

Shén

“The sixth member of the group was a nonhuman, a hulking reptilian Shén, native to the hot lands south of Livyánu, half a continent away. He traded in the flame opals of Pán Cháka and in garnets, commodities which the Shén knew were valued by humans and other species, but which they themselves held in no particular esteem. Although the Shén was friendly enough, his guttural name was unpronounceable—something between a hiss and a snarl.”

from The Man of Gold by M.A.R. Barker, ©1984 DAW Books



Shén

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The ferocious-looking Shén are mildly friendly towards men, rather harsh and abrupt in manner, a little clumsy, and laconic of speech. They dislike over-refinement and delicacy and value physical power, ferocity and endurance. Their psychic and magical talents are weak, and they are disdainful of sorcery. Preferring the heat of their southern enclaves, they come north only for brief periods to serve as mercenaries. The Shén never forget an offence—they still hate the Ayoggyá because the latter once cooked and ate some Shén captives during the invasion of Salarvyá by Emperor Hejjeka II ‘the Heretic’ (1,325-1,340 A.S.)—a perfectly natural act for the Ayoggyá.

Physical Attributes

The Shén are great armoured reptiles that stand between 1.83 and 2.31m high and are roughly humanoid, standing erect upon two powerful rear legs and with two forearms ending in three-fingered hands with an opposable thumb. They are covered with shining black scales (the fashionable among them paint these in iridescent colours), and have a thick, prehensile tail with a mace-like knob at the end which they use in combat, a curved, beak-like snout, double rows of needle-sharp teeth, and a crest of glittering spines. These usually lie flat along their skulls, but are extended when the Shén becomes enraged.

The Shén have three sexes: males (‘egg-creators’) about 40 percent, females (‘egg layers’) 35 percent, and ‘egg-fertilisers’ 25 percent. They are divided into genetic lineages called ‘egg-groups’ that may be friendly, neutral or dangerously hostile to one another, and their states are built around these groups.

Enclaves

The large Shén states of Shényu and Mmatugual, and several little states including Gai, Ra and Qonu.

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