venture below to obtain wealth, and temples and the

tomb police patrol and place guardians to prevent this. One may be able to spy on rivals by finding hidden passages near temple meeting rooms, and enterprising teams may break in and steal valuables, as in the Man of Gold.

Dungeon adventures definitely had their downside. Too often they degenerated into monster hunts, or the bad old days of huge mazes filled with randomly generated monsters and loot with no rhyme or reason. Role playing took second fiddle to mapping. Tékumel deserves better.

But there's no reason to go back to the bad old days of referees obsessively mapping out every feature. Key areas should be mapped out, but large sections can be left vague or only simply described. There are long, featureless corridors; narrow, twisty tunnels; numerous dead ends. We can even gloss over large portions of the underworld as we do the outside world when parties travel long distances. "You arrive at the Chamber of Nessu'mar. Now what?"

I believe some of the old conventions of dungeon exploration should be abandoned. There's little reason to force players to make maps. Upper class Tsolyani would disdain paper maps, and I don't think there are many who can create High Cartography stones, especially while wandering around down there. More likely, explorers would blazon their trail underground, or use a code like the tomb robbers' argot. Directions for traveling underground would be mostly verbal, and the old dungeoneer's game of carefully pacing out and mapping rooms to discover likely secret chambers should be a waste of time: the Tsuru'umikh do not utilize every square foot of space, and square rooms and simple, straight corridors would be rare.

Likewise, the "game" of putting traps in dungeons all over the place has little purpose here. The underworlds were excavated to maintain access to important areas, or to provide for transportation to same. Traps would exist for a reason: either to guard an important area, or placed after the fact to prevent access to an area. Some might set traps to capture explorers: Priests of Ksárul looking to interrogate prisoners, or monsters hoping to make an easy meal. But the paranoid days of tapping everything with a ten-foot pole should be over, too.

As it happens, I have one adventure ready for convention play that has not gone past playtesting, called "For Old Times." It's a dungeon crawl, and I tried to keep it up to my highest standards. My playtesters enjoyed it, and it was a real delight to see a serious and skilled group of dungeoneers tackle it.

Besides, if D&D3 is going back to the dungeon setting, maybe it would be helpful to have a few good dungeon games out there to help transition the D&D players into Tékumel--hopefully without having to translate the new game system into d20.

**OUTSIDE THREATS:** Meanwhile, what about outdoor threats? In the old days of EPT, wandering monsters were found everywhere outside of city walls, so that parties crossing

the Sákbe roads might have to fight a swarm of Serudla four days outside of Jakálla, and be wiped out. Just how common are wandering monsters, in the old sense, in the Empire?

Ever since reading the sourcebook, I've considered dangerous animals like the Serudla to be pushed back to the wilds. The settled areas of Tsolyánu, except for unpatrollable areas like the swamps, are reasonably free of huge predators and wild animals. Consider how difficult it would be to farm if Zrné kept slinking in and carrying off the workers?

But it's possible I have the wrong image. Instead of a broad settled Empire like ancient Rome or China, the Five Empires might be more like medieval Europe or Russia, where the only places one could be relatively sure of safety from wildlife was the cities. A pack of wolves might pursue a lone sledge in wintertime Russia; a pioneer family in Dakota in the 1880s might be besieged by a mountain lion; the forests of medieval Europe had wild boars and other unpleasant beasts.

Gardasiyal's encounter tables have lowered the probabilities of meeting dangerous creatures, but it's still possible to run into a Feshenga one hex away from Béy Sü. Even more dangerous creatures can be encountered in the mountains and woodlands, regardless of how close one is to civilization, and whether there is a Sákbe road in that hex.

Given the encounter tables, I feel dangerous beasts are more common in the Five Empires than I used to think, but I still believe the settled areas are safe. Organized humans tend to fight off threats, and unlike Medieval Europe, where a local lord might not be able to afford the manpower to organize a hunt for potentially dangerous boars or wolves, the Five Empires have settled these lands for a long, long time. Neither manpower nor weapons nor organization are a problem. Predators might lurk in the dark forests where Sákbe road guards dare not go, but the likelihood of meeting a Feshenga between Béy Sü and Usenánu seems pretty low to me. How could the Empire send lone runners from city to city if they ran the risk of being carried off?

As before, I welcome your thoughts and comments.

END

The Illuminating Depictions of  
various citizens of the Tsolyani Empire

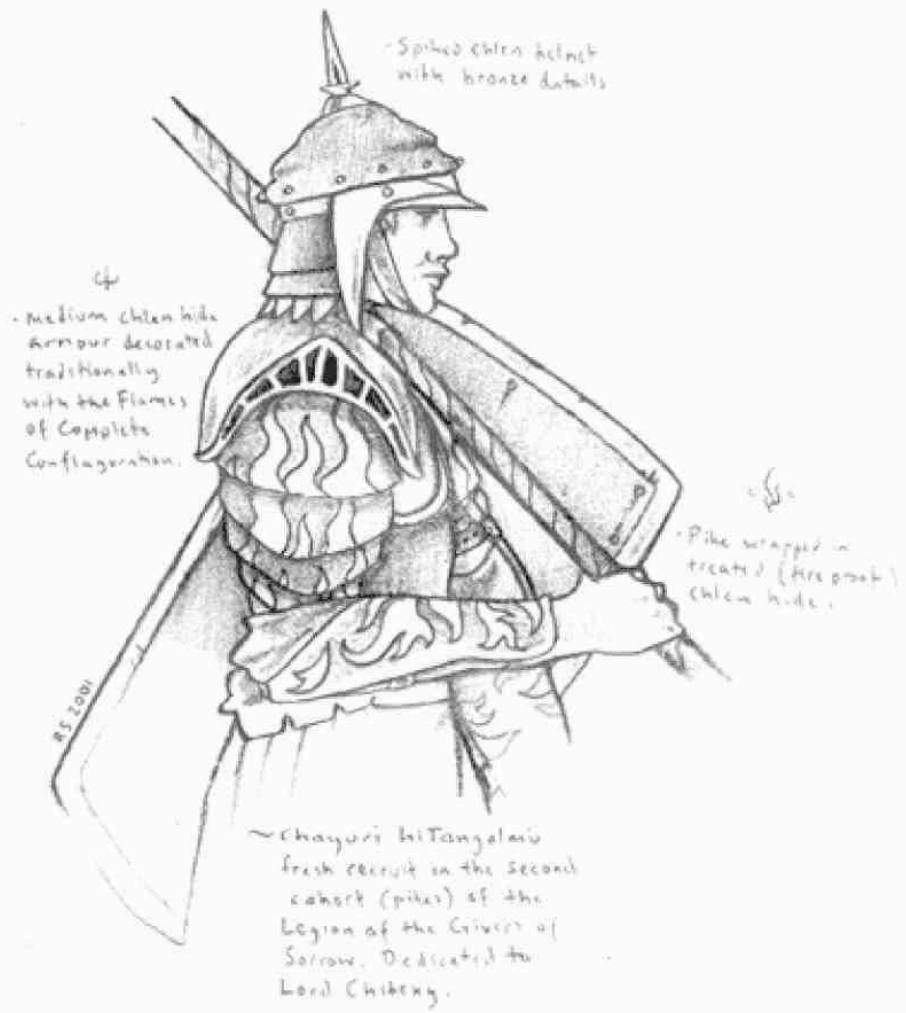
volume 1.11

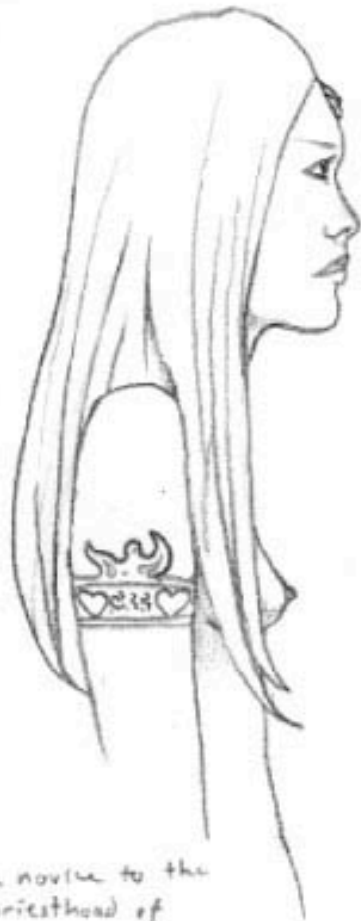


as they posed for the pen and paper of one  
Mischan hiTlassyu, of the clan Blue Blade,  
scholar priest in the Temple of Lord Ksarul, Jakalla.

*These images may be used in any way  
pertaining to please the rulers of the  
Empire of the Petal Throne*







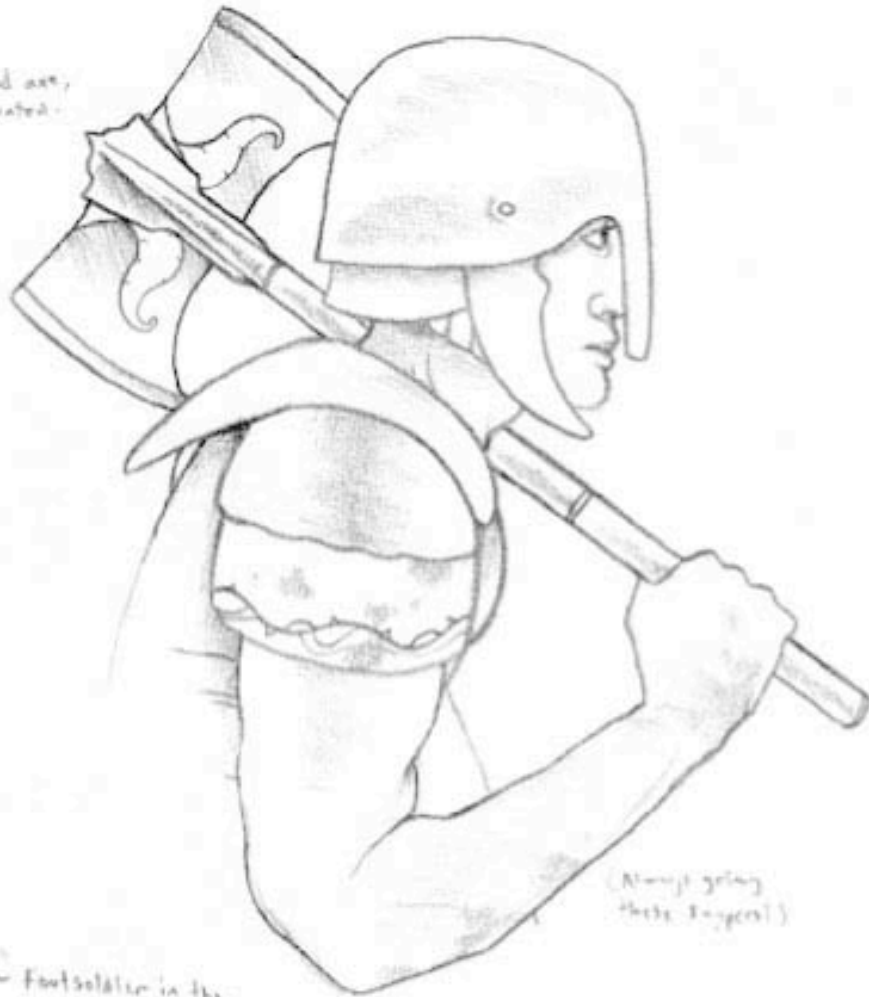
↳ a novice to the  
priesthood of  
Lady Diamlish



↳ Helm of Honor of the  
Legion of Red Desolation  
The plume is made of a  
brilliant pointed plant  
(looks very dramatic in combat)

• Tight fitting bronze helmet  
typical of the 2nd Imperial  
Sappers.

- Bronze head armor,  
with decorated.



(Almost going  
these fingers)

~ Footsoldier in the  
Battalion of Vrishtra the role  
in field armour or residence  
often wide.

Eye of Thoth's  
set with Pearl of  
Wisdom.



White oxen hide armor  
details with gold  
decorations

RITUAL

~ Wlisa h-Riching of the  
Sons Red Clam.  
Wearing the traditional dress  
of a high ranking priestess of  
Thoth's when performing  
the ritual invocation of  
the Dissolving Truth.



Roby you set imperial  
sash

Lord Huan led until just recently  
an exciting life in the legions, first  
his many years.

As all Shards in service  
of Lord Huan, Lord  
Huan wears signs of  
loyalty of the Father-  
like titles in gold on his  
sleeves.

Lord Huan in the early high ranking  
rank in the Temple of Lord Huan,  
and the High Steward of the House of the  
Sun. He has been wearing ritual white  
gown.

The Lord Huan has a quarter 'Sun' mark on his neck.



A print of Huan in war



- A musically gifted  
follower of Lord Acetia  
at Brij Sri playing  
a hymn on a Sanyasi  
flute.

Ceremonial Battle armor  
of Lord Thunir from  
the Reign of  
Svenhuga IV  
ca. 3460

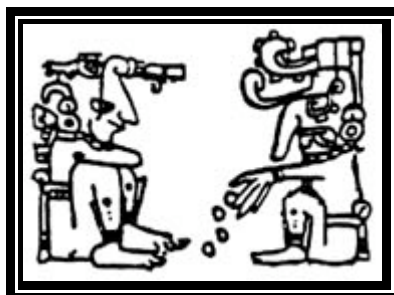


The famous actor Rignat in Merlan  
seen portraying Harman, the hero in  
the ancient legend epic "The Lorent  
of the Dead Captain," in which a  
Captain in a legion dedicated to Thunir  
falls in love with a beautiful warrior  
and princess of Karol. This epic is often  
performed at yearly competitions and festivals  
in Bay Su.



~ A SOLDIER IN TYPICAL SHEN BATTLE RAGE  
THE LEGION OF THE SPLENDOUR OF SHENYU,  
4th IMPERIAL SHEN AUXILIARY HEAVY INFANTRY  
IN ITS FINEST HOUR...





## COMMENTS AND KUDOS ON VISITATIONS OF GLORY #1

### From Robert A. Dushay

EVERYTHING OLD IS NEW AGAIN

I very much enjoyed issue #1. The art was terrific, and the submissions were all great, too.

KRISTA DONNELLY: I liked the conflicting motivations of all the characters, especially the situation between Ngaya and Kotaru. It would be amusing to see how two players work this out. Krista, have you ever run this besides your playtest session? Could you describe how the playtest went? (One of the cool things in Pagan Publishing's *Realm of Shadows* campaign was writing up what players did when the game was playtested.)

MALCOLM HEATH: Sárku remains one of the more popular deities for players to pledge themselves to in my games. Since we know Sárku is considered a respectable deity for good, solid citizens to worship, I'm always interested in portrayals of this faith as something other than undead-worshipping fanatics. Nice job. I wonder, given your Ritual of Transition to the Eternal, where a worshipper is immured with a corpse, if devoted members of the temple seek permanent living entombment in small chambers underground, where they are fed, but they spend their lives in observation and contemplation, in worshipful imitation of Lord Sárku's undead? On the other hand, I'd think Sárku's doctrine might also say that life has its place, and there will be an eternity to enjoy the delights of eternal knowledge and observation of the inevitable corruption of all.

BRAD JOHNSON: Tékumel fiction is always nice. I particularly liked the idea of "no redemption" for Hrithik. It seems to me a good cautionary tale for why the followers of the Goddess are expected to not put things away for a rainy day. Is your tale supposed to be a myth or tale for followers of the Goddess, a story of an "actual event," or am I just taking things too darned seriously?

FLOYD BRIGDON: Thanks for supervising and running this gig. Regarding your map, I've often wondered how the Tsolyani deal with mapping the underworld or other features when they don't use maps. I'd bet the tomb robbing clans simply mark the walls down there in their argot, and don't have any external maps at all.

## **From Robert Svärd**

My name is Robert Svärd, I'm born and raised in Uppsala, the old heathen capital of Sweden (1000 years ago at least...) but have also managed to live in Hong Kong as well as Edinburgh, Scotland. I've been involved in RPG's since I was 9 but like many others quit the hobby when I started uni (my major is Media and Communication sciences at Uppsala University). The thing that brought me back two years ago was Tékumel, and now I'm a zealot here in Sweden, busy converting others to the Faith. I can't get enough of Tékumel, even though what I have read so far is limited to the novels and what is available online. Hence my gaps in knowledge about Tékumel. The weaver of my skeins of destiny has willed me to leave my safe place in Sweden and move to Tokyo in September 2001, where I assume it will be even more difficult to find likeminded Tékumel fans.

Even though I pride myself on my skills in the English language my contributions will probably be limited to art, as I enjoy drawing as well as writing. As usual, some are better than others, so be choosy! Not all of them are "correct".

robertsvard@yahoo.com

## **From Malcolm Heath**

Ngángmuru!

I fear that this letter must be brief in the extreme, but I did want to set down my comments on the last issue for posterity, as well as to mention a few corrections to my own piece last time.

On a more personal note, things out here in shady Portland, Oregon (Bulwark of the Western Empire) have been somewhat crazy, both at work, and also in regards UCON, for which I am leading up the efforts to put on a LARP, since David Aitken had to bow out. I am also getting set to record the conversation with Professor Barker at the event. I'm very, very excited to be attending this, and I hope to see most if not all of you there.

Now, on to the comments. In a different form, these were posted to the Yahoo Group's list for the APA, but I stand by them:

**Steven W.:** Great Pé Chói! I think you got them exactly right. It's interesting that so many of the pictures of Pé Chói have them standing at the same angles that you do; it

seems to fit them, somehow. I am about as far away from being able to put pencil to paper and make anything other than cryptic marks as Everest is from the bottom of the sea; I really respect anyone who does this, and then puts it out for folks to see.

**Krista D.:** I am very impressed. Another thing I have a great deal of trouble with is actually organizing adventures in a logical and understandable fashion. I especially liked the character of Ngaya. She's in probably the most powerful position of all of them; she knows where the money is, has a hold on at least a few of the other characters, and could (if the character played it this way) find out a lot more about what is going on since she's "just the Master's daughter" and possibly to be ignored. I'm trying to figure out a way she could manage to get around the stipulation about not becoming aridáni, and still keep the ferry rights. I'm looking forward to what you submit this time.

**Robert D.:** While OTE isn't really my style, I was interested to read about it, since I see that as another way to game social interaction. It brings up interesting issues regarding how to handle this. On the one hand, you have something like S&G, where you "roll to impress your superior" with bonuses for inducements, and the way that I like to do it, which is with no dice at all (I'm lucky to have had players that accept this method; it could seem very unfair to some, I think). Good stuff, overall.

**DCSIII:** Wow. I remember seeing stuff that you did quite a while ago. I really like it.

**Malcolm:** This could have been expanded a bit. Originally I intended it as a general introduction to the faith of the Worm, but trimmed it, since it was becoming vague and unwieldy. Originally this section was cast as an interview. I think it works better this way. In addition to this, after publication, I realized that I was mislead slightly by the noble Héjesh hi Kolúmra, however. The last two ceremonies he mentions, namely **The Night of Perceiving the Horizon of Death**, and **The Ritual of the Transition to the Eternal**, are actually Durrítlámish rituals. I assume that they are Outer Rituals, otherwise, how could Héjesh have known about them? I also assume that he wanted to have 5 rituals to tell me about, since five is the number of his dread Lord, Sáрку.

**Brad J:** Very interesting piece. Did you intention this as a story that might be told for the education of young Dlamélish worshippers? I really like the fact that it tells a moral completely opposite than what we get in modern western society.

**Floyd B:** Great job on the collation, and lovely calligraphy on the title banner. The good luck map is cool! In some ways the first things we do with this hobby remain the best; the start of creative endeavor, a first flash of fun and excitement.