

From "The Man of Gold" by Prof. M.A.R. Barker, published by DAW Books



THE TEMPLE OF VIMÚHLA

A Self-Guided Tour

Prof. M.A.R. Barker has been involved with science fiction writing and fandom for some 40 years. He was the president of the "Nameless Ones", the science fiction club in Seattle, in 1948 and 1949. He attended the Norwescon World SF convention (Portland, 1949), where he met authors E.E. Smith, L. Ron Hubbard, Lin Carter, Bea McCaffrey, and Frederick Brown, among others. He currently teaches at the University of Minnesota, and has degrees in a wide variety of disciplines.

The world of Tékumel, the creation of Prof. M.A.R. Barker, grew out of his interest in languages, history, and science fiction. It is a world in our far future, terraformed by humans and their non-human allies and transformed into a lush colony world. Isolated in a "pocket universe" by a great cataclysm, the stellar civilisation collapsed; the colonists (of diverse races) regressed into barbarism. After many millenia, the long night has given way to a new civilisation, with mighty empires and omnipotent dieties.

This display is of one of the great temples of the world of Tékumel, that of Vimúhla, Lord of Flame and of War. Vimúhla is a god of "change", identified with the qualities of violence, destruction, and the incandescent obliteration of the all-consuming flame. As such, Vimúhla is a popular diety among soldiers and warriors in many lands. The worship of Lord Vimúhla is especially strong in the western areas of the Seal Imperium of Tsolyánu - the Empire of the Petal Throne. This model depicts the Temple at Kátalal, a medium-sized city in Tsolyánu. For a moment, put yourself into the sandals of a visitor to this temple, and follow the acolyte showing you through its many ornate chambers....

As a visitor of status, you are respectfully shown through the MAIN GATE (1), through its portcullis which has been raised to permit your entrance. The gate is flanked by two GATE TOWERS (2). In addition to their defensive uses (now actually ceremonial), they serve as housing for servants and the acolytes of the temple. A gate in the base of one of the two towers leads out into the courtyard of the temple. To your left, against the outer wall, stands a STATUE (3) of the Seal Emperor of Tsolyánu, Hirkáne hiTlákotani, the 61st of his line. To your right, past a COLONADE (4) where students are taught the creed and liturgy of the Flame, stands the TUNKUL GONG TOWER (5). Within this tower hangs the huge bronze gong used by the temple to mark the ceremonies, and to mark the hours of the day. Across the square, the temples of the Dark Gods - Lord Hrū'ū, (God of Ultimate Darkness), Ksáru (Lord of Secrets), and Sáru (Master of the Undead) - mark the hours of the night with their own Túnkul gongs.

Ushering you up the RAMP (6) that leads to the main portion of the Temple, your guide points out the low building that houses the KITCHEN (7) and STOREROOM (8) that is used by the staff of the Temple. This building also houses a BARRACKS (9), BATH (10), and GUARD CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS (11). As Vimúhla is a war-god, the Temples of Vimúhla maintain larger staffs of guards and officers than most of the other temples. Some of these soldiers may be seen lounging about the POSTERN GATE (12) at the rear of the outer portion of the Temple. Through this small gate comes the prosaic needs of the Temple and its staff.

At the top of the ramp, your guide gestures upward, and the portcullis leading to the ENTRANCE HALL (13) rises to admit you. Within, the high murals and Classical Tsolyáni glyphs proclaiming the might of Lord Vimúhla cover the walls. You next enter the great OUTER SHRINE (14), with its ceremonial fire-pit and statue of the 16th Aspect of the deity. A small door in the wall, off to the right, leads you to the RECEPTION ROOM (15) used by the administrators of the Temple when conducting business of an informal nature. Your guide leads you up the stairway to the next level, where you look in at the ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE (16). A number of scribes are at work, updating the records of the latest tithes brought into the Temple from its lands and by its parishoners. Beyond where they are working, you can see an open door that leads into the TREASURY (17). Into this strongly-built room are placed the funds being counted by the scribes.

The stairs continue upwards. A door gives out onto a GALLERY (18) that looks down into the OUTER SHRINE (14). Here, too, are murals celebrating the battles and victories of Vimúhla over the enemies of the faith. Another stairway, at the opposite side of the gallery, leads upward. A BATH (19), is also located here. On the next level, you encounter a sentry at her post in the ANTECHAMBER (20). Several military priests are just behind her in their SLEEPING QUARTERS (21). After your guide proffers a pass from the Guard Captain, you are allowed to pass into the DINING ROOM (22) used by the priests for their meals. A servant is clearing away the remains of a meal. Across the room, the door to the QUARTERS OF THE HIGH ADMINISTRATIVE PRIEST (23), is open. This worthy is in his room, and greets you with grave courtesy. If you wish to stay the night, you will be given the use of the GUEST ROOM (24).

Your guide shows you up the last flight of stairs, to the level at the top of the main tower. Located here are the QUARTERS OF THE HIGH SCHOLARLY PRIEST (25), and the QUARTERS OF THE HIGH RITUAL PRIEST (26). They share a SITTING ROOM (27), that overlooks the DINING ROOM (22). These persons perform the rituals and ceremonies of the Temple, and the scholarly research into the doctrines and sorcery used by the Temple both in rituals and in the military arm of the Temple. Many of the legions of the Seal Imperium of Tsolyáni are supported by the Temple of Vimúhla; the Temple provides the military sorcerors to the legions, who cast powerful spells against the enemy.

Your guide requests that the High Priests allow you to be shown through the lower levels of the Temple, where there are shrines of great antiquity and reverence. This is granted, and your guide begins to lead you back downward, along the stairs that you ascended earlier. After descending to the level of the OUTER SHRINE (14), you are led through the heavy gilded bronze doors into the RITUAL ANTECHAMBER (28). This room serves as the connecting room between the OUTER SHRINE (14), and the INNER SHRINE (29). To your left, you see a doorway that opens onto the ADMINISTRATIVE HALL (30). This chamber is where the civil business of a formal nature (such as audiences, conferences, and meetings with the officials of the Seal Imperium) is conducted. To your right, a stairway leads up to the floor above, where other rooms are located. These are: a COMMON ROOM (31), SLEEPING QUARTERS (32), and a BATH (33). These rooms are used by the lower-ranking priests and priestesses of the Temple.

While telling you about these rooms, your guide has led you through the RITUAL ANTECHAMBER (28) into the INNER SHRINE (29). The room is dominated by an altar dedicated to the Lord of Flame, where sacrifices are performed to commune with the deity. The guide moves a small lever, and the altar slides aside to reveal a stairway leading down. He tells you that there is another concealed entrance to the lower levels in the stairway just outside the door to the RECEPTION ROOM (15). You descend the stairs, and are now in a CORRIDOR (34). This leads into the GUARDROOM (35), and the SUBALTERN'S QUARTERS (36). This officer is the deputy commander of the Temple guards. From these rooms, another short corridor leads to the OUTER HALL (37); this in turn gives onto the CHAMBER OF CEREMONIES (38). This large hall is used by the

Temple for those non-ritual ceremonies required by the Temple. Two small rooms at the end of the chamber serve as depositories for some of the Temple's treasures; one contains a trap for unwary thieves.

A hidden door leads to the SMALL ANTECHAMBER (39). Doors in this room lead to the FEAST HALL (40). Here guests of the Temple (such as yourself) are entertained. The hall is decorated with murals depicting sacrifices being made to the Lord of Flame, and you can see servants preparing a dinner in your honor. Another short corridor leads to the BALCONY (41) that overlooks the INTERROGATION CHAMBER (42). Under the laws of the Seal Imperium, the Temple of Vimúhla handles the interrogation and execution of most criminals. The Petal Throne reserves to itself and its agents, the Omnipotent Azure Legion, the right to deal with crimes against the Imperium itself. Your guide takes you down the stairs, and you are in the chamber itself. You can see to ahead of you the CELL(43), where prisoners are held, and to the right is an EXECUTION CHAMBER(44) where there are tiny cells located for the worst cases, as well as facilities for execution of the guilty felons. Their bodies are cast into the sewers through a panel in the wall of the room. You leave this area through a series of small rooms(45), which lead to the SORCERORS' WORKROOM(46). In this room, the Scholar-Priests of the Temple explore the arcane devices of the ancients, and experiment with new spells they have created. A door in one corner of the room leads to the STUDY ROOM(47). Dominating this room is one of the greatest treasures of the Temple, one of the vision devices of the ancients. Here also are some of the books and scrolls used by the priests in their arcane research.

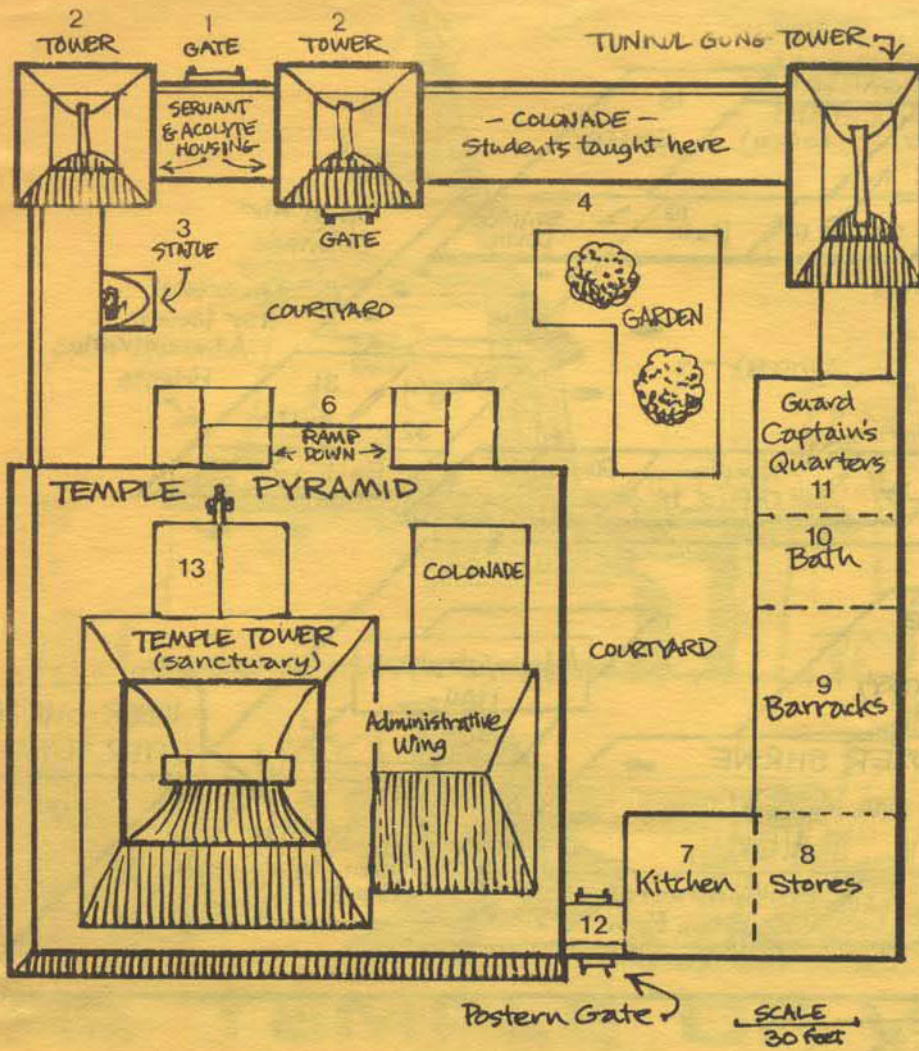
A secret door behind the mirror in the WORKROOM(46) leads to the passageway to the INNERMOST SHRINE(48). This passageway, your guide tells you, avoids the PROTECTIVE MAZE(49) that keeps unwanted visitors out of this holy area. This shrine is used for the most sacred and arcane of rituals. A heavy bronze rolling block seals this room off from the rest of the Temple. Also accessible from the maze is the CRYPT AND TOMB AREA(50), where some of the long-dead heirophants of the Temple repose. Beneath the sarcophagus is a crypt where the most valuable and holy of the Temple's relics and treasures are kept.

This, then, is a tour of one of the temples of the world of Tékumel. This world, the creation of Prof. M.A.R. Barker, is depicted in the novel *THE MAN OF GOLD* (published by DAW books) and the fantasy role-playing games *EMPIRE OF THE PETAL THRONE* and *SWORDS AND GLORY*. In addition, a number of reference works, histories, data books, and adventures have been published. These works, along with the games, are available from:

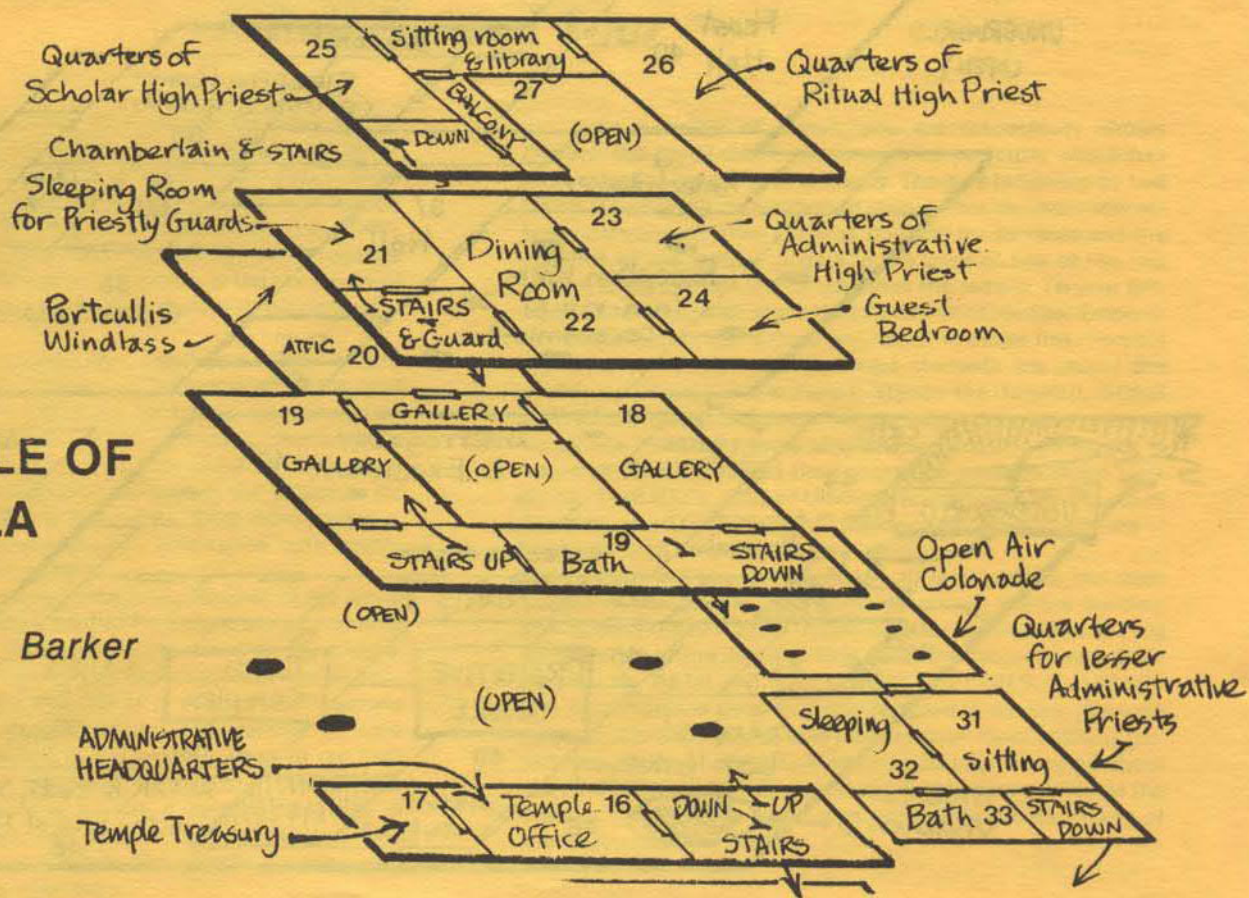
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We thank you for your interest.





PRIEST of Lord Vimuhla



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